

CONDUCTING VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLES—FAQ

Check back frequently as more answers and suggestions are added based on your questions.

GENERAL

Q: How do we get people to return to roundtable?

- Although there may be issues we cannot control impacting Scouters' capacity to attend roundtable, we can control how we conduct roundtable. The overall question we need to answer for roundtable attendees is "What is in it for me?" If Scouters are finding the information timely, the training helpful, the networking useful, and their needs linked to experts and answers, they will come back. If roundtable events respect their time, have engaging presenters, and provide meaningful content, we will be successful.
- The time question is one of the reasons that we looked at promoting the virtual roundtable format. There is no drive time, and a young den leader can put kids to bed and return to roundtable.

Q: How do you get Scouters to tune in to a virtual roundtable?

- The answer probably mirrors what you already use to encourage attendance today:
 - Email
 - Facebook
 - Newsletters
 - Council website calendar
 - Phone calls
 - Texts
- There may be other communication opportunities in your council or district that might work, as well.
- It is also important to remember that you should reach out to your potential attendees multiple times and in multiple ways. For example, not everyone checks their email regularly.

Q: Are the slides and a recording of the July 15, 2020, Commissioners' webinar available?

- Yes. Slides and recordings for *all* webinars are available on our [Virtual Roundtable Resources](#) webpage.

VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE FORMAT

Q: Are the professionals up to speed with the new virtual roundtable format?

- Our National Service Center staff is coordinating communication with professionals regarding our new virtual roundtable format. Information has been, and will continue to be, provided directly to Scout executives and council staff.

Q: Are virtual roundtables the only option available in the future?

- Virtual roundtables have proven to be an effective tool that is responsive to the needs of today's unit leaders. In a recent survey of unit leaders, over 50% of respondents indicated they had attended fewer than half—or even none—of the roundtables offered by their district in the six months prior to the onset of COVID-19. Nearly 90% of the respondents indicated they would be likely to attend a virtual roundtable. Local districts that have been offering virtual roundtables since the onset of COVID-19 report significant increases in attendance.
- Virtual roundtables are a recommended best practice; content being developed by our National Service Center is designed to support virtual meetings.
- All Scouting is local. There will be times when an in-person meeting is the best solution, just as there may be times when multi-district or council-wide roundtables may be a better option than the traditional single-district approach. Local councils and districts are empowered to use the meeting format that best meets local needs at any point in time.

Q: Why the two different time formats? Is one time format preferred over the other?

- [Alternate virtual time formats](#) are simply intended to provide flexibility. Local districts and councils are empowered to adapt and adjust the length of the separate roundtable components and the entire length of the meeting to meet their volunteers' needs and expectations. The recent survey of unit leaders once again communicated significant interest in roundtables that are as efficient as possible, while still providing key information they need.

Q: Are we required to use the recommended formats for our new approach to roundtable?

- Our new approach to roundtable is designed to provide [flexible formats](#) that will enable you to accomplish roundtable's traditional core functions: providing and capturing information, offering current program training, and providing networking opportunities. They also respond to feedback from unit leaders regarding the need to offer focused, efficient roundtables. Local councils and districts are empowered to use the meeting format that best meets their local needs.

VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE MEETING COMPONENTS

*** Q:** Is there a resource for “ice breaker” games, etc. that can be used in the pre-meeting social gathering time?

- There is no one-stop shop for “ice-breaker” activities that we know of. There are tons of examples online, however, and you can even find some great virtual activities that have been developed during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Most ice breakers that you may already be familiar with are easily or creatively adjusted to become virtual.
- Have a good site to share? Send us a comment below!

Q: One of the most successful features of great roundtables of the past has been unit presentations of activities/skills in areas of particular experience or expertise. Where would this type of idea-sharing be planned or placed in a virtual format?

- Guest presentations can fit well in a few different places of a virtual roundtable, depending on the content. A presentation like this might be just right for a breakout session if it is especially relevant to a particular subset of participants, or it might make a great part of the Safety Moment or support a Hot Topic. The key is efficiently providing participants with information they value, wherever it fits best. Local councils and districts are empowered to adapt and adjust details of their roundtables to enable them to best meet unit leaders' needs and expectations.

