

The American Legion and Scouting

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PURPOSE:

The American Legion and Scouts of America have enjoyed a working relationship for almost 100 years. This project is designed to educate our membership on how to start new units, sponsor Eagle Scout projects and work as commissioners.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The doctoral program strives to:

- 🏆 Outline the process of starting new units.
- 🏆 Give guidance on sponsoring Eagle Scout projects
- 🏆 Strengthen the commitment of the American Legion membership to service Scouting units as commissioners.

The American Legion and the Scouts of America

The American Legion's support for Scouts of America began at the Legion's first national convention in 1919. Today, Legion Posts sponsor more than 2,500 Scouting units across the country. This is natural for Legionnaires, who bring their service-learned skills and experiences as veterans to help build character and positive traits in our country's youth. Few other post activities generate more goodwill from the community.

The ability to interact with both young men and women who have a desire to enrich our community through service and the added desire to engage with our local political system, make the relationship between these two organizations the best opportunity to encourage these goals. During this paper, we will exam three different ways to participate within the Scouting program; hosting a unit, sponsoring an Eagle Scout project or being a unit commissioner.

Each opportunity presents challenges, but great rewards and memories that will last a lifetime are available as well. Challenges that should be considered with each is the proper and lengthy process of filing multiple forms, which can be mitigated by seeking assistance from someone that has experience with these activities.

Deciding to start a unit at the Post

When trying to decide if the Post is ready to start a unit, several questions must be asked. These should include whether or not the Post can financially support a unit and how much support the Post will be able to provide. Other than the chartering fee, the Post should not be expected to pay cost for the operations of the unit, as most units will do their own fundraising. Fundraising can be used to pay for uniforms, literature, camping

gear and trips. The expenses that will be paid by the fundraising will have to be decided by the unit as a whole. It should be noted that while the unit does the fundraising, these funds are placed in the Post account and earmarked for the unit.

Another question is concerning facilities to host the meetings. If the Post has a home, then someone just needs to reserve a room for the unit to meet in. Most units meet for 1 – 2 hours, once a week and some of their time will be spent outside doing activities. The Post will need to make sure that the areas inside and out that will be used by the unit are free from vehicle traffic and other non-Scouting related activities. When utilizing the inside of the Post, please make sure that clubroom activity is kept completely separate and away from the Scouting activity.

Some Post have concerns about the liabilities that might be incurred by chartering a Scouting unit. Scouts of America provides primary general liability insurance to cover the Post, its board, officers, Chartered Organization Representative, employees, and Scouting members and volunteers for **authorized** Scouting activities. Please make sure to speak with the Judge Advocate to ensure that there is proper insurance coverage for any incidents.

There are other questions that might be raised by the membership and the area Scout District Executive will be able to assist in answering those questions. The Scout District Executive will be a vital asset in starting the unit, along with those within the Post or District that have an extended working knowledge of the Scouting program.

A motion will then need to be brought to the Executive Board for approval to start a unit. Once the motion has been approved and membership has approved the Executive Board's minutes, the process of starting the unit may begin.

Recruiting Leadership and Youth

If there is someone within the Post or District that is familiar with the Scouting program, it would be advantageous to have them assist in identifying those adults within the Post or potential parents that would be willing to fill in the positions that are needed for a healthy unit. It would be helpful if these adults have participated in the Scouting program as either an adult or Scout.

The front of the application will have the words "adult application" on it and contains the mission of the BSA, along with some additional information regarding criminal background checks and youth protection.

The back of the first page, will have information about the Scouts of America, including the purpose of the BSA, an excerpt from Declaration of Religious Principle and Leadership requirements. There is a section that describes the approvals required based on level of involvement and information about *Scouting* magazine and *Boy's Life*. Qualifications to be an adult leader are described, as well as youth protection is discussed in this segment. Lastly, there is a segment that discusses how to fill out the application, along with certain codes and fee charts.

