

Membership Fireside Chat Q&A

June 10, 2021

Membership Growth Plan Questions

Q: How much of membership growth will focus on restoration or creation of UNITS vs. number of youths? In other words, is the focus on growing existing units (mega-units) or creation of lots of little ones?

A: The emphasis is on growing membership. It is easier to get more youth into a thriving unit that is open right now than into a unit that is not meeting. If you have areas that don't have units then you need to get units in those areas. We need to bring back units that were thriving before COVID so that youth in those units will return. We should also follow up with families in those units that folded to get them into another unit. Your plan of focus should reflect your council's needs – if you need more units start more units, if current units have capacity then get more youth into those units, if you have a lot of units that did not recharter then make your efforts toward getting those units up and running again.

Q: Please discuss the anticipated reformatting to the business aspects of new unit formation. The current arrangement presents some barriers to entry. An example would be the unavailability of BeAScout.Com and the electronic application capabilities during new unit formation.

A: Good news, we are about to have "Coming Soon" unit capabilities in BeAScout. This will allow new units to have pins on BeAScout and allow youth applications online. Once a unit has the COR registered and in place the unit can also elect to accept adult applications online if the council has that feature enabled. This should be available soon, so watch for the announcement.

Q: How can Packs prepare Cubs to be enthused and successful in not just joining Scouts BSA but thriving in the first year? What are some year-to-year retention tools that Troops could use with both Scouts AND their parents? Does Retention become part of a leadership role for an older Scout?

A: In the new Cub Scout handbooks – Arrow Of Light year is all about preparing Cubs to be enthusiastic and successful as they move to a troop. The adventures they participate in that year focus on Scouting skills and camping as well as meeting troops so that they find the best fit and can bridge to the troop in February/March so they are in the troop long enough to acclimate before they go to summer camp (it allows the parents to also acclimate to the troop so they feel comfortable sending their child to summer camp.)

The best retention tool a Troop has is an active and fun program. This includes having trained youth leadership and assigning trained youth to be Patrol Guides if the patrol is all new Scouts. If the unit mixes ages ensure that the Patrol Leaders understand how to include these youth in patrol decisions so that they learn the patrol method and feel they are also a valued member of that patrol. The Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters should also ensure that regular SPL meetings are happening and that the SPL has planned the year and has activities assigned for each meeting so that meetings are used for skill building and not a waste of time for youth. Youth will stay if they feel welcome, valued, and have fun activities at meeting and camp outs.

For new parents, the troop needs to be welcoming and hold a new parent orientation meeting so they can meet the leaders (including the SPL) and understand how the SPL and youth leadership works. Youth leadership will look like chaos to these parents, so they need to understand how it works and why it is important in the program and in the process of teaching their child leadership. The troop might also consider having a Court of Honor, or some other less formal troop get together that includes all families in their troop so that the new parents can meet other parents who are more experienced in the troop. This can help the new parents feel like they are part of the larger troop community and they can make friends with other parents in the troop. Its harder to leave when you feel a connection to the troop and other parents. It also gives them the opportunity to observe older youth who have been

in the program and recognize the leadership capabilities these youth have developed through participating in Scouting.

*Q: Where is the STEM or STEAM program in the program lineup?*** What about STEM Scouts; does this program fall under LFL?*

A: The STEM Scouts program is currently in pilot stage right now.

Q: Is national pushing as part of fall recruitment a Cub Scout recovery plan to individually call every cub who dropped because of COVID and reinvite them pack into BSA

A: Yes – councils are actually making those calls right now so that those youth do not miss a summer of fun since resident and day camps are opening across the country. These calls are focusing on restarting units or finding new units for those whose units have folded.

Q: The Welcome message is SO important for retention. How are we using the New Member Coordinator position?

A: Our research shows that a welcoming atmosphere is essential to keeping these new families in the unit. And, while the New Member Coordinator is one way to do that, we have heard from many units that they have not embraced this position because they are trying to fill other leadership positions. Their solution has been to make everyone a part of the welcome committee – they rotate welcome duties at their pack events with each den being a “host” that greets people as they come in.

Q: Can you address girls joining Scouting? I know that there is a goal to increase girls in Scouting. What is your strategy?