Q: Will networking happen only before or after a virtual roundtable? How do you get the same impact as “hallway networking?”

- Networking can take place during the meeting using the chat feature, interactive whiteboard, or other tool that complements the virtual presentation app you use. In the experience of those who have conducted virtual roundtables for a while now, this activity has not taken away from the primary activity going on.
- Hallway conversations can take place in a separate Zoom meeting room or during time provided before and after a virtual roundtable. Of course, these conversations can take place in an actual hallway when in-person meetings are an option.

Q: The [virtual roundtable formats](#) are great, but they should permit more real-time communication and feedback with things like polls or comment options to provide a flow of information with roundtable participants.

- Zoom provides a flexible polling function that makes it possible to quickly gather input and feedback from participants that can be shared after the meeting.

*** Q:** How can we make Scouter and unit recognition part of a virtual roundtable?

- Any Scouter and unit recognition can be given at roundtable, whether virtual or in-person (though you're encouraged to save the District Award of Merit and Silver Beaver award for District/Council banquets).
- The opening is often a great time to recognize Scouters and units, but the new virtual roundtable formats are flexible to allow you to determine where recognition best fits in your event. Just ensure that you plan your time properly to cover everything your team has planned for the remainder of your roundtable.

Opening

*** Q:** Are the Pledge of Allegiance, Scout Oath, and Scout Law optional? Can we include the Outdoor Code?

- The new virtual roundtable formats are meant to be customized to fit the needs of your roundtable. You may opt not to include the Pledge, Oath, and Law or opt to add in the Outdoor Code if your roundtable team so chooses.
- The openings provided on the [Roundtable Planning Resources](#) webpage for each month may or may not include the Pledge, Oath, Law, and Outdoor Code, so if you plan to incorporate them into your roundtable, you may need to look at other months' resources to find a suitable video or simply lead them on your own.

- **Note:** There is not currently an opening video that includes the Outdoor Code; however, videos are added to the webpage regularly; check back monthly for new offerings!

* **Q:** I see that a prayer is not part of the suggested opening? Can we include one?

- Not all councils and districts include a prayer as part of their roundtables; therefore, a prayer was not specifically included.
- The new virtual roundtable formats are meant to be customized to fit the needs of your roundtable, so if your team wants to add an interfaith prayer, we encourage you to do so.

* **Q:** Our recent roundtable openings have featured patriotic songs from the Cub and Scouts BSA songbooks, and we encourage everyone in attendance to sing. How can this be done in a virtual setting in a way that involves everyone?

- Singing can be a great way to involve people in the meeting; however, it can also be chaotic if everyone sings at their own speed. One option would be to mute everyone while they sing, allowing the song leader to be the only heard voice. Or you can all just sing and enjoy the moment as it occurs.

* **Q:** Many of our districts utilize the Order of the Arrow chapters for roundtable opening and closing ceremonies. What should we consider when including them virtually?

- Utilizing your Order of the Arrow chapters for roundtable opening and closings is a great option. If you typically record your roundtables, however, you must follow [Digital Safety](#) guidelines for online Scouting activities and refrain from recording those sections of the roundtable involving youth.

Breakouts (Training & Discussion)

* **Q:** Is it recommended that all program levels (Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing, etc.) meet together and then move to separate breakout rooms, or does it make more sense to host individual roundtables for each program?

- The new roundtable formats are designed to provide a flexible framework for hosting a monthly roundtable meeting. Roundtable commissioner teams are free to use these formats or create others that best fit their needs.
- In general, the Hot Topic and Safety Moment, Opening, and Closing components of roundtable should apply to all program areas. On the other hand, the program-specific breakout components provide time for Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts, and Venturing leaders to join separate breakout rooms to discuss ideas and concepts that are more tailored to their program areas.
- Since all Scouting is local, it might make sense in one district or council to host a separate Cub Scout-specific roundtable, whereas a joint roundtable may be most appropriate in another district or council.

* **Q:** Are there materials available for facilitators of program-specific breakout discussions?