The Post Commander should have the roll as Executive Officer, and the Scouting Chair of the Post should hold the roll of Chartered Organization Representative. All

other positions can be filled by either Post members or parents of the Scouts. All adults will have the references checked before someone from the Post signs their application. Once all of the adults have been selected for their roles, training should begin and most can be done online.

Every pack is under the supervision of a pack committee. This committee consists of a minimum of three adults. One of these is designated as pack committee chair.

Obviously, with a committee of three, members must assume responsibility for more areas of service than with a committee of seven or more, where the responsibilities can be spread around. Although packs can and do operate with a minimum of three committee members, experience has shown that a larger committee generally ensures a stronger, more stable pack.

Their responsibilities include making recommendations to the chartered organization for final approval of pack leadership, coordinating the pack program with the program of the organization through the chartered organization representative, and supervising finances and equipment.

A strong pack committee will have individual members assigned to such areas as record keeping and correspondence, finances, advancement, training, membership and re-registration. The pack committee chair decides how the responsibilities should be divided and gives committee members assignments. Details of the various pack committee functions follow.

The pack committee chair must be appointed by the chartered organization and registered as an adult leader of the BSA, of good character, familiar with organization procedures, and with a deep concern for the pack's success. Preferably a member of the chartered organization, respected in the community, who shows the willingness and ability to be the Cubmaster's chief adviser. The pack committee chair's job is to: maintain a close relationship with the chartered organization representative, keeping this key person informed of the needs of the pack that must be brought to the attention of the organization or the district; conducting the annual pack program planning conference and pack meetings; and working with the chartered organization representative to provide adequate and safe facilities for pack meetings.

The pack secretary should be kept informed of all Cub Scouting literature, materials, records, and so as to help leaders function effectively; assist new den leaders by telling them what items are available; acquaint den leaders with contents of the Pack Record Book so they will know how to supply the information that should be recorded there; and maintain up-to-date information on membership, leadership, attendance, and advancement in the Pack Record Book.

The pack treasurer should help the pack committee and Cubmaster establish a sound financial program for the pack with a pack budget plan; open or maintain a bank account in the pack's name and arrange for all transactions to be signed by any two: Cubmaster, chair, secretary, or treasurer; approve all budget expenditures along with the pack committee chair; and collect dues from Cub Scout and Webelos den leaders at the pack leaders' meeting, while keeping up-to-date financial records.

The pack advancement chair should have a working knowledge of the Cub Scout and Webelos Scout advancement plans; help plan and conduct induction and advancement recognition ceremonies; promote the use of Cub Scout and Webelos Scout Den Advancement Charts to record advancement in the den and as an incentive for advancement; and collect Den Advancement Reports at pack leaders' meetings for use when ordering badges and insignia from the local council service center.

The pack training chair should have a working knowledge of the training plan for Cub Scout leaders; promote leaders' attendance at Cub Scout leader training courses, monthly roundtables, Cub Scout leader pow wows, and Quarterly Leadership Updates; and arrange for BSA Youth Protection training for Pack Leaders annually.

Pack Outings/Activities Chair should help the Cubmaster and Pack Committee plan and arrange for outdoor activities; arrange for property, fire, and tour permits when required; help arrange for equipment, as needed; know and carry out BSA outdoor program policy related to Cub Scouting and review all activities to ensure unit leaders comply with BSA policies in the Guide to Safe Scouting.

In general, the Cubmaster (sometimes referred to as the unit leader) is the guiding hand behind the work of other pack leaders and serves as program adviser to the pack committee- a recruiter, a supervisor, a director, a planner, a motivator of other leaders. Their responsibilities include working directly with the den leader coach, Tiger Cub coach, Cub Scout den leaders, Webelos den leaders, den chiefs, and pack committee chair and members to make sure all dens are functioning well; plan the den and pack programs

with the help of other leaders; lead the monthly pack meeting with the help of others; involve all dens in some way; and coordinate the total Cub Scout program in the pack. Everything the Cubmaster does is aimed at helping the individual boy. Securing strong leaders, planning den and pack activities, advising other leaders and parents. These are all ways in which the Cubmaster affects the kind of Cub Scouting each boy in the pack is offered. Although this job is an executive position, the Cubmaster has direct influence on the lives of individual boys by keeping in mind that boys can be made better through Cub Scouting.

