

THE YOUTH PROGRAM

What is Youth Program?

Youth Program is the totality of what young people do in Scouting (the activities), how it is done (the Scout method), and the reason why it is done (the purpose).

The Youth Program in Scouting covers the complete span of a young person's experience in the movement. It starts when the youngest member joins the movement, typically somewhere between the ages of six and eight, and ends when the oldest member leaves; usually between the ages of eighteen and twenty five. It is a progressive process of education and personal development through largely recreational means.

WHAT: The Youth Program encompasses all activities that young people in Scouting take part in: camping and outdoor activities, community service and community development projects, earning proficiency badges, games, ceremonies, troop and patrol meetings, etc. All of these must have one thing in common: they must be attractive and challenging to young people.

HOW: The Youth Program in Scouting has one fundamental dimension which determines how it is carried out: the Scout method. As defined in the constitution of the World Organization of Scout Movement, the Scout method is a system of progressive self education through:

- A promise and law
- Learning by doing
- Membership in small groups (for example the Color group), involving, under adult guidance, progressive discovery and acceptance of responsibility and training towards self-government directed towards the development of character, and the acquisition of competence, self-reliance, dependability and the capacities both to cooperate and to lead.
- Progressive and stimulating programs of varied activities based on the interests of the participants, including games, useful skills, and services to the community, taking place largely in an outdoor setting in contact with nature.

WHY: The Youth Program is based on the principles of Scouting - Duty to GOD, Duty to Others, and Duty to Self - and is the means to achieving the purpose of Scouting:

To contribute to the development of Young People in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and members of their local, national, and international communities.

The Process of Youth Program Development

Program development is the process of regularly re-appraising and adjusting the Youth Program of a national Scout association to suit the needs and aspirations of young people and their society and thus improve its quality.

Program development is based on:

- Reflection on the purpose, the principles and the method of Scouting; these constitute the foundation on which the Youth program is built.
- Analysis of recent trends in the needs and interests of young people and the society in which they live; in our rapidly changing world, the continued relevance of the Youth Program depends on the appropriate response to this analysis.
- