

ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION  
OF A RURAL SCOUTING  
DISTRICT

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## FOREWARD

This is an attempt to bring to light a number of possibilities in the operation and administration of rural or sparsely populated areas where scouting units are small in size and scattered in distance and travel time.

It should be noted that these possibilities are not conclusions and should be used as guides to improve existing conditions. The author has had numerous years of experience in very large geographic and populated districts as well as districts of very small numbers of units, and large geographic areas. During these years it has been found scouting can function well in any district of whatever size and population if there are enough adults interested in helping the youth. We only have to dedicate ourselves to the time necessary to maintain and improve the scouting program and to instill the spirit of scouting into both boys and adult leaders. This appears to be an easy solution to any of our problems dealing with the growth in quantity and quality of the scouting program but most of the time it isn't as easy as it appears.

The material herein enclosed will deal with the many facets that cause the scouting units to function and bring good health programs to the boys. It is hopeful that you may find the perfect solution to your individual district problems in the following pages so you too can have a well operating district with healthy growing units reaching all that care to be called SCOUT.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following publications are helpful in District operation and activities. They are available from the Boy Scouts of America, P.O. Box 175, Bellwood, Illinois 60104. Write for current price list.

ACTIVITIES	ACTIVITIES and CIVIL SERVICE		
Boy Scouting	Boy Scout Parent/Leader Orientation	LB3082	
	First Aid Contests	LB3703	
	Guide for Recommending Merit Badge Counselors	LB6532	
	Merit Badge Counselling	LB6517	
	Merit Badge Pamphlets by Name		
	Organizing a Boy Scout Troop	LB6515	
	Organizing a Unit	LB3610	
	School Night to Join Scouting	LB7255	
	Camping Guide	LB3081A	
	Camporee Guide	LB3701	
	Advancement Guidelines	LB3087A	
	COUNCIL & DISTRICT	Council and District Plan Book	LB6032A
		The District	LB3079A
Index of Challenge		LB3659	
Membership/Relationships		LB3080B	
Recruiting Leadership		LB3074	
Cub Scouting		Pow Wow Guide	LB3840A
Exploring	Exploring	LB6627	
	Exploring Techniques-Post organization	LB6623	
Training	Den Chief Training Conference	LB6450	
	Show and Do for Adult & Troop Leaders	LB6551	

Other publications produced by BSA can be found in publication "Scouting's Library of Literature" No. 70-278 obtainable at no charge at your council service center.

## Single District Administration

The BSA has from time to time changed the titles and numbers of offices or positions that need to be filled on a district staff and/or committee. As of this writing the following positions are included on a typical district committee:

Chairman  
Program  
Finance  
Membership

Even though these are the only positions listed, it should be obvious that other positions could be created and filled to accomplish your district needs and goals. It is important that those other members on the district committee, which include Members at Large and Scouting Coordinators, be given responsibilities which could be special projects and committee assignments. The coordination of all those on the district committee working together is of the utmost importance.

One of the main weaknesses of district committees is the failure to assign specific responsibilities to the committee members. The Scouting Coordinators are

required to be there to represent their units and to be a part of the total functions of the committee. They should be assigned to specific committees so as to provide the support that the committee needs.

The Program Chairman is responsible for most of the activities in the district. How a district functions depends a great deal on the efforts of the program committee. Just about any activity outside the scouting unit is dependent on this committee. Of course some activities are coordinated between the other committees and the Commissioner's staff. In small districts much of the activity is created by more than just the program committee and then carried out with the entire district committees working together with the unit leaders.

The program committee is generally responsible for the following functions:

- Camporees
- Cub Scout Field Day
- Canoe trips
- Show & Do
- Pow Wows
- Overnight hikes
- Swimming weekends
- County Fairs

and any other similar activities.

The Finance Chairman and his committee are responsible for the finances in the district. They also work the Sustaining Membership Campaign each year and any other finance projects. Most efforts in finance are coordinated through the council finance committee.

The Membership Chairman has a never ending job. The person having this responsibility has the most challenging position in the district committee. He or she must be creative, resourceful, innovative, positive attitude, like people, and have the spirit of scouting.

The Membership Chairman with his committee has the responsibility of establishing new units in the district. This means they have to take surveys in schools to find boys interested in the scouting program in their age groups. When it is found the potential is there, then it becomes necessary to get the adult leadership.

