



## Session Three

# Program Planning

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### Time Allowed

50 minutes

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### Teaching Objectives

- Conduct portions of the presentation as team activities that allow participants to gain hands-on experience conducting various aspects of the annual program planning process.
  - Stress the importance of Scoutmasters guiding their troops in developing annual program plans and then sticking with those plans.
  - Discuss ways to involve Scouts in planning a troop's program, in feeling invested in it, and in taking responsibility for bringing it to life.
  - Explore how the planning process allows troop members to connect their activities with the values of Scouting.
  - Direct participants to resources that will help them conduct effective troop program planning.
  - Speak to the needs of Scoutmasters with varying experience, specifically:
    - The new Scoutmaster, especially one with a new troop.
    - The Scoutmaster of an established troop with boys representing a wide range of ages and experience levels.
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### Materials Needed

- *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, No. 33009A
- *The Boy Scout Handbook*, No. 33105
- *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*, Nos. 33110, 33111, and 33112 (one copy for each patrol)
- *Troop Program Resources*, No. 33588 (one copy for each patrol)

- *Troop Planning Work Sheet* (one copy for each patrol)
  - *Quality Unit Award Form* (one copy for each patrol)
  - PowerPoint slides or overheads from CD, if desired
  - Flipchart or other means of writing discussion notes
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## Recommended Facility Layout

Session meeting area. Each participant should have a comfortable place to sit, take notes, and organize written materials. That setting most often consists of tables, each accommodating six to eight participants forming a patrol, and enough chairs for all participants.

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## Delivery Method

- Instructor-led discussion
  - A team/patrol activity that models a troop program planning conference
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## Presentation Procedure

Begin the discussion by asking participants for some of their thoughts on why planning is important for carrying out an effective troop program. Among the points to bring out are these:

- An annual planning meeting encourages troop leaders to explore a wide range of program opportunities. That will help a troop stay out of the rut of doing too much of the same thing—for example, only tailgate camping or only climbing and rappelling.
- Too often, a troop's program is planned by adults and then offered to the boys. It is far more effective to give the boys responsibility for selecting and carrying out a troop's program with adults in the background roles of supporting and coaching.

Lead the discussion to the understanding that through its boy leaders, a troop uses two forms of planning to ensure the best possible program:

- *Annual long-range planning.* The patrol leaders' council, the Scoutmaster, and other key adults involved with the troop meet once a year to determine the next 12 months of troop programs and major activities.
- *Monthly short-term planning.* The same troop leaders meet every month to fine-tune the annual plan and assign to patrols and individuals the tasks that will result in success.





### ***Annual Troop Program Planning***

A yearlong troop program plan creates stability for the troop, increases Scouts' participation, and allows a Scoutmaster to give the boys much of the leadership of meetings and activities. It is difficult to underestimate the importance of the role that planning plays in developing a coherent and inviting troop program. (Some troops do their program planning once a year, some every six months. The choice may be based on whether they elect their senior patrol leader and patrol leaders once a year or twice a year. In either case, the planning process is the same.)

- Lead participants in discussing the five steps involved in annual troop program planning. Participants can reference *The Scoutmaster Handbook* as the discussion unfolds.
- The guidelines that follow are designed to enliven this presentation by involving participants as leaders of an imaginary troop that is developing its annual program.
- At the beginning of this exercise, provide each team with a copy of the *Troop Planning Work Sheet*.

#### **The Five Steps of Annual Troop Program Planning**

1. Do your homework.
2. Get patrol input.
3. Hold a planning conference.
4. Consult with the troop committee.
5. Announce the plan.

(A full discussion of each of these points can be found in *The Scoutmaster Handbook*, Chapter 8, "Troop Program Planning.")

#### **DO YOUR HOMEWORK**

Prior to an annual troop program planning meeting, troop leaders need to plot out on a calendar what's going on in the coming year for their community, church, school, personal life, etc. With the calendar as a resource, the patrol leaders' council can better schedule troop events so that they do not conflict with other activities.



## Patrol Assignment

Ask participants to offer dates of events that could have an impact on troop activities. Instruct each team to note these dates on their *Troop Planning Work Sheets*.