Every pack should have at least one assistant Cubmaster. In most packs, two or three will be helpful, allowing the Cubmaster to divide the responsibilities. An assistant Cubmaster's responsibilities (as designated by the Cubmaster) are to assist the Cubmaster as needed; be ready to fill in for the Cubmaster, if necessary and participate in pack meetings.

The pack trainer will be responsible for orientation of new Cub Scouts' parents and new leaders in the pack, as well as for the delivery of Fast Start training. The trainer will also promote participation in district and council training opportunities, particularly basic training. Pack trainers may also have a role in delivering the new basic training for Cub Scout leaders. The pack trainer under the direction of the pack committee chairman, with guidance and assistance from the district Cub Scout training committee, the pack trainer helps leaders and parents understand purposes, policies and procedures of Cub Scouting. The pack trainer conducts, or facilitates, the training of leaders and parents in

the pack; provides coaching and training to help leaders learn to plan and conduct pack and den meetings and activities.

The Cub Scout den leader's responsibilities are to work directly with other den and pack leaders to ensure their den is an active and successful part of the pack; plan, prepare for, and conduct den meetings with the assistant den leader and den chief; attend the pack leaders' meetings; and lead the den at the monthly pack activity.

The assistant Cub Scout den leader shares the work of the Cub Scout den leader and may be called upon to serve as a parent contact or record keeper, or to handle other details of den operation.

Scout troops are designed differently, as they are Scout run units. While the adults are there for guidance, the Scouts who are at least 11 years old or in the 6th grade, run the troop and decide their activities. Troops are divided by groups called patrols that can range in the number of Scouts in each patrol. Troops are gender specific and do not combine male and females in one unit.

A typical Troop will consist of multiple adults, such as the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster is the adult leader responsible for the image and program of the troop. The Scoutmaster and his assistant Scoutmasters work directly with the Scouts. The Scoutmaster can be male or female but must be at least 21 years old. The Scoutmaster is selected and recruited by the troop committee and approved by the chartered organization representative.

The Scoutmaster should train and guide youth leaders, work with other responsible adults to bring Scouting to the youth and use the methods of Scouting to achieve the aims of Scouting. The Scoutmaster should also meet regularly with the patrol leaders' council for training and coordination in planning troop activities, attend all troop meetings or, when necessary, arrange for a qualified adult substitute and attend troop committee meetings.

There are other responsibilities of the Scoutmaster, which include conducting Scoutmaster conferences for all rank advancements; providing a systematic recruiting plan for new members; and see that they are promptly registered and delegating responsibility to other adults and troop leaders. The Scoutmaster should make it possible for each Scout to experience at least ten days and nights of camping each year; participate in council and district events; build a strong program by using proven methods presented in Scouting literature; and conduct all activities under qualified leadership, safe conditions, and the policies of the chartered organization and the Scouts of America.

The Scoutmaster, with the assistance of the troop committee, recruits assistant Scoutmasters to help operate the troop. Each assistant Scoutmaster is assigned specific duties and reports to the Scoutmaster. They also fulfill the required two-deep leadership standards set by the Scouts of America. There must be at least two adults present at any Scout activity. An assistant Scoutmaster may be 18 years old, but at least one in each troop should be 21 or older so he or she can serve in the Scoutmaster's absence. A troop should recruit as many assistant Scoutmasters as possible. Many successful troops have three or more.

The troop committee is the troop's board of directors and supports the troop program. The troop committee should ensure that quality adult leadership is recruited and trained, in case the Scoutmaster is absent, a qualified assistant Scoutmaster is assigned.