These leaders should be found among the parents of the boys if possible. Other leaders come from the community. It can be approached by finding community



leaders who know their people or if it becomes necessary by "door to door" campaigns. It is important to find persons who can work well with the youth.

## Single District Operations/Activities

District operations and activities are those functions which cannot be done by a single scouting unit. They include all Cub Scout and Boy Scout units.

The following functions are examples that can be accomplished through the District Committee:

- SME Campaigns
- Membership Drives
  - Open House
  - School Night
- Monitoring Advancement Quality/Quantity
- Eagle Boards of Review
- Merit Badge Councillor Lists
- Assisting District Commissioner
- Scout Week
- District Awards Banquet

Sustaining Member Enrollment is a necessary campaign to help raise funds for council financing. It is a short campaign and is chaired by either the Finance Chairman or someone appointed by the District Chairman.

Membership Drives are usually held in the early fall after school starts. School nights are held at

various schools where scouting units hold meetings or in the vicinity of a scouting unit. The membership chairman may choose this method also to establish a new scouting unit. Normally surveys are taken in the school before hand to establish statistics to help formulate a good school night program.

Open House programs are usually held by a scouting unit at their meeting place during a regular meeting time. It can also be held on the same night in conjunction with a district wide open house of all units. It can also be held in one central place with all scouting units participating.

The Advancement program is a very vital part of scouting. It is the culmination of many parts of scouting. This is the area that needs monitoring by the District Advancement Chairman and District Commissioners. If advancement is progressing at a good pace, both quantity and quality, then you can be sure that the scouting program is in a healthy state. It is a good gage to watch.

The District Eagle Board of Review is made up of at least three persons. The Chairman is appointed by the District Chairman and the members are usually assigned from the District Committee.

Merit Badge Councillor lists are established by the District Committee. It is a vrey tedious job to originate one. It is important to maintain the list once it is established. A committee is appointed by the District Chairman and they are expected to keep this list up to date. Most communities have resources for most of the required merit badges and those that are normally acquired. For those of a special nature it is sometimes hard to find someone who is an expert. The schools in the area have many teachers who are good prospects.

The District Commissioner is responsible for the scouting program being carried out in the scouting units. It is necessary at times that the District Committee assist him in carrying out his duties. As he and his assistants go about their visits to the units they find problems that need correcting. Many

of these problems can be solved with the help of the committee.

The District Commissioner is responsible for district round tables through his Round Table Commissioner.

The Commissioner's complete functions can be found in other publications.

Scout Week each year is a highlight in scouting. There are many activities that can be arranged and carried out by the district committee. Small towns are great for the boys to participate in the functions of city or county government for a day. This can be done by each troop sending a representative to a district wide caucus where a mayor and other town officials are elected to office by the boys for an hour or day. These boy officials then take office and perform the duties of that office. It is a great experience for these boys to see how government works. Good Turns can be planned for this week. Litter clean-up in the community and conservation projects, for example.

A District Awards Banquet held each year is a very rewarding function of the district committee. Many recognitions can be accomplished at this time. Among those are outstanding troop/post/pack, scout leaders, cub leader/post advisor of the year, District Award of Merit, recognizing the Eagle Scouts of the year and other special awards.

## Multi-District Operations/Activities

Multi-District Operations should be limited to only those functions that cannot be fully developed by the single district such as Boards of Review, merit badge counselling, and training courses when there may be a shortage of help to carry out these responsibilities.

Most small districts find it difficult to enlist the help of qualified individuals to cover all the merit badges. There are some merit badges that do not have qualified/experienced individuals available for counselling. By having a larger area to search out these qualified individuals, it improves the quality of counselling in all the districts. A joint effort between the districts will produce a Merit Badge Counsellors list for multi-district use.

Although it is only necessary for a district to have an Eagle Board, it would be important if a Board could be made up of different individuals from each district and have enough members so that a few wouldn't have to be available and do it all.

All training courses require qualified persons who are familiar with the scouting program that they will be instructing. It has been found that small districts do not have enough individuals so qualified and who are willing to give all the time required to instruct. Although most councils have enough trainers to man these courses they are not always close enough for everyone to conveniently attend. Adjoining districts can put their resources together and do this with many more trainees in attendance. It is important that the training be convenient and that it be well publicized. Training is much better when more are in attendance. Much of scouting training is done through the resources available among the trainees.

