

TOPIC: Governance- Venturing Officers’ Association

Participants will be able to answer the following questions by the end of the session:

- Discuss how to recruit VOA Officers
- Discuss how to develop a team with Venturers from multiple crews
- Explain how strategic planning can benefit a VOA
- Examine the mechanics of VOA operation

Presentation Method

In planning the presentation, you should review the latest materials posted at <http://www.venturing.org/>. The most recent program updates and resources are posted there are ready for your use.

Use the discussion outline below to help you prepare your remarks. PowerPoint presentation slides were not prepared for use during this session. If you wish to use one, the content below will be helpful in constructing your presentation.

Resources

- Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Handbook for Venturers*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 619088)
- Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Venturing Advisors Guide*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 618768)
- Boy Scouts of America (2017). *Venturing Officers’ Association Administration Guide*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 512-131)
- Boy Scouts of America (2017). *Venturing-SOPs: National Officers’ Standard Operating Procedures*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America

OVERVIEW The Venturing Officers’ Association (VOA) is a crucial link between units, districts, and councils. The formation of a VOA brings tremendous potential for growth and benefit in a council, however it has also has its challenges in the early stages. To overcome the challenges of a VOA, it is necessary to understand its composition, operation, and methods.

INTRODUCTION A Venturing Officers’ Association (VOA) is a team of youth officers supported by a group of Advisors. It is a forum that provides youth with a voice to support and strengthen the Venturing program. In an effort to strengthen the Venturing program, it is common for VOAs to conduct events or activities for crews.

VOA OPERATIONS A VOA operates within parameters set by the local council. In general, a VOA operates with leadership from a youth President and an adult Advisor. These two volunteers, along with a professional Staff Advisor form the core of the VOA, around which various other volunteers are arranged. Together, this Key 3 structure sets agendas and generates shapes the direction of a VOA for the year.

Major functions of a VOA may be program activities, trainings, and/or other events to

promote Venturing in their territory. To assist in these functions a VOA may utilize Vice Presidents and Associates Advisors or consultants. All Crew Presidents within the territory supported by the VOA serve as voting members of the VOA; as such, these members help to create events and planning at regular meetings throughout the year.

**TEAM
 DEVELOPMENT**

The strength of a VOA is in the diversity of its members. A good VOA should have representatives from numerous crews throughout the territory that it supports; this diversity can create difficulties in promoting a cohesive team that will be able to accomplish its goals.

To create a cohesive team, it is often useful to invest time in developing personal relationships with each member of a VOA. Many VOAs may begin their year with an officer retreat or some other activity to encourage officers to become acquainted with each other. Even if this is not a possibility, it should still be a concerted effort on the part of the youth and adult leadership to encourage officers and advisors to learn more about each other and each other's' respective backgrounds.

Uniting youth from many units can be aided by an event or a shared experience that can be built upon as a foundation for future collaboration. In addition to sharing some experiences, it is also crucial to foster a culture of communication and support. An atmosphere such as this will promote positive feedback and encourage people to participate more.

RECRUITING

Attracting qualified members to serve on a VOA may seem to be a perennial challenge, however this is not as intractable as it may seem. A key to recruiting youth officers is early and almost constant promotion. In addition to these more general strategies, personal outreach to interested individuals and those that have participated in VOA functions previously can lead to more success in recruiting.

When recruiting officers, it is useful to understand some key characteristics that may be indicative of future success.

Some of these traits are:

- Persistence
- Strong Interpersonal Skills
- Enthusiasm
- Creativity

**STRATEGIC
 PLANNING**

A VOA thrives when it is given the structure of attainable and realistic goals on an annual basis. These goals can be shaped over time, however, through strategic planning. This is a process by which a VOA creates a vision for future action or success, and then structures this vision over time with specific target areas that serve to suggest goals in the future.

The purpose of creating a strategic plan is to alleviate some of the annual stress

revolving around creating individualized goals because of the framework that is provided by a strategic plan. A plan also benefits newer officers and members of a VOA by providing them with a concise way to discover information about the VOAs goals, values, and vision for how they will impact the Venturing program in the upcoming years.

A strategic plan may be made for any period of time, however it is suggested that a strategic plan be for at least 2 years to maximize its practicality.

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Use the discussion questions to provide advisors an opportunity to process and analyze the information presented during this session. As a general suggestion, keep the discussion positive and constructive, in keeping with the values of Scouting and of Venturing as a youth development program.

To keep the discussion moving in a positive direction ask, “how does [comment] promote a youth-designed and youth-led program?”

- How can a VOA work to support districts?
- What impact does a council VOA have on units and individual members?
- How can a VOA increase member retention in Venturing?
- Can a VOA be utilized to support other youth programs or projects, e.g. NYLT?

CLOSURE

Wrap up conversation. Close by asking participants how they will use what they learned during this evening’s roundtable to support their crew’s program.

ASSESSMENT

Look for participant answers to the following questions by the end of the session:

- How can a VOA recruit officers?
- What methods can be used to encourage VOA officers from different units to collaborate?
- How does a VOA conduct its business?