The troop committee should also advise the Scoutmaster on policies relating to Scouting and the chartered organization, support leaders in carrying out the program, oversee the financial operation and health of the troop and be responsible for finances, adequate funds, and disbursements in line with the approved budget plan.

Members of the troop committee should include the Chartered Organization Representative (COR) who is a member of the chartered organization, serves as head of "Scouting department" in the organization and maintains a close liaison with the troop committee chair. The COR should also recruit other adult leaders, serve as liaison between the troop and the chartered organization and assist with unit re-chartering.

The unit chair is the member of the committee who organizes the committee so that all functions are delegated, coordinated and completed, maintains a close relationship with the chartered organization representative and the Scoutmaster and will call, lead and promote attendance at monthly troop committee meetings and any special meetings that may be called.

Other members of the committee are; the unit secretary who is responsible for keeping minutes of meetings and send out committee meeting reports; the treasurer who pays bills on the recommendation of the Scoutmaster and the authorization of the troop committee, maintains checking and savings accounts and keeps adequate records in the

Troop/Team Record Book; the Outdoor/Activities Coordinator who is responsible for securing permission to use camping sites, serves as transportation coordinator and secures tour permits for all troop activities; and the advancement coordinator who encourages Scouts to advance in rank, arranges quarterly troop boards of review and courts of honor and develops and maintains a merit badge counselor list.

Other positions in the troop committee can include the Chaplain, training coordinator, equipment coordinator, membership coordinator and the Scout parents unit coordinator.

As it is decided what role each person will take, they will need to fill out an application for that role. If they are willing to hold multiple positions within the unit, then each position requires another application. There is only one application fee per adult, it does not matter how many different roles they take on.

Crews are similar to troops with the exception that they are gender integrated and must be at least 14 years of age. The adult leader is there for guidance, and the crew decides their activities with the support of the adults. Any unit must have a minimum of five youth to be chartered. Working with the district executive can help in determining which type of unit will work best for the Post.

The first training that all adults will need to complete will be the youth protection training (YPT). This training is done online and is required of all adults involved in Scouting. Once they have completed the training, they will not have to take the training for another 2 years. All adults that are registered with a unit must have current YPT training when re-chartering the unit for the next year.

Recruiting children for the unit

As most Posts have a working relationship with our local schools, due to working either Boys State (the American Legion program for high school juniors interested in government), Oratorical (the American Legion program for students interested in competing over topics of the US Constitution) or flag etiquette, it should not be difficult to do a “rally” at the local schools, if they don’t have a scouting unit at their school. The Post can also recruit from the local churches, if they don’t have a Scouting unit. Having the local church leaders involved will assist the unit when the Scouts have certain programs like the religious emblems that they need to complete.

A “rally” is a recruiting effort at the school, where the students receive information about the new unit that will be started at the Post, or possibly school, if there is not a home post. During the rally, the students should be informed about the initial meeting that will be held the permanent meeting place for the unit. This meeting will be with the students and their parents to inform them of how the program works and what is required of them.

There are several different types of units that the Post can sponsor, such as a Cub Scout pack (male/female/mixed), Scout troop (male or female) and crew (crews can be integrated). The Cub Scout pack is separated into dens by age group.

No matter what type of unit that the Post decides on, all Scouts will have to fill out a youth application if they are under the age of 18. The youth application looks similar to the adult application but has the words, “youth application” across the top with the logos beneath.

The inside of the application is self explanatory for the most part, please make sure that the parent or guardian signs the applications after they fill out their information. The Charter Organization Representative or someone acting on their behalf will then fill in the bottom portion, again, remembering to sign the bottom before the application is turned in. When accepting the application, the Post will have a choice of either collecting the registration fee for the Scout, or the Post may decide to pay the fee themselves.

