

TOPIC: Governance- Youth & Adult Roles

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

- Contrast the role of youth and adult advisors in a crew and a VOA
- Describe how advisors use counseling and advising skills to support the youth and mission of a VOA
- Describe the relationship between a VOA and a Council Venturing Committee
- Diagram a crew and VOA leadership structure, illustrating youth and adult functions

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 Within a youth-led program, such as Venturing, it is crucial to understand the differences between the roles of youth and adults. This session will assist both crew advisors and youth officers to build a more robust program through a recognition of their respective responsibilities to the program and each other.

INTRODUCTION A Venturing Officers’ Association (VOA) and a crew both require collaboration between numerous volunteers of many ages, including both youth and adults. While all ages of volunteers are necessary to support the Venturing program, it is also necessary to have distinct roles for each volunteer to serve or else the program risks having “too many cooks in the kitchen”.

YOUTH + ADVISOR CONTRAST Regardless of the level of the Venturing program, youth and adults have distinct roles, ensuring that youth are able to safely and enjoyably experience leadership and adventure. The easiest dichotomy can be drawn at the crew-level, where youth serve as leaders to create meeting agendas, plan for adventures, and spearhead recruiting. In contrast to the youth, adults create a sort of safety net, approving the plans of the youth to ensure that they are safe, financially feasible, and are not logistically or physically too challenging for the crew to undertake.

Youth roles, whether in a crew or a VOA, should focus on developing leadership and exercising communication skills. Practically speaking, this means that youth should be the direct leaders of the VOA or crew; by engaging in decision-making, discussing problems and solutions with their peers, and being given responsibility for successful programs, youth are empowered to grow as leaders and as people.

Adult roles should be primarily concerned with facilitating constructive and safe conditions that facilitate those experiences that will help youth reach their full potential. This is an expansion of the traditional notion that an adult is someone youth fall back on because adults can take an active role in planning- just not the leading role. All adults are advisors, and as the name implies should strive to guide youth instead of directing them to carry out specific tasks.

**COUNSELING +
 ADVISING**

An advisor’s most important function within a crew or VOA is to provide advice to the officers, to guide and inform them of alternatives or obstacles that they may face. At the same time, many officers and advisors become close and develop a mentoring relationship. In this role, an advisor may be asked for counsel on non-Scouting-related matters. This phenomenon is not uncommon, and can present an opportunity for Venturers to learn life skills or lessons from someone more experienced or knowledgeable. It should be noted, however, that there is a time and a place for each of these roles.

The advice of an advisor to an officer, covering topics relevant to Scouting, should be presented in an informative way. The information is given to assist an officer with making decisions, allowing the crew or VOA to be informed while making decisions. This advice may or may not be taken, but is offered in the interest of empowering youth to decide the best way to deliberate an issue. The giving of advice is a routine part of any VOA or crew meeting, and may take on different forms (more or less formal, written, verbal, etc.) as the situation requires.

Situations that an advisor provides counseling are different. In these circumstances, the advisor is talking to an officer about a topic that may be tangentially related to Scouting or not at all. Counseling is often presented in a format of “this is what I did in a similar situation,” and may be more detailed in its suggestion for action; unlike advice, counsel may not necessarily be neutral.

Each of these, both counseling and advice, are used to support a VOA or crew. It is important to ensure that officers have as much information as possible when making a decision (advice), as well as it is also important that officers are personally prepared to make decisions (counseling). An advisor uses both of these tools to ensure that the VOA or crew has sufficiently prepared leadership to tackle any issue or adventure.

**COUNCIL-VOA
 RELATIONSHIP**

In many councils, a Council Venturing Committee exists to provide a forum for adult advisors to gather and share best practices and other information in the Venturing program. The relationship between the adults of the Committee and the youth leaders of the VOA can sometimes be slightly confusing, however it does not need to

be.