### Instructors' Note

*While this assignment is not as thorough as a Scoutmaster would wish to be in an actual planning process, it will encourage participants to go through the motions of doing their homework. Instructors can add validity to the exercise by posting dates of BSA district and council events that may affect troop activities (summer camp, camporees, etc.) and the dates of school and community functions and special events of the troop's chartered organization that may impact the boys' schedules. Participants can copy these onto their Troop Planning Work Sheets and then add any other dates they know about.*

*To the greatest extent possible, use actual dates of upcoming events, especially those of the district and council. Write these dates and those suggested by participants on a flipchart or chalkboard and leave them posted; patrols will use these lists during their program planning activity later in this presentation.*

- Ask for suggestions of priorities the patrols see for their troop in the coming year. Write the suggestions on a flipchart. The list may look something like this:
  - Attend summer camp.
  - Have an outdoor adventure at least once a month.
  - Do a monthly Good Turn for the community.
  - Earn the National Camping Award and Quality Unit Award.
  - Conduct a fund-raising activity to secure money for new tents and other camping gear.
- Draw up a general outline of the annual program. Make it as flexible as possible while still fulfilling the accomplishments envisioned for the troop. For example, a troop's annual plan should, at a minimum, include 10 days and nights of camping, the standard a troop must meet to be a Quality Troop.



- Meet with your senior patrol leader to review your outline. Share with him your thoughts on the coming year and seek his input. He may have very good ideas that have not occurred to you.
- In discussions with the senior patrol leader, a Scoutmaster next explores the range of options that appear to be available to the troop. (Refer to *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*, for ideas.) For example, a Scoutmaster may feel that the needs of the troop can be best achieved by adopting any of 20 selected program features. Paring down those possibilities to a dozen—one for each month—will be a task for the troop’s annual planning conference chaired by the senior patrol leader.

### Instructors’ Note

*The important issues at this point are to accustom participants to using the three volumes of Troop Program Features as a reference and to give the boy leaders of their troops as large a role as possible in determining and carrying out the troop’s annual plan. Rather than asking the teams to come up with 20 selected program features, instructors can have a flipchart prepared with such a list. Participants can refer to that list as they move on to the next step of the planning process.*

### GET PATROL INPUT

A troop’s annual program should be driven by what the boys want to do, not by what adults prefer. Involving all the Scouts in a troop in the planning process helps ensure that this will be the case. Here is one scenario for canvassing the ideas of troop members:

- The senior patrol leader shares an outline of the annual program plan, complete with options, with other members of the patrol leaders’ council.
- Each patrol leader presents the general plan and options to his patrol for discussion. Where there are specific choices, patrol members can make their wishes known. If they have additional ideas they feel will improve the plan, they can also communicate that information to their patrol leader.
- The senior patrol leader puts the potential monthly themes on a ballot, leads troop members in a discussion of the choices, then offers them the opportunity to vote.
- After the patrol leaders have gotten the input of patrol members, the patrol leaders’ council and other key troop leaders are ready to meet.



### **Instructors' Note**

*There is no hands-on activity connected to this step of the process. Instructors should emphasize the importance of the input of all troop members in the planning process. The greater the role that boys have in planning the program, the greater their willingness to support it in the months to come.*

### **HOLD A TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING CONFERENCE**

The troop program planning conference is at the heart of determining a troop's activities for the coming six months or year. Those in attendance should be members of the patrol leaders' council, the Scoutmaster, and the assistant Scoutmasters.

### **Instructors' Note**

*The exploration of the troop program planning conference can be conducted in the form of a conference with participants in the roles of patrol leaders' council members and instructors serving as the senior patrol leader, Scoutmaster, and assistant Scoutmaster. The goal is provide participants with some of the experience of program planning while still staying within reasonable time limitations for this presentation. For the sake of brevity, step B can be mentioned but not carried out, and the dates needed for step I can be prepared ahead of time by instructors.*



## Troop Program Planning Conference Agenda

- A. Conduct a team-building activity or game that is fun and engages participants with one another.

### Instructors' Note

*A good game at this point is The Human Knot. It gets everyone up and moving, is always entertaining, and can be used to make the point that planning is the key to bringing order to complicated tangles.*

Session 3, slide 5



### The Human Knot

Select a flat area free of obstructions.

### The Problem and the Objectives

Patrol members (or other groupings of 6 to 8 participants) stand in a tight circle. They reach into the center of the circle with both hands and, with each hand, grasp the hand of another participant, thus forming a human knot.

Maintaining their grasps, participants untie the knot by moving over, under, and around one another. The utmost of cooperation will be required for participants to visualize the moves that must occur and then to carry them out.

### Tasks of the Instructor

- a. Explain the problem and objectives to each patrol. Clarify the rules before the patrol begins its problem-solving.
- b. Monitor the activities of patrol members.
- c. A team sometimes forms a knot that cannot be fully untied or reaches a point where it is physically impossible to continue a particular solution. In either case, the instructor may change the grasp of one or several participants, or may restart the challenge by having the patrol form a new human knot.
- d. After the patrol completes this task, encourage the members to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their problem-solving methods and to consider other ways they might have achieved their goal.