A: The best strategy right now is to increase the number of girls and young women in units that are already formed if the unit is small to medium sized. If the units are large, then the council should consider adding other girl troops or additional family packs in that area. Most parents still do not realize that the Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA are open to girls, so getting out in the community to talk with parents is also essential to grow these units. In recent research conducted with parents of youth who were not in the program, most did not know that girls could be in the program and parents of both boys and girls said they did not know if Scouting was in their community. Our best recruiters are the families who are already in the program, getting them to recommend Scouting to other parents and having youth invite their friends to take part in the program are the most effective ways to grow the unit.

Q: You have mentioned all kinds of non-traditional kinds of units, but no mention at all (or pictures on marketing info) of youth with special needs.

A: Marketing to and inclusion of youth with different abilities has been a focus of the Special Needs Committee. They have some new marketing pieces that can be used in recruitment which are on the Marketing Brand Center www.Scouting.org/Brandcenter

Q: What are we doing to help with councils with no school access?

A: School access has always been an issue with many of our councils. For those thinking about access to elementary schools and Cub Scouts, the upcoming June 25th Cub Chat Live! will focus on building school relationships. Individual units should be *building a relationship* with the individual schools of the youth in their pack:

- Speak with the school principal or representative and ask, “What can we do to help here at the school?” Offer specifics on how the youth at the school and in Cub Scouts can help around the school. Providing a helping hand is foundational to building a relationship. Do not ask for anything, simply offer to help and then follow through. You will need to do this multiple times. Having school access eventually becomes a conversation, not a request.
- Check out the [Adopt-a-School](#) program for something more formal to help guide school access.

Q: Why are we not talking about promoting membership in the teenage age group, i.e. Venturing and Sea Scouts?

A: The focus this year is bringing back Cub Scouts because of the loss of Packs last year. Cub Scouting feeds Scouts BSA and many of the other programs. Growing Cub Scouts in future years helps to grow all programs since this is normally our entry way into Scouting. Just because we are primarily focusing on one program does not mean the others are not important. Venturers and Sea Scouts should continue to recruit for their units.

Q: Issues facing BSA seem to fall into a couple of categories: "membership" and "everything else" -- We can grow membership through enthusiasm, but can we trust that those working on "everything else" can get that done?

A: Yes. The volunteers and professionals working at all levels want the best outcome for Scouting. With enthusiastic volunteers and staff all working together, no matter what part each of us are working on, we can move this organization ahead and provide the program we love to an ever-increasing number of youths.

Q: In terms of membership retention, are there any national efforts to encourage Scouts who are aging out to register as volunteers? Ideal volunteer candidates to appeal to millennial parents?

A: Yes. The BSA Board commissioned several study groups called "Churchill" groups to make recommendations in several areas – engaging youth that are college age was one of the groups. More should be coming out soon from that group as the organization looks at all Churchill recommendations and starts acting on them.

Q: Will we still be able to get annual Council Market Analysis Reports?

A: The 2021 Council Market Analysis is currently available to councils. An email was sent to the Scout executive with a link to the SharePoint site where it is housed. If you have a Scouting.org email address you should have access to your council's folder. Log into the BSA SharePoint site using your BSA credentials, then in "sites" select "Membership Insights and Planning" from the dropdown list. If you cannot find this site or you have recently changed councils and need the link to your new council send an email to Pat Wellen (Pat.Wellen@Scouting.org) along with your council number and a link to your councils folder will be sent. If you are a volunteer we do not have a way to link you directly to this resource at this time so you will need to go through your council to obtain the report.

Engaging Council and District Membership Chairs

Q: How can a district membership chair stay up-to-date on these resources, and how can they get involved in these national efforts to improve recruiting and retention?

A: The new territory structure – specifically the NST Membership Chair – will be your partner in connecting you to the most up to date resources and plans so that your council can plan recruitment and retention efforts that are right for your council needs.

Engaging Adults to Become Leaders

Q: How can we engage reluctant adults to step up and lead?

A: Check out the Cub Scout virtual Roundtable topic: Annual Planning Conference posted March 2021. In it, there is an exercise describing how you can get everyone to volunteer. The exercise was also briefly described during this chat.

We need to keep in mind that Cub Scout parents may not have the time nor energy to step up into a leadership role immediately. They want to try something before they commit. Parents do understand the need to volunteer and want to volunteer. What volunteering looks like may not be in one of the pre-defined leadership roles. Start them out with a small task of their choosing, let them have some success and build from there. People like to "pull" work and not have it "pushed" out to them.

