

Roundtable Overview

The 2018–2019 *Cub Scouting Roundtable Planning Guide* is designed to help you plan and produce a successful roundtable program for your district. For this program year, you will find:

- The Big Rock topic plans that are used in the general session of roundtable when all program groups meet together
- Cub Scout interest topic plans that can be used flexibly to meet the needs of leaders. Recommended times for each activity will help you maintain a reliable schedule.
- Program materials that can be used by leaders in their meetings and events.

Scouting is considered a year-round program, meaning that dens, packs, and troops are encouraged to meet and conduct activities year-round. Thus, it is suggested that roundtable also operate year-round. Of course this is up to the council and districts to decide as part of the yearly planning process.

Some of the resources listed above, such as Big Rock topics, may not have plans for every month of the year because local councils and districts may have unique local topics to discuss in certain months. Councils and districts are encouraged to use the provided templates to create topics that meet any local needs they identify. Topics from previous years are archived on the Roundtable Support page of the Commissioner website: www.scouting.org/Commissioners/roundtable.aspx.

ROUNDTABLE LEADERSHIP

Coordination of all roundtables held in the council is under the jurisdiction of the assistant council commissioner for roundtables. This person reports to the council commissioner and conducts an annual councilwide roundtable planning meeting followed by a midyear review. This process brings a level of standardization to the content at district roundtable by promoting the use of national roundtable guides and other resources while also allowing local flexibility for the districts. In some larger councils, there may be multiple assistant council commissioners for roundtable depending on the local needs.

The district roundtables fall under the guidance of the assistant district commissioner for roundtables. He or she oversees the district roundtables in all program areas, reports to the district commissioner, and works with the

district structure. The assistant district commissioner also needs to be responsive to and work in cooperation with the assistant council commissioner for roundtable to see that the annual planning and midyear review programs are well attended by the district program-specific roundtable commissioners. In addition, this is a perfect position from which to ensure that national roundtable guide materials are being used and the proper program materials are being provided to units.

Roundtable programs are then implemented by the program-specific roundtable commissioners for Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Venturing. These individuals are responsible for coordinating and conducting the various parts of the roundtable meetings. They make their contributions under the guidance of the positions described above and with the help of the assistant roundtable commissioner, a position described below.

Assistant roundtable commissioners conduct tasks directly for the program-specific roundtable commissioners, as mentioned above, to assist in the development and delivery of their monthly meeting agenda and program items. This role replaces the previous position of roundtable staff and allows the assistants to pursue the normal roundtable training and awards structure in place for roundtable leaders. Each program-specific roundtable commissioner may have as many assistants as needed; i.e., Cub Scouts may need several assistants to facilitate their program breakouts, while others may not need so many.

The positions of assistant council commissioner for roundtable and assistant district commissioner for roundtable have specific role descriptions that are available online at www.scouting.org/Commissioners/roundtable/RoundtableChanges.aspx.

Assistant district commissioners for roundtable and/or roundtable program commissioners should be in attendance at all district commissioner meetings to report on roundtable attendance and program highlights for the next month. This gives unit commissioners important information for their units.

TRAINING AND RECOGNITION FOR ROUNDTABLE TEAM

Roundtable commissioners and assistants should all be trained so they will be fully qualified to present material and teach skills at roundtables in an interesting way. Training opportunities include:

- Roundtable commissioner and team basic training, www.scouting.org/Commissioners/roundtable.aspx
- Council commissioner colleges/conferences and workshops
- Council trainer development conferences
- The Fundamentals of Training
- The Trainer's Edge
- Wood Badge courses
- Philmont training conferences
- Other local and special-topic training as available

All roundtable commissioners are eligible to strive for commissioner service awards, including the Arrowhead Award and Commissioner Key, the Doctorate of Commissioner Science, and the Distinguished Commissioner Service Award, among others. Earning these awards should be encouraged, and those who have fulfilled the requirements should be publicly recognized for their service and dedication to Scouting.

