

Annual Troop Program Planning

Your Annual Troop Program Plan = Satisfied Boy Scouts and families = A lifelong love of Scouting!

Dear Committee Chair, Scoutmaster, and Senior Patrol Leader:

Let's talk about one of the key elements of all successful troops and an indicator of a potentially successful year. Of course that would be the troop's annual program plan and planning conference. Research conducted by Eli Lilly in Indianapolis, Indiana, showed that a common element of strong troops is they all have a good annual program planned a year in advance that is then shared with all families in the form of a calendar. The important result of a shared annual program calendar is that your troop will attract more families and Boy Scouts will stay involved longer.

Two other key elements of successful troops identified in that study were training and having just the right leader to start with.

Here's how a troop program planning conference works. A month or two before the scheduled face-to-face conference, the committee chair, Scoutmaster, and senior patrol leader perform the following steps.

Preparation Steps

Step 1 — Gather the following key information:

1. Key school dates, like holidays and exams
2. Community event dates
3. The chartered organization's key dates
4. Personal dates that may affect the troop's activities, such as the Scoutmaster's anniversary cruise
5. Key district and council dates
6. Data collected from the Troop Resources Survey
7. Last year's troop annual plan, if you have one
8. Troop priorities and goals
9. Scouts' advancement records
10. General outline of next year's program

Step 2 — Discuss this process with your senior patrol leader, explaining the importance of this process and his role in it. Discuss your options for programs and activities and your troop goals. Share your draft outline for next year's program and ask him for his input and thoughts. Be flexible at this point. Review this presentation so he will understand the agenda and work ahead.

Step 3 — Your senior patrol leader shares the draft plan with patrol leaders, who then share it with Scouts to get their input and ideas. Patrol leaders schedule a meeting to gather information and ideas from the Scouts. Take good notes.

Step 4 — Invite the following people to attend the conference to maximize the efficiency of your planning.

1. Your troop's youth leaders
2. Troop committee members and other adult troop leaders
3. Chartered organization representative
4. Your unit commissioner (optional)
5. Anyone else who might be helpful, such as other parents

A new electronic [program planning conference guide](#) 

http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/zip/BSA_Troop_Annual_Program_Planning_Conference_Guide.zip is available for troop use to hopefully add some color to the process. Basically, it is a narrated

PowerPoint that takes the troop step by step through the planning process. The result is an annual calendar and plan that all parties agree upon.

The Troop Annual Program Planning Conference

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what keeps Scouts in the program. They like to have fun, do really cool, challenging stuff, go places, and learn things, even though they might not want to admit it. That is what we call program, and it doesn't just happen by chance. It takes planning and preparations, starting with your patrol leaders' conference.

Use these ground rules while discussing ideas at your conference, and you can add your own rules, too:

- It is important to respect the views of each other. Listen and don't interrupt.
- Keep focused on your task to plan your annual program. Don't get sidetracked.
- Write out your ideas so everyone can see them.
- Be in agreement.

Step 1 — Your Scoutmaster leads a discussion on your troop's goals for the coming year. Write the goals on a flip chart or eraser board, and agree to a list of goals.

Step 2 — Share the draft printed calendar that shows the dates you researched with the rest of the meeting attendees. Ask if anyone has any other dates they need to add.

Step 3 — Take a few minutes to discuss these dates and events. Once you feel comfortable with this stage of the calendar, you might even take a vote to approve the dates you have so far.

Step 4 — Senior patrol leader shares updates from patrol leaders about what Scouts want to do. This can be the most challenging exercise in your program planning conference, so take as much time as you need. You could use the troop program features as a base for your Scouts' desired programs or themes. You might take it one month at a time. Don't forget to add in advancement opportunities. The flow of your troop's program is up to you and could be driven by your goals. As an example, if one of your goals is for the troop to take a wilderness trip to Alaska, some of your programs could focus on traveling to Alaska, wilderness survival, trip planning, wilderness first aid, and van safety.

Again, as you agree on a monthly feature or program theme, write it on a flip chart or board and take a vote. Designate someone to write all this in a master calendar and take good notes!

Step 5 — Add other important dates such as:

1. Boards of review
2. Courts of honor
3. Troop open house
4. Service projects
5. Webelos-to-Scout transition ceremonies
6. Any other dates already planned this far in advance

At this point you should have a complete annual plan, a calendar, and a set of troop goals.

Step 6 — Hold a final discussion on the plan, calendar, and goals, and then take a vote for approval.

Once you approve your annual plan, it will go to the troop committee for final approval.

Step 7 — To make this plan a truly valuable tool, it **must** be shared with each Scout family, your chartered organization, and all other interested parties. This is a must!

Your plan will be a living, breathing document. For it to have real value, you must follow it, share it with everyone, and review it regularly to see if modifications have to be made. Good luck on another great year, and don't forget to share your plan and calendar with every Scout family!

Resources

These tools will make it easier to create newsletters, revise calendars, keep youth members and families informed, and help youth members manage the troop more effectively and efficiently.

Boys' Life Resources <http://www.scouting.org/magazines/BoysLifePromo.aspx>

Boys' Life produces a number of useful resources such as a planning calendar, planning charts, and other program helps.

NEW! Troop Annual Program Planning Conference Guide 

http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/zip/BSA_Troop_Annual_Program_Planning_Conference_Guide.zip

Use this PowerPoint presentation to help guide your troop through its annual program planning conference.

Troop Calendar Template  (2013-2014)

<http://www.scouting.org/filestore/boyscouts/xls/2013-2014TroopPlanningCalendar.xls>

This template allows you to fill in dates and events important to your unit and the annual program plan. It can be saved, revised as needed, and printed or emailed, making it easy to update and share. When you first know about an addition or change to troop activities, add that to the calendar so it will always be up to date and ready to print or share.

Troop Meeting Plan  <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34425.pdf>

This template provides the framework for conducting efficient, well-run troop meetings.

Troop Budget Planning

These fillable electronic forms help make troop budgeting straightforward.

Planning Your Troop's Annual Program Budget 

<http://www.scouting.org/filestore/boyscouts/pdf/510-275.pdf>

Troop Operating Budget Worksheet, available in PDF  and Excel  formats.

Guides to Unit Money-Earning Projects  <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/510-274.pdf>

Troop Program Features

http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/Resources/TroopProgramFeaturesVol_I_III.aspx

The 36 monthly program features allow units to plan meetings and events around activities that Scouts will find challenging and exciting.

Troop Program Resources  <http://www.scouting.org/FILESTORE/pdf/33588.pdf>

This loose-leaf volume provides a number of helpful tools such as Scoutmaster's Minutes, games, and a variety of sample ceremonies.

Troop Resources Survey  <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34437.pdf>

Use this survey to help get adults involved with your unit even more engaged.

Training Courses

The Boy Scouts of America provides a wide variety of training for volunteers and youth members. From Youth Protection training (required for every adult no matter what position is served) to courses offered at Philmont Training Center.