We should also lead with the expectation of volunteering right away. Let families know at registered that we are an organization dedicated to youth development and that we are run by volunteers, such as yourself!

Q: I'm finding the hardest thing is to engage units and get them interested and trying to grow. A lot of this stems from unit health. How do you address this?

A: Capacity issues are often really a "lack of volunteers" issue. Leaders feel overwhelmed because they have no help from other families. More youth means more families means more volunteers. Everyone who joins should expect to volunteer in some fashion. Define volunteer tasks or opportunities and let people choose what they want to do. Ask each family to volunteer for at least one activity, and then do not micromanage how a volunteer fulfills their task.

Also, by not growing you are denying other youth and families the opportunity to be a part of our wonderful organization. Appeal to their pride in the program. The BSA is an amazing program, everyone should be given the opportunity to participate.

Q: One problem is that some districts have lost volunteers who could help support membership growth. Do you have suggestions on how to get that support?

A: Families join because they want to spend time with their kids, doing the fun program activities. Volunteers at the district are often removed from Cub Scouts (the program where we register the most youth each year) by several years. They remember their last experience, which is typically in a troop and often their own summer camp experience. In the main, troops grow from youth in Cub Scouts.

Move the focus of recruiting efforts to the packs. Ask each pack to start two dens each year. A Tiger den of girls and a Tiger den of boys. This is small, manageable for packs and for volunteers, easy to message and focused. Tigers comes with adult partners. From there, typically someone rises to the top and eases into the den leader role.

Membership Fees

Q: Will we soon have the national rechartering fees announced for the 2021-22 year? My understanding was that they will be announced during NAM.

A: The membership fees have been announced for 2021-22 year. It can be found at:

<https://scoutingwire.org/bsa-membership-fee-increase-details-and-faq-updated-6-4-2021/>

Q: What is the BSA's ideas on National fees? Is there a plan for lowering the cost for families who need assistance?

A: A registration assistance fund has been established to help those families who cannot afford Scouting. Councils can apply for these funds and have them available to units. The fees being charged today reflect the actual cost of running the program, including increased insurance fees for all members and background checks for adults. Previously, many of these costs were subsidized by the national organization and/or councils; however, that is no longer possible.

BSA Technology

Q: Will we be hearing this week anything about the transition away from ScoutNET?

A: The transition away from ScoutNET continues. Reports are being migrated from PAS to My.Scouting. Completion of Registrar Tools that will allow data entry and provide all of the other functions (and some additional registrars have asked for) will roll out later this summer. Parts of it are currently being tested by registrars. Recharter is being moved to the Internet Advancement tool that units currently use. The process is also being streamlined to include three steps to recharter making it easier for units and councils. This move will occur for units rechartering in December and training will happen in Sept/October time period. The ScoutNET system will not be fully retired until December 31, 2021.

Q What about sending this out via text? Most of our parents do not check email regularly.

A: At this time we do not have that capability in our system, but we are looking into what options may exist in the future.

Q: I know there has been some discussion on eliminating the Leader approval on the online YOUTH application. Has this been approved and if not, will it be approved before Fall Recruitment (August 1, 2022)?

A: Leader approval will not be eliminated from youth applications at this time. However a new feature is being added to ONLINE REGISTRATION – this feature will allow the unit Key 3 to turn on “Automatic Acceptance” for youth only. This will allow any youth who come in through online registration to be accepted without the Key 3 having to go in and accept each application individually. Adult applications, because they require reference checks and review of background questions, will not be automatically accepted.

Q: As an experienced Scouter, I find the administrative aspects continually get more complex. What can be done to simplify administration?

A: The goal right now is to allow units to manage as many processes as possible through online unit tools so that they do not have to turn in paperwork, or go through the council to make changes. As we do this we are also looking at each process and piece of paper and asking: “Do we need this?” “What purpose does it serve?” “Is that purpose outdated and we need to eliminate that process/paperwork?” As a result of this evaluation units now have the ability to change leadership positions in their unit using the Position Manager tool in My.Scouting – no more paper applications to fill out and turn in when changing a registered leader from one position to another. We are also currently working on simplification of Recharter and anticipate it will be three steps from start to finish for a unit by December recharter.