THE ROUNDTABLE COMMISSIONER

Roundtable commissioners should be knowledgeable Scouters who are able to pull together many different resources to create a high-quality learning and fellowship program. They need not be experts on all topics. Instead, they are willing to find interesting presenters who can add variety and excitement to roundtables for which the commissioner is not the best presenter.

Roundtable commissioners and assistants participate in the process to develop an annual plan for delivery in order to allocate resources, secure presenters, and ensure each meeting offers a high-quality experience to the attendees. These may include local resources such as museums, outdoor associations, education centers, and many other community or special interest groups. The suggested program information in this guide offers both a good starting point and an entire annual roundtable plan. Once an annual plan is adopted, it should be shared with the units. Sharing the plan in advance helps the units ensure the most appropriate attendees are at each roundtable based on the topic to be presented. For example, a roundtable featuring advancement would be very helpful to a unit advancement chair and new unit leaders who want to learn how the advancement program is administered.

It is also important for roundtable commissioners to be trained for their roles. They should take advantage of council-level roundtable commissioner training, as well as a broad variety of training in different topics that may be of interest to their attendees. The College of Commissioner Science curriculum will soon expand to include a full seven-course bachelor's level of roundtable training.

USING THE ROUNDTABLE PLANNING GUIDE

Much of how the roundtable team chooses to use this planning guide will depend upon experience, direction of the council, and needs of the individual districts. Being flexible is the key to a successful roundtable, but keep in mind that while the program is flexible, policy is not. Roundtables should always accurately represent Boy Scouts of America policy to ensure units receive accurate information so they can present safe and compliant programs.

For those who have never planned a roundtable, the sample program agenda outlines can serve as a great example. Many roundtable commissioners use the outline exactly as written, but each roundtable may be modified to suit the purposes and personalities of the team and the leaders who attend.

As commissioners gain confidence in their ability to plan roundtables, they can add extra features or substitute other topics or activities based on the local needs of those in attendance.

It is recommended that districts follow a similar schedule of activities based upon the annual council roundtable planning conference. This provides some continuity in program and information, thus giving unit personnel the ability to attend any roundtable and find similar activities for helping units build strong programs.

Just be sure to adhere to BSA policies, add the personality and interests of your roundtable team, and have FUN!

LENGTH AND FORMAT OF ROUNDTABLE

Experience has shown that although roundtable meetings for each of Scouting's programs (Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Venturing) can be successfully conducted separately, a greater benefit is derived from the fellowship and unity that comes from holding these meetings on the same night and in the same location.

Roundtable commissioners will find the 2018–2019 plans allow for a variety of roundtable configurations. The first section of each roundtable is designed for all program areas to share common interests and concerns in a joint meeting, and the second section separates participants into breakout groups by program—Boy Scouting, Cub Scouting, or Venturing.

The Cub Scout group may break out even further into den leaders, Cubmasters, and pack leaders, or a combined section may be offered for all attendees based on the interest topic.

Many districts choose to offer time after the closing of the meeting (often referred to as “cracker barrel”) to allow Scouters to mingle and share experiences, fellowship, and ideas with one another. Refreshments or other activities may be provided, but be mindful of time and budget constraints for the team and participants.

TECHNOLOGY AND ROUNDTABLE DELIVERY

When a local district is in a tightly contained geographic area, such as a suburban area of a major city, meeting in person is usually both easy and convenient. But face-to-face roundtable meetings become more difficult when a district includes several counties and many of the roads are rural two-lane roads. The amount of time required to drive to the roundtable site from the farthest reaches of the district may discourage unit leaders from attending in person, especially in poor weather. Roundtable teams for such districts should consider alternative methods to reduce the geographic barriers to roundtable attendance.

One alternative might be a longer roundtable format that permits attendees to receive more training and better justifies the time required to travel to the roundtable site. This longer format may allow for not meeting every month, but rather on alternate months or even quarterly. Another alternative might be hosting roundtables in two or more locations on a rotating basis. If the district leadership is able to do so, the district could hold more than one roundtable per month, each in a different part of the district. Each of these alternatives has been used successfully in parts of the country.

