

Program Features

It is recommended that this be the first Program Features presentation that is done at the beginning of the Round table Year. It will provide a basis for understanding the *Program Features for Troops, & Crews* and how they support a unit in the development of a successful program.

Using “Program Features for Troops and Crews” in Meetings

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handouts of the “Introduction” and “Demonstrating the Need for the Program Features”
- Any Volume of the new Program Features for Troops, and Crews, so attendees can select a Program Feature to study and use during the exercise. Buy it or borrow from a unit that has them.

INTRODUCTION

(Give attendees a printed copy of the following explanation of the Program Features, and discuss it with them)

What are The Program Features?

View Video: [Program Features](#)

The Program Features for Troops, and Crews is a three volume set (available for purchase from Scout shops or scoutshop.org). It replaces the older three volume Troop Program Features.

Each volume includes 12-16 program features with a mix of topics: outdoor, sports, health and safety, citizenship and personal development, STEM, arts and hobbies.

Why Were They Created?

The Program Features were created to assist the youth leaders of Troops and Venturing Crews in creating well-planned meetings and outings that deliver Scouting's promise of adventure to all the Scouts in the unit. Research has shown that inadequately planned and executed Troop and Crew meetings and outings are the number one cause of youth leaving Scouting. Adults and youth leaders can use these Program Features to plan exciting programs, help facilitate advancement and personal growth, and keep youth members engaged.

What do They Contain?

Each of the new Program Features contains the following:

- List of objectives
- Advancement and awards list related to the Program Feature's contents

- Leadership planning tips for the unit's youth leaders
- EDGE teaching/learning tips for skills related to the Program Feature
- Meeting planners for 4 weekly meetings
- Outing planner for an outing related to the Program Feature
- Scout skill games to be played at unit meetings and outings
- Skills and events suitable for Scouts BSA and Crew members of all ages and experience levels

How Can a Unit Include the Program Features in its Meetings?

The primary role of the Patrol Leaders' Council is to plan and lead an exciting, fun filled annual and monthly program. However, most young people don't have much experience selecting activities for an annual program or converting those ideas into well planned weekly meetings and monthly outings. With that in mind, the new Program Features provide the two most essential things a PLC needs: ideas and ready-made plans for putting those ideas into action in ways that will attract participation by Scouts BSA members of all ages and

DEMONSTRATING THE NEED FOR THE PROGRAM FEATURES

Separate the attendees into groups of 6, and have each group select one of its members to act as its leader for the rest of this program session.

- The leader will be the Senior Patrol Leader
- The other 5 are the unit's Patrol Leaders or Crew leaders.
- One is the leader of a New Scouts BSA patrol of 11 year olds (or new inexperienced Crew members),
- One is the leader of the oldest Scouts BSA and Crew members in the unit (16 and older)
- The others are the leaders of the Scouts BSA members “in the middle” in terms of age and experience.

Tell them they will stay in these groups for the rest of this program session.

Tell each group that they have 5 minutes to create a list of 12 exciting Scouting themes which will form the unit's annual plan.

(When the 5 minutes are up, give attendees a printed copy of the following explanation of the Program Features, and discuss it with them)

Ask the attendees these questions:

- Was it difficult to create the list?
- Would it be harder for the youth members to create such a list since they have less experience?
- How many of the themes are repetitions of things done in the last couple years, because they were easy to think of?
- Are ***all*** of the monthly themes appropriate for ***all*** the Scouts BSA and Crew members in the unit, both the least experienced and the most experienced?
- For example, if a group picked a canoe trip, what about the Scouts BSA members who haven't earned their "swimmer" rating and should not be in canoes?
- If a group picked a backpacking event, what about the Scouts BSA members who have never been backpacking, or may not have the stamina for a long hike carrying a backpack?
- If not everyone can participate, then how will all the Scouts BSA and Crew members be interested enough to participate in the chosen themes and attend the outing?
- How will incomplete participation impact the Patrol Method for mixed age patrols?
- How will the unit leaders get the new Scouts BSA members patrol to participate if the outing is too difficult?
- How will the unit leaders get the older Scouts BSA and Crew members to participate and provide leadership if the outing is too easy, or if they've done it several years in a row and don't want to do it again?
- How will it impact the morale of Scouts BSA members who feel "left out" because the theme isn't appropriate for their age and/or skill level?