Q: Can a unit use the Invitation manager WITHOUT using the Application Manager? Do they operate independently?

A: Invitation manager and Application Manager operate independently. You can get leads through invitation manager and then give the lead a paper application – but why would you want to? If the family is making the inquiry online they will probably prefer to also register and pay online as well. By not having online applications available, today’s parent get the impression that the organization is outdated and may not consider joining because they will view the rest of the program as antiquated without even trying it.

Q: There is a push for online volunteer registration. This helps the COR approve leadership changes electronically. I have been told that my local council have turned this ability off. Is that possible? What can I do to encourage them to turn it back on?

A: Talk with your council and find out why they have elected to turn online applications off for adults. Some states have additional background check and Youth Protection requirements beyond those required by the BSA. While there is a YPT hold built into the system and after approval of the application by the unit it automatically goes into the background check process that paper applications go through, we do not have state by state additional requirements built in. If your state does not have any additional requirements then you can educate your council as to the need to turn on adult online applications for units that would prefer to register their adult online.

Welcome Emails

Q: Can you clarify what national BSA onboarding emails go out, to whom, and with what frequency?

A: The national onboarding emails go out weekly to all new registrants in the system – both youth and adult leaders. Currently there are three emails in the series, one per week for the first three weeks after joining and each is customized to the program the youth has joined. The first email gives has a welcome message, provides information about the unit they have joined, and has contact information for the council. A team of council representatives, and unit leaders is currently working on revising the series and providing recommendations on timing and number of emails. In addition to these welcome emails, if the unit has elected to send a system generated welcome email that

email goes out 24 hours after the first national Welcome email. The unit can set this up where they set up their BeAScout pin in Organization Manager in My.Scouting.

Q: Will the series of emails only go out to fall Cub Scout sign ups? or will it continue for all new going forward?

A: These welcome emails go out every week, not just in the fall.

Q: Is there a way to see the emails that go to new members or volunteers?

A: After the series is revised (by mid-July) we will share the new series with councils and units so that they will be aware of what is being sent. Any changes in the number of timing of these emails will also be communicated at that time.

If you want to see what is being sent right now, check out this [post](#) on Bryan on Scouting.

Q: Are the emails automatic or does the council or parent need to push these out?

A: These are automatic emails.

Marketing/PR Plan

Q: Will there be more Cub Scout and Scouts BSA photos for recruiting that we can use from the BSA brand center?

A: We regularly add photos to the brand center. Visit the site regularly to see what's new. Check out the collections on the landing page.

Q: What is the link to escape the great indoors

A: That can be found here: <https://scouting.webdamdb.com/bp/#/lightbox/1513758/>

Program overall

Q: What's being done to strengthen the continuum between all our programs; Cubs to Scouts BSA to Venturing/Sea Scouts and then to young adult leadership?

A: The Program Development Committee coordinates all of the program levels and stresses a collaborative atmosphere that promotes program continuity. There are proposals under consideration that would strengthen progression from Cub Scouts to Scouts BSA.

Q: What can we tell youth who would like to join, but can't commit for a whole Scouting season?

A: The beauty of the program is that it can be delivered in a variety of ways. For Cub Scouts, the program can be completed in a den setting or at home on their own time. Pack meetings are not mandatory. There is no attendance policy. Troops that have embraced youth being in other activities and coming when that activity concludes (such as marching band, football, baseball, etc.) knowing that youth are more well-rounded when they participate in a variety of activities and Scouting have had higher retention rates because they acknowledge that youth have a variety of interests and they make room for those interests rather than having the family make a choice between the two.

One of the Churchill study groups is also looking at possibilities of providing programming in "Seasonal" chunks so that families could sign up for the program for one season, do something else the next season, and then come back again for another season.

Cub Scout Specific

Q: These Cub resources are awesome - where is all of this stuff housed? Scoutbook?

A: The National [Cub Scouting](#) website is the landing page for a lot of resources including the welcome video for new parents, information on Preview Adventures, and anything and everything you would want to know about Cub Scouts.

To see how the Den Leader Experience (DLE) works without logging into Scoutbook as a den leader, check out the "[sandbox](#)." Choose from one of the predefined users in the upper left corner pull down menu to gain access.