If those alternatives aren't practical, the leadership of a geographically large district should consider whether it is preferable to deliver at least some portion of the roundtable using one or more of the commercially available telephonic or video services. Some issues to consider and resolve include:

- Availability of telephone jacks in the meeting rooms and/or suitable Internet connectivity at the roundtable site (including Wi-Fi)
- Availability of the equipment necessary to record and transmit a roundtable from the host site, including cameras, quality microphones, and lighting
- Cost of the various telephonic or video services
- Limits imposed by the service provider on the number of simultaneous participants

- Whether to record and broadcast both the joint session and all the breakout sessions, or just the joint session, keeping in mind the need for more equipment if multiple breakout sessions are filmed simultaneously
- Whether to enable two-way communication so remote participants can ask questions and participate in group discussions, or whether the remote participants will only be able to listen to presentations
- Whether the remote participants have access to the necessary technical resources (equipment and bandwidth) to receive a particular type of telephonic or video feed

Another consideration is ensuring a sufficiently large in-person attendance to maintain the camaraderie which is the essence of most successful roundtables. The district leadership should determine whether the in-person attendance can be maintained if the roundtable is broadcast to everyone in the district in real time, or whether it would be better to limit access to recorded roundtables to leaders of selected units. YouTube videos and podcasts can be posted a few days after the actual roundtable to encourage in-person attendance. And it is possible to post “non-public” YouTube videos, for which the URL (Web address) is given only to leaders of selected units that are considered to be “sufficiently remote” from the roundtable site.

When the usual roundtable location does not have Wi-Fi or other Internet connections in the meeting room, or when the remote participants don't have access to high-speed Internet (either cable or wireless), it may not be possible to have an effective video roundtable. In such cases, if the meeting room has either a telephone jack or a high-quality cellular signal, an alternative is for the remote participants to use a conference call service. A high-quality speaker phone, possibly one with multiple microphones, should be used to ensure that remote participants can hear all the participants gathered in the meeting room. Districts should email copies of handouts to the remote participants (or post the handouts on the district website) when using a conference call rather than streaming video.

Many services, both commercial and free, are available. However, most of the free services (such as Skype, Google Voice, Google Chat, and Google Hangout) limit the number of simultaneous remote participants to as few as 10. When a district uses a service that restricts the number of free remote participants, the district should evaluate the possibility of having remote participants gather at satellite locations closer to their homes. Each satellite location can count as one participant, if several leaders use a single speaker phone or video monitor.

Other services (such as GoToMeeting, WebEx, and TeamViewer) support a larger number of remote participants but require the payment of either monthly or per-minute fees. Some services have tiered fees for different numbers of simultaneous participants. FreeConferenceCall.com is an example of a service that does not charge to set up a call, but requires participants to pay their own telephone service for the call (such as long-distance charges or wireless-to-landline charges). Some councils choose to provide conference call services that are toll-free to remote participants and absorb the cost of the service, whereas other councils require the remote participants to pay for the call.

Some districts may choose to use a blend of in-person roundtables during certain months, real-time remote audio and/or video roundtables during other months, and YouTube videos or podcasts for selected presentations when the primary need is the dissemination of information rather than an interactive discussion. Examples of the latter

could include recordings of presentations on Friends of Scouting, Internet Rechartering, or a topic that every new leader should hear as a supplement to available online training. Having these supplemental topics available via podcast or YouTube videos would enable new leaders to hear that information whenever they accept a position for which that information would be useful, without having to repeat basic information at roundtable.

For more information on technology and roundtable delivery, the quarterly newsletter, *The Commissioner*, has included numerous articles on technology options for roundtable delivery and will continue to do so in the future. The first such article was included in the Fall 2013 edition. The Winter 2014 edition included an article on one district's use of YouTube videos of roundtable sessions. The Fall 2015 edition included an article on the BSA's social media policy relative to YouTube videos and podcasts. Current and archived copies of *The Commissioner* can be found at www.scouting.org/commissioners/.