Roundtable Overview

The 2018–2019 Roundtable Planning Guide is designed to help you plan a successful roundtable program for your district. In this guide you will find:

- Program outlines that include the key elements for presentation of the Scouts BSA roundtable with recommended times for each activity to help you maintain a reliable schedule.

- Big Rock topic plans that can be used flexibly to meet the needs of the combined district roundtable group.

- Tips for troops that provide ideas to keep meetings effective and active.

- Scouts BSA interest topic plans that can be used flexibly to meet the needs of Scouts BSA leaders.

- Year-round and monthly roundtable planning calendars.

- Program breakout information.

Scouting is a year-round program. This means that troops can meet and conduct activities all year, so roundtable may need to operate year-round as well. Of course, that is up to the council and districts to decide as part of the yearly planning process.

Some of the resources listed above may not have plans for all 12 months, and local councils and districts may have their own unique topics at certain times of the year.

Councils and districts are encouraged to use the provided templates to create topics that meet any needs they identify. Topics from previous years are archived on the Roundtable Support page of the Commissioner website. Scout leaders are free to plan and execute a diverse and widely varying program based on the unique abilities and interests of the youth in the troop. For this reason, flexibility has been built into the Roundtable Planning Guide.

ROUNDTABLE LEADERSHIP

Coordination of all roundtables held in the council is under the jurisdiction of the assistant council commissioner for roundtable. This person reports to the council commissioner and conducts an annual council-wide roundtable planning meeting followed by a midyear review. This process brings a level of standardization to district roundtable in terms of content by promoting the use of national roundtable guides and other resources while allowing local flexibility for the districts. In some larger councils, there may be multiple assistant council commissioners for round- table depending on the local needs.
The district roundtables fall under the guidance of the assistant district commissioner for roundtable. This individual oversees the district roundtables in all program areas, reports to the district commissioner, and works with the district structure. He or she should also work in cooperation with the assistant council commissioner for round- table to see that annual planning and midyear review programs are well-attended by the district's program- specific unit roundtable commissioners. In addition, the assistant district

commissioner should make sure the national roundtable guide materials are used so that the units will be getting proper program materials.

Roundtable programs are then implemented by the roundtable commissioners for Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, and Venturing crews. These individuals are responsible for coordinating and conducting the various parts of the roundtable meetings. They make their contributions with guidance and help from the assistant council and district commissioners.

Assistant roundtable commissioners conduct tasks directly for the program-specific roundtable commissioners, assisting in the development and delivery of the monthly meeting agendas and program items. As part of the roundtable team, assistant roundtable commissioners fully participate in the training and award structure for commissioners. Each roundtable commissioner may have as many assistants as needed.

For example, Cub Scout roundtables may need several assistants for their program breakouts while Scouts BSA roundtables may not need as many.

The positions of assistant council commissioner for roundtable and assistant district commissioner for round-table have specific Role Descriptions.

> 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

* 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 Honor Award

* Commissioner Key

* Doctorate of Commissioner Science Award

* Distinguished Commissioner Service Award (this is now a nominative award)

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 Scouts BSA 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 of developing an annual plan for roundtable 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. In the Roundtable Commissioner Notebook section of this guide, there is a calendar for mapping a yearly roundtable plan and a worksheet for formalizing each month's detailed 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 round- table 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.

Likewise, a program on backpacking would be very relevant to Scoutmasters and assistant Scoutmasters who may have a direct role in coaching the youth leaders who will be presenting that program to the unit or to those planning high-adventure events with these elements.

It is also important for roundtable commissioners and their assistants 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. This training can include classes on interesting topics at the council's University of Scouting.

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. If you are looking for assistance as to which topics to use ask your attendees what they want. 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 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.

To assist with the process of collecting and tracking information, several forms have been included in the Roundtable Commissioner Notebook section of this guide.

* The Yearly Roundtable Planning Calendar template is designed to support your annual planning process. In the same way that a unit plans for the year ahead, the roundtable year must be laid out to ensure all members of the team know what is expected of them. This also makes the monthly roundtable much easier to manage since everyone already knows the broad outline of what is going to happen.

- The Monthly Roundtable Planning Worksheet template allows you to detail each month's plan more completely. Giving each team member an outline of responsibilities helps all of them prepare for their assigned functions.

Of course, a plan that works in Florida in January may not work that same month in Minnesota. So, feel free to customize the order in which you present the year, using the materials included in this guide. Tailor the year to fit your council and districts' particular needs and interests.

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, Scouts BSA, and Venturing) could 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 that this guide allows for a great variety of roundtable configurations. Using these plans, your roundtable may be 60, 90, 120, or 180 minutes based on the district needs and frequency of meetings. The first section of each plan 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.

Many districts choose to offer a time (often referred to as "cracker barrel") after the closing of the meeting to allow Scouters to mingle, share experiences and ideas, and enjoy fellowship with one another. Refreshments or other activities may be provided; but, be mindful of time and budget constraints for the roundtable 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 (up to 180 minutes) 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 round- table using one or more of the commercially available tele- phonic or video services, including those over social media outlets. The availability of such services is constantly improving, so it may be time to take a look at what is new and available in your area. Some issues to consider and resolve include:

- Availability of suitable internet connectivity at the roundtable site
- 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 telephone or video services for both the host and remote participants
- 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 band-width) 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. When such speaker phones are not available, a cell phone connected to an external speaker via an auxiliary cord or Bluetooth can serve the same purpose. Districts should email copies of handouts to the remote

participants (or post the hand-outs on the district website) when using a conference call rather than streaming video.

Many of the free services (such as Skype 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. There is also "FacebookLive." Facebook Live permits an unlimited number of viewers to text questions and comments to the person filming the video. When the filming stops, Facebook Live archives a copy for sharing with viewers who did not see the video while it was being filmed. Some districts report good results using Facebook Live as a means of both conducting and archiving electronic roundtables.

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 on line.