- Topics for the monthly program-specific breakout discussions are listed under the Roundtable Planning Resources section of the [Roundtable Support](#) webpage. These typically consist of

videos created by the national program committees. Once the video has been shown via the virtual meeting platform or on-screen at an in-person meeting, the roundtable commissioner may then use the talking points from the video to lead a discussion with the attendees of that particular breakout.

*** Q:** Some Scouters are active in more than one program area, such as Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA. How can a roundtable commissioner best place roundtable attendees in the proper breakout rooms in an equitable and timely manner?

- Just as with an in-person roundtable, a Scouter must choose which program-specific breakout most appeals to them in a virtual setting. If a Scouter is active in more than one program area, the roundtable commissioner will ideally determine their breakout placement ahead of time.
- One possible solution is to ask participants' preference using an online registration tool prior to the roundtable. Local councils use a variety of Scouting-specific event registration platforms that can be tailored to this purpose.
- Alternatively, at the start of roundtable, a team member may use your virtual meeting platform's chat function to make inquiries of each attendee and then prepare the breakout assignments during earlier parts of the roundtable.

Q: Will you be adding training for leaders wanting to hold virtual unit meetings when conditions do not allow for in-person meetings?

- Many unit leaders have indeed been using virtual formats for their unit meetings. The [Virtual Roundtable Resources](#) web page provides a variety of links to support delivery of virtual meetings. We will continue to add to those resources in the future.

Q: Does the program training provided in roundtable breakouts align with training available in the BSA Learn Center, and will it satisfy position-specific requirements?

- The program training provided in roundtable breakouts is designed to help unit leaders run their monthly unit and den meetings. It is intended to *add* to position specific basic training, not replace it. As a result, it is offered in addition to training available in the [BSA Learn Center](#) and does not count toward position specific training requirements.

*** Q:** Is it recommended to offer supplemental training opportunities during roundtable, such as leader-specific training?

- With the new 50- and 75-minute meeting formats, there is not a designated spot for supplemental training events other than the Hot Topic, Safety Moment, and program-specific breakouts. However, if it makes more sense for a district or council to host leader-specific training during the monthly roundtable than using the nationally supported material, the roundtable commissioner team may consult the appropriate training committee to consider offering individual components of these training programs during the program-specific breakouts over a period of several months.

Closing

*** Q:** Because our breakout sessions take place in different rooms and often end at different times, we have not had any formal closings in many years. Is this something we should try to incorporate into our roundtable? How would we do so with all our sessions ending at different times?

- There are some compelling reasons to start incorporating a closing into your roundtable. Knowing that the whole group will reconvene for a closing at a specified time is a great way to help set some pacing on breakout sessions and other parts of the roundtable, which may help keep discussions more focused and productive as a result. It is also a plus for those who are more likely to attend if they know that a meeting will end on schedule.
- Breakout groups finishing sooner than others can use the additional time to network and link their needs to resources others can provide, which can happen virtually as well as in person. Your closing can then wrap up the meeting's themes across the various topics and breakouts and leave attendees feeling positive and ready to apply what they learned.
- Having everyone together for those few minutes at the end also gives you a chance to gauge the energy level and effectiveness of the meeting and gather some feedback for next time. Everyone gains from a good, consistently implemented closing.

VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE CONTENT

Q: Are we required to use the content provided by our National Service Center and only in the recommended month?

- Content provided by our National Service Center has been developed in collaboration with the volunteers on our national program committees. Recommended timing is designed to fit with the typical Scouting program year.
- As more content for our new approach to roundtable becomes available, local councils and districts will have more options to select content that best meets their needs in any particular month. The format of our [Roundtable Planning Resources](#) page will enable roundtable commissioners to select from content either by month or by subject.
- All Scouting is local. Local councils and districts and councils are empowered to select and deliver content that best meets that needs at any point in time.

Q: No content to support Venturing or Sea Scout roundtable breakouts has been provided. Are there plans to provide that content in the future?