The Program Features are designed to overcome all of those issues by including:

- Tier I "Essential" activities that even the least experienced Scout BSA members can participate in and master
- Tier II "Challenging" activities that add more advanced activities on top of the "essential" ones
- Tier III "Advanced" activities that add yet another layer of difficulty on top of the other two -- for the oldest and most experienced Scouts BSA and Crew members in the unit
- Meeting plans with skills for each of the 3 levels/tiers of experience.
- Outing plans for Tier I, Tier II and Tier III activities

DEMONSTRATING THE VALUE OF THE PROGRAM FEATURES

NOTE: Text in bold italics are instructions to the Roundtable Commissioner as master of ceremonies.

(Begin by giving the SPL for each group one Program Feature to use for this portion of the session)

1. ***Ask the SPL of each group to show their group the first few pages of the Program Feature, but not the***

EDGE Tips, Games, Meeting Plans or Outing Plans.

Have the group review these introductory pages and discuss the effort required to plan 4 weekly meetings and an outing related to their Program Feature.

After 4 or 5 minutes, ask the groups how hard it would be for their Scouts BSA and Crew members to plan 4 weekly meetings and an outing related to the topic of their Program Feature, based only on what they have seen so far.

Remind them the youth leaders will need to

- Plan for all 3 levels of experience at each meeting
 - Plan for 3 different levels of difficulty for the monthly outing, so each Tier of Scouts BSA and Crew members will feel challenged and engaged at their level of experience
2. ***Have the SPLs hand one Meeting Plan to 4 of the other group members; the Games to the 5th member, while retaining the EDGE Tips. Ask everyone to study his or her page for a couple minutes.***

After a couple minutes, have each member pass his or her page to the person to their left; then repeat until everyone has seen all 5 pages.

Ask the groups if they think their Scouts BSA and Crew members would benefit from being able to use the Meeting Plans, Games and EDGE Tips to plan their weekly meetings.

- Do the meeting plans provide useful structure for a unit meeting?
 - Do the meeting plans provide useful content to enable their Scouts to learn what they need to know for their outing?
 - Do the meeting plans seem to offer useful ideas for every age -- to keep ***all*** the Scouts BSA and Crew members engaged and motivated at meetings?
 - How can the older Scouts BSA and Crew members help the less experienced ones learn the skills described in the meeting plans, to add more to everyone's level of participation?
 - How can the meeting plans help their PLC learn how to organize and plan meetings of their own -- on a topic other than one of the Program Features?
3. ***Then have the SPL hand out the 3 outings plans, and have the group members study them in pairs.*** The SPL pairs with another group member for this part. After a couple minutes, have each pair pass their page to the pair to their right and repeat until everyone has seen all 3 outing plans.

Ask the groups if they think their Scouts BSA and Crew members would benefit from being able to use the Outing Plans, Games and EDGE Tips to plan their monthly outings.

- Do the outing plans provide useful structure and planning assistance for a unit outing?
- Do the outing plans provide useful content to enable the Scouts BSA and Crew members to have fun on their outing?
- Do the outing plans seem to offer something for every age to keep all the Scouts BSA and Crew members engaged and motivated to attend outings?
- How can the older Scouts BSA and Crew members help the less experienced ones use the skills described in the meeting plans, to add more to everyone's level of participation and fun on the outings?
- How can the outing plans help their PLC learn how to organize and plan meetings of their own -- on a topic other than one of the Program Features?

4. *Time permitting, have each group swap their Program Feature with a team next to them and study the meeting plans and outing plans for a second Program Feature.*

5. *Before ending, do the following:*

- Quickly read off the entire list of [Program Features](#) from the back cover of the volume, to show the attendees the breadth of the topics included in the entire set of Program Features.
- Note that there are enough Program Features for more than 3 years of activities before a unit needs to repeat one.
- Note that a unit of mostly inexperienced Scouts BSA members can reuse a Program Feature in a couple years to increase the difficulty level to Tier II or Tier III when they are ready for the added challenges.
- Encourage everyone to buy and use all the Program Features to enhance their unit programs.