The district can be helpful to their boy scouts by furnishing to the local library or libraries a complete merit badge library. The cost of this library could be shared or completely donated by a local business or individual. This way the boys wouldn't have to buy each pamphlet as they need it. There should be one committee member assigned the responsibility for monitoring the library on a periodic basis.



Multi-district activities should be those that enhance the overall scouting program. These may vary at times and aren't necessarily done each and every year. The following are some examples:

- Camporees
- Cub Scout Field Day
- Canoe Trips
- Show & Do
- Pow Wows
- Special Overnight Hikes
- Swimming Weekends
- County Fairs

Camporees are by far better when there are many units in attendance. The scope of a larger camporee makes the activities much more appealing to all scouts. The competition in scouting skills, camp crafts, games, and other events gives all scouts a better quality of participation.

Cub Scout Field Day is by far better when a greater number of dens can compete. There can be more events planned and you can also draw in more help in the form of resources and Boy Scouts to aid in manning stations and judging competition.

Canoe trips don't necessarily need to have a larger number to participate or more units in attendance, but it does help to have others in other

districts to learn the skills and provide a different group to participate from year to year.

Show & Do's are really a training function more than a regular activity. There really is a need for Show and Do's to have many on the staff in order to man all stations and do other administrative functions. Since there are so many required to put one on, a small district will use so many of these available leaders that there are few left to receive the training. If each district provides a few for staff, who are more proficient, then the trainees will receive training of a much better quality.

Pow Wows require much of the same numbers as Show and Do's so that they too need more people to draw from for both trainers and participants.

Special hikes could consist of training type outings when more people can participate in well-prepared sessions.

Swimming weekends are great. These can be held during the entire year if indoor pools are available. Community colleges are a good place to seek assistance. It is sometimes possible to have room and meals available on campus on these occasions. There

can be training for aquatic merit badges and other requirements during entire weekends or be a few weekends with competition between district swim teams.

County fairs are always a great place for scouting. The story of scouting can be placed in front of many people. Displays of cubbing, scouting, and exploring, as well as pioneering projects built and demonstrated for all to see. All types of activities can be demonstrated such as first aid, unusual cooking, musical entertainment, scout skills, merit badges, home safety and many more. This is also a good place to recruit new boys into the program. An effort of some type should be undertaken to recruit boys by inviting them to meetings close to their homes.

## WHY MEETINGS

It has been noted, through conversations and surveying those individuals who normally participate in most of the district and council activities and functions, that they expect to receive something when they attend these functions. What they receive may be in the form of hand out materials, information important to their scouting job or unit, or are there to impart such information to others.

In the same vein we need to look at why we don't have many people attend any of the meetings that they should. We need to make these meetings meaningful enough for them to attend. Meetings are to impart information and need to be short enough so as to not drag out too long until those individuals get impatient and give it up. There are many in your rural districts who have to travel many miles and some may spend as much as 4 to 5 hours in meeting and travel time. If your meetings aren't beneficial to these participants then you won't see them very often or at all.

## STATISTICS

The following pages are statistics gathered for three districts which have for the past two years combined those activities that would better fulfill the needs common to each of them.

They have only combined on an activity basis. Each have retained their identities and all other functions that a district normally does. They have assisted each other in many ways other than those listed but the decision to combine efforts in activities and training became necessary to increase the quality of the scouting and cubbing programs.

As of this writing, the results have been well worth the time and effort.