Responsibilities of the Post

The Post will also be responsible for additional items that will assist in keeping with the Scouting program and objectives. The Post should utilize Scouting to further the American Legion's aim and values for youth, and accomplish the objectives of promoting youth character development, career skill development and a strong commitment to community service. The youth should have vast knowledge and respect for patriotism and military and veteran recognition. Lastly, working with the Post Chaplain, they will develop a faith-based youth ministry.

Based on the principle of duty to God and country, Scouting offers a way for a Legionnaire and other dedicated volunteers of the Post and the community to bring fun, adventure, and leadership skills to young people, and to provide effective character building, citizenship training, and personal fitness opportunities for youth.

Scouting encourages each child to strive for their personal best, a lesson that will help them achieve success as they work through the scouting program – and throughout their

adult life. Scouting activities encourage character development, physical coordination, family unity, and enthusiasm for learning. Scouting helps children develop a sense of teamwork, achievement, self-confidence, and respect for others. Learning to master new skills helps the Scout realize their own abilities and discover that their can-do attitude is the first sign of success in any endeavor.

The Post will be expected to conduct the Scouting program consistent with Scouting rules, regulations and policies, which can be found on [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org). This would include not using the program to pursue objectives of a political or social nature. As the chartered organization representative, a Legionnaire will be the point of contact between the unit and the council and serve as a voting member of the council.

Assistance from the local council

The local council will respect the aims and objectives of the American Legion and provide those resources that the Post request. Resources that will be made available include program training, program resources and support services. While the council will perform criminal background checks on all adults submitted by the Post, it is strongly suggested that the Post also perform their own.

The council also provides camping opportunities for the Scouts within the unit. This is done with camps that are ran by the Scouts of America and can be used by the unit or through events that individual Scouts can attend at their facilities, such as “Fun with Family”, “Webelos Coyote Extreme” and “Resident Camp”.

Finalizing the paperwork

Once the Post has adults and youth selected and applications completed, the Post will need to complete the new unit application. This will be a time that the Post may request their unit number; if the number has been assigned to another unit, another request can be made for a different number. When filling out the New-Unit application under “Full name of chartered organization”, please use American Legion Post ##### (ex. American Legion Post 1234). Type of organization is “Veteran Service Organization”. Again, the Post Commander, or his designee, will be the Executive Officer. The Post will also need to be prepared to pay the chartering fees and fees for each adult and child who has filled out an application.

Once the final paperwork is completed with the assistance of the District Executive and will be finalized with the presentation of the unit charter. The Post should be assigned a unit commissioner who will be the direct contact between the unit and the district and council. This person is vital for providing assistance when needed and should be the person to present the charter to the Post.

Sponsoring an Eagle Scout Project

When trying to determine if the Post should sponsor an Eagle Scout project, the first question should be what type of project the Post wants to sponsor. There are many different types of projects that can be done. Projects can benefit the Post, the local community, a school or local ecological area. Whatever the project, the Post will be the beneficiary and will be listed as such on all paperwork. Before starting the next step, if the project will be

for an area outside of the Post, please make sure to get with the organization(s) that will be involved and get their approval and support.

The Post will also need to decide if and how much they will be sponsoring the project. Funds can be donated by the Post and the Scout can raise funds as well. It will be beneficial to the Scout if the Post prepares a letter that the Scout can present to potential donors, including local businesses, such as Home Depot. Some businesses have policies and programs to donate specific amounts for these projects. The Scout can be assisted by being directed to the appropriate company and contact for these donations. Most Home Depots will sponsor \$300 per project, but if they are approached by several Scouts during a specific time frame, this amount will be less.

Working with the Scout

Once the Post has decided what projects need to be completed and how much the Post will sponsor, they will need to recruit a Scout looking to complete their Eagle Scout project. The Post should start by reaching out to the local Scouting Council. Providing a flyer that list what the projects are, the expectations and other requirements can help in finding a Scout to take the project. Once a Scout contacts the Post about doing the project, a meeting will need to take place between the Post, the Scout and his guardian to discuss in detail the project and parameters.