- All Venturing roundtable resources previously available on our Roundtable Support website have been retained in the [Roundtable Resources Archive](#) and continue to be a resource that can be used for Venturing breakouts.
- Sea Scout roundtable resources have not been provided by our National Service Center in the past.
- Because allocation of available resources was needed, priority was given to Cub Scouting and Scouts BSA—two programs that serve the majority of BSA membership. As work to implement our new approach to roundtable continues, resources will likely become available to broaden support.

VIRTUAL MEETING MANAGEMENT

Q: If a district transitions to virtual roundtables, the district commissioner should identify volunteers who have skills delivering successful virtual roundtables. Many traits are similar with in-person roundtables, but a person with an understanding of virtual meetings will be a benefit, yes?

- Correct...and, in a recent survey of commissioners, 74% of respondents considered themselves to be either intermediate or advanced users of Zoom, while fewer than 3% indicated they had never used it.
- The survey results don't mean that roundtable commissioners won't need additional resources and people to help them prepare to plan and conduct virtual roundtables effectively, but they do suggest that many have basis knowledge that will help them transition to the new approach quickly.

Q: Do you have suggestions for providing virtual roundtables in areas that do not have internet service or where small towns are geographically far apart?

- Districts with limited internet access have found that local libraries or chartered organizations may be willing to assist by offering use of their facilities where high-speed internet is available. Often, bandwidth problems can be managed by asking participant to turn off their video until they wish to speak. Also, all the program content available on the [Roundtable Planning Resources](#) page can be downloaded ahead of time so that it can be shown to participants during an in-person meeting without needing an internet connection.

VIRTUAL MEETING TOOLS

Q: Will roundtable commissioners need to have specific training on Zoom or other virtual meeting tools? Will that be available from a BSA resource?

- Roundtable commissioners will need to be proficient in using Zoom—or other virtual meeting tools—to offer virtual roundtables. In a recent survey of commissioners, 74% of respondents considered themselves to be either intermediate or advanced users of Zoom, while fewer than 3% indicated they had never used it.
- Successful virtual roundtables will also need multiple roundtable commissioners working together to provide a smooth experience. Individuals will need to be assigned to host breakout sessions; more than one person will need to take responsibility for other elements, such as monitoring the waiting room, sharing materials on participants' screens, coordinating questions and comments in the chat feature, etc.
- The [Virtual Roundtable Resources](#) page contains information and guidance to help commissioners use virtual meeting tools to run successful, creative, engaging virtual roundtables.

Q: Although Zoom is currently making a version of its virtual meeting application available at no cost, that may not continue once there is less need for social distancing. Districts may not have a budget for this. How are subscription costs for Zoom, or other virtual meeting tools, to be paid?

- Local districts and volunteer teams were experimenting with virtual meetings before COVID-19 and the need for social distancing. In many cases, volunteers had personal subscriptions or access to other virtual meeting tools that could be used. Some chartered organizations may be able to provide access and, in some cases, local councils may be able to do so. Scouts are thrifty: as is the case with many other local needs, solutions often exist within our local community of volunteers and supporters if we make the need known.

- While our National Service Center staff recognizes the need and will explore potential options, it is likely the best solutions will be local.

ROUNDTABLE FACILITATOR TRAINING & SUPPORT

Q: Will training be provided for development of video content?

- At this time, there are no plans to provide training for the development of video content. As with many technology-related skills, an internet search will provide a variety of online resources that will enable those interested to choose options that align with their interests and the type of devices they want to use.

RECORDING

*** Q:** Recordings of youth are included in some of the roundtable content provided by our National Service Center. Are there options that would enable recording of local roundtables that include youth so more unit leaders will be able to benefit from information made available at roundtable?

- To include youth, the council should have on file a talent release for every youth under 18 who is included in a video or part of roundtable that is being recorded. If the roundtable staff want to show videos done by units, there are a couple of things to keep in mind. If the video includes youth and wasn't intended for mass distribution, then it could be shared via roundtable but not if roundtable is being recorded and then posted on a website or social media. If the video includes youth and is intended to be distributed widely, talent releases should be on file with the council for every youth. BSA health forms can be used as talent releases. A couple of things to keep in mind when recording youth: use only first name and last initial, and try not to show anything that would indicate location (i.e., troop numbers, name badges, council strips, etc.).