Cub Live! is each Friday 2PM central and can be found on the following Facebook pages:

- Scouting Magazine *this is the host site from which live questions can be answered*
- Cub Scouts *cross posted*
- Scout Life *cross posted*

Q: Do these new resources discuss Unit Commissioner and District Training as resources for new leaders?

A: All the resources described during the fireside chat are listed on the Cub Scout program website. They are intended to help parents, volunteers and leaders in a unit pull the information they need to be successful.

Commissioners and District Training Teams should be behind the scenes to a den leader. If in place and working, commissioners work with the unit key-3, as would a district training team, not directly with den leaders. The listed resources are in a den leaders' direct line of site and always available.

Q: Do Pack Trainers have access to those den leader resources on Scoutbook?

A: The National [Cub Scouting](#) website is the landing page for a lot of resources including the welcome video for new parents, information on Preview Adventures, and anything and everything you would want to know about Cub Scouts.

The Den Leader Experience (DLE) is for den leaders. It is designed to help them run their den meeting.

Cub Live! is each Friday 2PM central and can be found on the following Facebook pages:

- Scouting Magazine *this is the host site from which live questions can be answered*
- Cub Scouts *cross posted*
- Scout Life *cross posted*

Q: Where can we see Cub Chat Live?

A: From the following Facebook sites, look for the live videos:

- Scouting Magazine *this is the host site from which live questions can be answered*
- Cub Scouts *cross posted*
- Scout Life *cross posted*

The program is live every Friday 2PM central. Shows are recorded and typically posted on each Facebook site within 48 hours.

Q: If volunteers are asking about how to submit an idea about creating a new adventure, where do we send them?

A: Head to the [Preview Adventures](#) website, fill out the form and send to the listed email address.

Q: I am a Cubmaster and help launch all my new Tiger dens. The new Den Leader Resources app looks great, but I don't have access to it based on my position as Cubmaster. Is there a way to be added to a Den so I can help the den more directly? Eventually I step away as they feel comfortable, but as much as I can assist, especially with the new app, would be helpful.

A: As Cubmaster you have admin rights in Scoutbook. Log into Scoutbook and give yourself den leader access.

Q: If we are going to encourage multiple dens in the same school that meet on different nights... what are your suggestions to fitting this into current chartering rules. We need a designated Den Leader and assistant for each small den of 3 youth???

A: You must follow all Youth Protection rules when youth are meeting – so you must have at least 2 registered adults at the meeting working with the youth.

Q: Do we have simple Cub program materials for rural areas with small groups that must combine dens or do the “one room schoolhouse” concept?

A: The National Cub Scouting committee is working on creating a program for required Adventures to have the same themes or topics across all ranks to hopefully help with this issue.

In the meantime, ask your Scout Executive for information on Cub Scouts 1-2-3. The program may prove beneficial to your situation.

Remember the Cub Scout motto, “Do Your Best.” Do what works for your youth and count that as success. If the kids have fun and learned something along the way, you are doing what was expected.

Summer of Service

Q: Are volunteers the main contact/Unit Leaders main contact? Where would the DEs fall under coordinating the Summer of Service.

A: The Summer of Service is meant to be very adaptable. Some councils may choose to run large-scale coordinated projects with heavy staff or volunteer involvement. Other councils may not get involved at all and leave it up to individual families or units to decide when and how to participate. Most councils will fall somewhere in between. A family or unit can go to the landing page (www.scouting.org/summerofservice) and get all of the information they need to participate...even print certificates and order patches. It is meant to be very “self-serve” in nature...your service, your way! Projects big and small all qualify. The important part is to get out there and do something! There is no required staff or volunteer involvement...unless your council has decided to utilize it that way. Reach out to your staff leader (if you are a staff person) or your council contact (if a volunteer) to see if your council has a coordinated effort with the Summer of Service. If so...join in! If not, find a way to serve that best resonates with you!

Other General Questions

Q: How can we get the Welcome Shirts for the New Member Coordinator?

A: Welcome shirts are available through BSA licensed vendors.

Q: How are we supposed to know who our NST contacts are? where can we find this info?

A: The Territory Directors have the contact information for the NST volunteers in each territory – contact them for the list. If you need a map of your territory go to <https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/properties/territory-maps/>

Q: How is NOLC defined?

A: NOLC refers to the National Operations Leadership Committee. This committee coordinates with all of the operating committees related to unit operations and health, program design and delivery, and unit leader support and training.