It is suggested that both the Legionnaire and the Scout each take very concise notes and follow up the meeting with an email confirming those details. Follow up dates should be established, as the Legionnaire will need to meet at least once more before the project

begins and several times during and after completion of the project. During one of the next meetings and before the project begins, the Scout will need to complete the initial portion of their project paperwork and obtain the beneficiaries' signature.

The form will be filled out by the Scout and all sections should be completed prior to signing. Please make sure that all information is correct, to prevent any delays. The order in which the form is signed is not mandatory, but it is recommended that all signatures obtained in the order on the form. When signing this form, the Scout should give the Post a copy of "Navigating the Eagle Scout Service Project, Information for Project Beneficiaries." This should be read as there are additional tips on working with the Scout and what the Post is and isn't responsible for.

The Post may choose to financially support part or all of the project and this should be indicated on the form. Fundraising for the project will be done by the Scout and should not exceed the cost of the project. If there are funds that are left over after the completion of the project, they should be given to the Post's Children and Youth account. No funds should be given to the troop. Fundraising should not be the primary reason for the project or fundraising portion of the project.

Once the project is completed, the Scout will bring his final paperwork "Eagle Scout Project Handbook Project Report" for a signature of approval. If all the reasonable expectations have been met, then a Legionnaire will sign the document. If, there is something that is missing on the project, or the Post is not satisfied that the Scout met their goal, then the Scout should be informed as to what is missing. The Scout should then be

given the opportunity to fix the issue. This is not a time to add additional request or changes, but to complete what was agreed on paper between both parties. When signing this form, the beneficiary must sign the form first, as this let's everyone know that the project was completed to their satisfaction.

Once the Scout has been approved for his Eagle Scout rank, he will probably send an invitation to the Post for someone to attend his Court of Honor. It is helpful if the Post presents a certificate and a small gift to the Scout as a thank you for their work and dedication not only to the project, but to their accomplishment of obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout. This not only shows the Post's appreciation; but can be a great recruiting tool for other Scouts within that unit to do other Eagle Scout projects for the Post.

The Unit Commissioner

So far, two ways have been discussed on how a Legionnaire and the Post can become more involved with the Scouting program, starting a unit or supporting an Eagle Scout project. The third option is to volunteer to work as a unit commissioner. These are the men and women who work with individual units to make sure they have all the tools and guidance needed for a healthy and successful unit. They are the liaison between the district and Scouting units.

Commissioners keep regular contact with their units and note any weaknesses that they see, providing possible remedies and the resources that might help to correct the weakness. The commissioner is considered successful when the unit is able to deliver the Scouting ideals to their units. Just as the American Legion has programs and goals, so too

does the Scouting community. These goals include the areas of membership, training and awards earned.

Commissioner training is available on-line or in person. In-person training is available at various time throughout the year. Training dates are posted on the council training page.

There are also other tools that can be used to track the success of a unit and determine what, if any, needs the unit might have. Training is provided on these tools and will assist in developing the unit service plan. Along with these tools, the commissioner is provided with monthly communications from the Council and National commissioner's groups via emailed newsletters titled "Square Knots Notes" (SHAC council) and "The Commissioner" (BSA Commissioner)

Conclusion

We have listed three different ways that the Post and individuals within the American Legion can get involved with the Scouting program. Each program is readily and easily obtainable with the guidance of this paper and some assistance from the local Scout Executive. The amount of time and effort that is put into any of these is dependent upon the desire to make the program a success and the attention to detail.

The American Legion sponsors Scouting Units throughout the United States and some Posts have as many as 4 different units. Some Legion Posts have enjoyed the assistance of many Eagle Scout projects and have collaborated with their local schools, churches and other organizations to accomplish over 20 Eagle Scout projects in just a few

years. While we have seasoned Scouters within the American Legion who spend their time as District, Assistant District and Unit Commissioners, guiding those units through the year with great and memorable programs.