### Safety Precautions to Consider

Participants must move deliberately to minimize possibility of injury.

**B. Review the conference methods and objectives.**

**C. Develop troop goals.**

- Through discussion and the exploration of options, the group will decide on troop goals for the coming year. The Scoutmaster can lead a discussion that guides the group in coming up with a list of the goals they want to see the troop achieve in the coming year. The Scoutmaster may present a list of goals and encourage the group to expand upon them or adjust the list to better fit the needs of troop members.
- The patrol leaders' council will approve the troop goals by majority vote.

**D. Consider major calendar events for the coming year.**

(Participants can refer to the items they noted earlier on the *Troop Planning Work Sheet*.)

**E. Consider the program features for the coming year.**

With supportive coaching from the Scoutmaster, the senior patrol leader presents the list of potential monthly program features and then opens the floor to discuss each of those features. Consider the following questions:

- Will the program feature help the troop meet its goals?
- What opportunities for advancement does the feature present?
- Where would the feature best fit into the annual calendar?
- How can this feature be presented to make it exciting for everyone in a troop—new Scouts, those in regular patrols, and older Scouts? In some instances, these different categories of Scouts will be best served when a troop's monthly meetings lead toward two or three different big events, each tailored to the interests and needs of Scouts of a certain age group.
- In what ways will this activity incorporate the values of Scouting? (Is there a conservation project? A Good Turn? Are there opportunities in this plan for personal growth and development?)

**F. Vote on the list of program features.**

The senior patrol leader can organize and direct the voting process.

**G. Write each selected program feature in its place on the *Troop Planning Work Sheet*.**

(Teams can update the worksheets they have been using throughout this presentation.)





- H. Discuss and schedule the following, writing them in the proper slots of the **Troop Planning Work Sheet**:
- Boards of review (monthly or bimonthly)
  - Courts of honor (quarterly)
  - Recruitment nights (one in the fall, one in the spring; ongoing recruiting should occur year-round)
  - Webelos Scout graduation (January through March, depending on the Webelos den)
  - Any other troop activities that can be scheduled this far in advance (open)
  - Conservation and service projects (annual, biannual, and connected with other outdoor troop activities)
  - Troop junior leader training for the troop's junior leaders guided by the Scoutmaster and assistant Scoutmasters (annually or biannually, after each troop election)
- I. **The senior patrol leader can lead the group in a review of the Troop Planning Work Sheet.** Once the group has approved the final edition of the plan, it will be ready to present to the troop committee for its input and approval. The senior patrol leader and the Scoutmaster can bring the troop program planning conference to a conclusion.

### Instructors' Note

*Let participants know of a video resource they may wish to use as they prepare to conduct an annual program planning conference. The Troop Annual Planning Conference video, available at council service centers, is a thorough review of the program planning process. Portions of the video are structured to be shown to the patrol leaders' council as they are planning the troop's program.*

Session 3, slide 7

### Patrol Assignment

Ask each patrol to outline a troop program for the coming five months.



*This activity allows participants to go through the process of planning the program of an imaginary troop. They will use the resources normally available to Scoutmasters (Troop Planning Work Sheet; Troop Program Planning, Volumes I, II, and III; etc.).*

*Patrols should follow the planning procedure outlined in this session. For the sake of the exercise, they can assume that they did their homework (step one of program planning) earlier in this presentation when they wrote the dates of important events on their Troop Planning Work Sheets.*

*After the patrols have planned their programs and filled out their work sheets, ask them to consider elements of their programs that support and advance the three aims of Scouting—character development, citizenship training, mental and physical fitness. In addition, have them consider what ethical decision-making opportunities may arise as a result of the programs they have planned.*

*Invite several or all of the patrols (depending on group size) to present their programs to the entire group. Ask them to explain how the aims of Scouting are emphasized in their programs.*

#### **CONSULT WITH THE TROOP COMMITTEE**

The senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster present the proposed troop program to the troop committee and ask for their support. If the committee believes the plan should be revised, the senior patrol leader will consult again with the patrol leaders' council before changes are made.

The troop committee lends its support to the program plan after the youth leaders of the troop have developed it. The committee also has the right of refusal if it feels the program plan is unsafe or otherwise unwise for the troop to pursue.