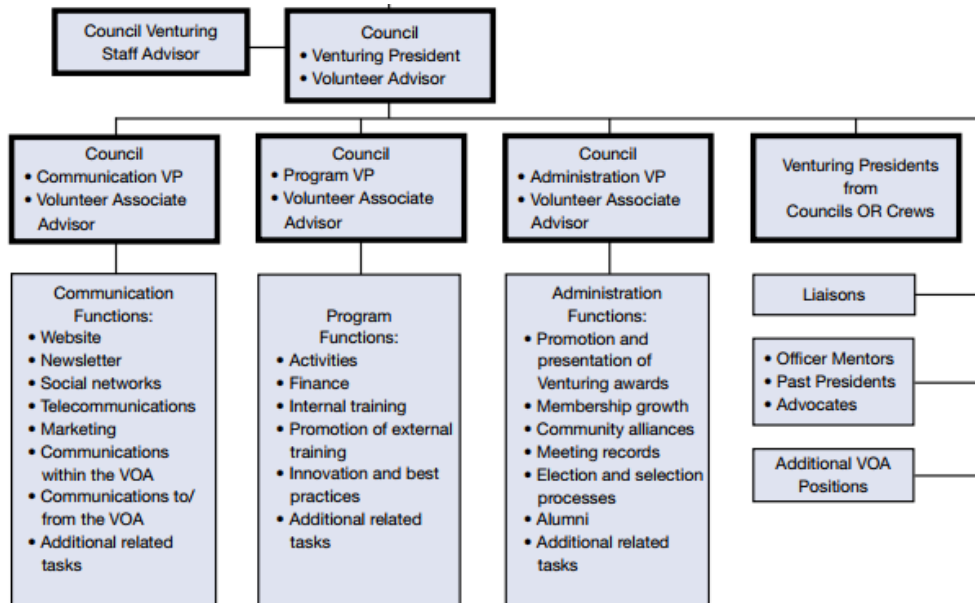
The Council Venturing Committee serves an important function that is similar to that of a Crew Committee: to support the youth in their development of leadership skills. The VOA works alongside the Committee to promote and support the activities of crews and Venturers throughout the district or council. As in a crew, the Committee ensures that the VOA does not overstep its abilities, financially or logistically; meanwhile, the VOA helps to connect the Committee, which may or may not have unit representatives, to individual crews and Venturers.

**CREW + VOA
 STRUCTURE**

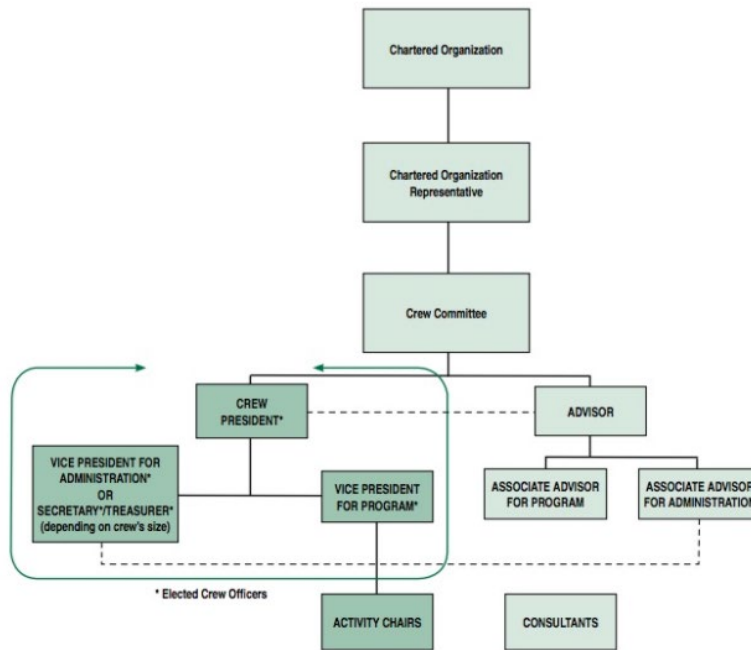
A crew and a VOA share some structures, including a blended format that shares some powers between youth and adults. At each level, though, there are difference between functions that are reserved to youth and those that are the purview of adults. For example, in a crew, most budgeting is handled by the Crew Committee. In a VOA, more aspects of budgeting and finance are left to the youth to enable them to learn about the process and its impact on decision-making.

The diagrams below illustrate the structure of a VOA and of a crew.

VOA Structure



Crew Structure



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 does a Committee or an Advisor help to guide youth decisions?
- When may it be appropriate to provide unsolicited advice or counsel?
- Where does a VOA derive its authority? Where does a Committee?
- How can youth work together with adults to accomplish goals?

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:
- What is role of a youth in a crew or VOA? An adult?
 - How does a VOA operate in relation to a Council Venturing Committee?
 - What is the difference between advice and counsel? How does an Advisor use these skills?