TOTALS-YOUTH AND UNITS

DIST	(1)	TIGERS	CUBS	SCOUTS	EXP.	TOTAL YOUTH	PACKS	TROOPS	POSTS	TOTAL UNITS
JAN	85	5	88	75	49	217	6	5	1	12
JULY	85	5	68	53	0	126	5	5	0	10
JAN	86	0	94	53	81	228	6	5	2	13
JULY	86	0	70	55	79	204	6	5	2	13
JAN	87	1	110	55	52	218	7	5	2	14
JULY	87	0	61	40	36	137	6	3	2	11
JAN	88	23	157	44	67	291	7	3	2	12
AVER	1985	3	86	66	50	205	5	5	1	11
	1986	-	88	46	65	199	6	5	2	13
	1987	8	107	44	35	194	6	4	2	12
DIST	(2)									
JAN	85	12	83	84	19	198	3	6	1	10
JULY	85	12	42	70	0	124	3	5	0	8
JAN	86	10	71	84	7	172	3	6	1	10
JULY	86	0	66	74	7	147	3	6	1	10
JAN	87	19	149	87	7	262	3	6	1	10
JULY	87	0	41	67	4	112	2	6	1	9
JAN	88	21	124	73	4	222	3	5	1	9
AVER	1985	11	62	66	12	151	3	6	1	10
	1986	8	81	78	7	174	3	6	1	10
	1987	13	107	65	4	189	3	6	1	10
DIST	(3)									
JAN	85	10	111	52	0	173	5	5	0	10
JULY	85	10	102	34	0	146	5	5	0	10
JAN	86	0	180	39	16	235	5	5	1	11
JULY	86	0	90	45	16	151	5	5	1	11
JAN	87	20	115	61	0	196	5	5	0	10
JULY	87	23	70	46	0	139	5	4	0	9
JAN	88	30	140	55	0	225	5	4	0	9
AVER	1985	8	119	37	0	164	5	5	0	10
	1986	6	115	47	16	184	5	5	1	11
	1987	25	75	48	0	148	5	4	0	9

The statistics shown do not reflect any significant change, if any, in the combined activities of the 3 districts monitored. It was not expected to be much of a change in such a short time.

The change has been in the attitude and spirit that has been shown by the boys themselves. They seem to take more interest in the activities because of the greater numbers involved. The camporees have shown a much larger attendance in numbers of troops as well as boys.

One of the most significant signs that this is an improvement is in the spirit of the adults. More adults are getting out and involved. All districts are showing increases of adult attendance at combined meetings and also in their own district activities. District meetings are improving because of more involvement.

For some years round tables have been nonexistent. They are now being held on a 3 district basis once a quarter. The attendance has been steadily improving.

DIST (1)	BOBCAT	WOLF	BEAR	WEB	ARROW OF LIGHT	TEND.	2nd	1st	STAR	LIFE	EAGLE	MERIT BADGE.
1985	48	3	4	6	0	11	4	3	3	3		108
1986	29	7	1	2	3	6	7	4	3	2	1	72
1987	75	35	15	13	5	13	7	5	4	3	2	82
AVER 86/87	52	21	8	8	4	10	7	5	4	3	2	77

DIST (2)

1985	27	14	9	13	2	14	19	8	8	4	4	185
1986	63	7	7	0	0	17	8	11	3	5	4	127
1987	71	35	14	8	6	11	11	17	4	2	4	120
AVER 86/87	67	21	11	4	3	14	10	14	4	4	4	124

DIST (3)

1985	95	35	13	3	10	0	0	3	0	0	1	1
1986	37	30	4	8	5	5	4	1	0	2	0	7
1987	80	14	13	2	0	16	8	9	4	0	1	90
AVER 86/87	59	22	9	5	3	11	6	5	2	1	1	49

The advancement program has shown improvement in most areas over 1985. The multi-district activities began in 1986 and by 1987 the training and planned programs began. The figures on the advancement chart show that there has been more activity in the Boy Scout program. The Cub Scout program appears to be moving up also.



## THE SCOUTING CHALLENGE

Scouting is a challenge. In these rural districts it is a greater challenge. You must be flexible in your approach to each situation. There may not be an answer readily available to you. Innovation becomes primary. By being flexible you can adapt to reality. Look at each situation in detail. Set your guidelines. Don't be so rigid in details that changes can't be made as you go along. You must be in step with your people. Don't set rigid standards that will alienate them. The most successful efforts are made by those who have a close personal feeling with those they are working with. "Walking in another person's shoes", brings you closer to that person. This will aid in the success of any scouting group. Most of all be sincere with each and everyone you associate with and the operation of your district will be much more successful.

Good Scouting

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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To: Faculty of the Piedmont-Appalachian Cluster College of Commissioner Science.

From: ROBERT D. LITTEN

Thesis: ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF A RURAL DISTRICT

This is to certify that all of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF COMMISSIONER SCIENCE have been fulfilled and required thesis has been approved by the faculty and I wish to be a candidate for degree at the MAY 1988 commencement.

Approved:	date:	Signed:
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2. <i>Bob Justice, Youth Exec.</i>		<i>4/15/88</i>
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