(During its monthly meetings, the troop committee will review the troop program plan with the Scoutmaster and discuss how committee members can most appropriately provide support.)

The Scoutmaster delegates parts of the plan to assistant Scoutmasters to provide the necessary adult guidance and accountability.

#### **ANNOUNCE THE TROOP'S ANNUAL PLAN**

Distribute photocopies of the final plan to troop members, the parents or guardian of each Scout, members of the troop



committee, and representatives of the chartered organization. Be sure to include the chartered organization representative and other relevant individuals in the chartered organization (the organization's leader, secretary, building custodian, etc.).

### **PUBLICIZE THE TROOP'S ANNUAL PLAN**

Communicating the annual plan through a variety of outlets serves valuable purposes for the troop:

- It helps members plan for upcoming activities.
- It keeps parents, committees, and chartered organizations aware of the current and future activities of the troop.
- It serves as an effective recruitment tool.

There are a number of effective means for sharing information about troop activities:

- Troop newspaper
- Troop Web site
- Local council newsletter
- Publications of the chartered organization
- School publications/bulletin boards

### ***Monthly Troop Program Planning The Patrol Leaders' Council***

Implementing a long-range troop program requires regular attention to the plan so that everyone stays on board and everything is covered along the way. The way to do this is with a monthly meeting of the patrol leaders' council to review and fine-tune the annual plan and to assign to patrols and individuals the tasks that will lead to success.

The following steps will help a Scoutmaster ensure the best possible troop program:

1. Look over the troops' annual program plan and review information about the upcoming activities in *Troop Program Features*.
2. Attend a district roundtable meeting to discuss program ideas with adult leaders of other troops.
3. Review planning with any assistance Scoutmaster assigned to specific themes or activities.
4. With the senior patrol leader, draw up the agenda for the monthly patrol leaders' council meeting.
5. Assist the senior patrol leader in conducting the monthly patrol leaders' council meeting.
6. Using the agenda, the senior patrol leader can guide discussions to fill out the plans for each of the month's four

- weekly troop meetings as well as for any other troop events that will occur in the upcoming month.
7. The Scoutmaster may share information and ideas gleaned from the roundtable, from *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*, and from other resources.
  8. The patrol leaders' council can use *Troop Meeting Plan Sheets* to plan in detail each troop meeting. The senior patrol leader will assign responsibility for various parts of the meetings to different patrols. He can also ask members of the council for input on appropriate games, training activities, and other aspects of the meetings.
  9. Work out the details of any campout, service project, or other troop activity scheduled during the coming month.

### ***Sequencing of Adult Leader Meetings***

To help implement troop programs, Scoutmasters can rely on the advice and help of other adults. The following sequence of meetings provides Scoutmasters with the best information and opportunities for planning:

- Roundtable meetings. Usually held during the first or second week of the month, roundtables focus on the programs troops will be using in the following month.
- Troop committee meetings. In addition to providing expertise and experience, members of the troop committee can shoulder much of the burden of providing the troop with transportation, record keeping, and solutions to other situations within the troop.
- Meetings with assistant Scoutmasters.
- Monthly troop program planning at the patrol leaders' council meeting.

### ***The Weekly Review***

After each meeting or special activity of the troop, the senior patrol leader should hold a brief meeting of the patrol leaders' council to review the activity just completed, go over the plan for the next event on the troop's calendar, and modify any parts of the monthly plan that require adjustment.

Invite participants to think back to the first video of Session One—a Scoutmaster and a senior patrol leader reviewing a troop meeting plan in the minutes before the meeting is to begin. We've come full circle—moving from that discussion through the structure and leadership of the boy-led troop, through effective ways of working with boys, and through the planning of a troop's program until we have arrived back at the beginning of a meeting. Throughout it all, the boys have had significant roles in providing leadership and planning the activities of their troop. That's exactly how it should be.





### **Summary**

Remind participants that Scoutmasters who put energy into ensuring that the annual troop program planning process occurs and that the patrol leaders' council does monthly short-term planning will find that their jobs as troop leaders will be much easier than if this kind of planning does not happen. They will also discover that their responsibilities are simplified when they rely upon assistant Scoutmasters and the troop committee for assistance and guidance.

Finally, point out that everything discussed in this presentation can be found in BSA literature, specifically *The Scoutmaster Handbook*; *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*; and *Troop Program Resources*. Let participants know that when they are ready to conduct an annual planning conference, they may wish to use the BSA video *Troop Program Planning* (No. AV02V010). It is a great review of this presentation, and parts of the video are ideal to use with your patrol leaders' council.

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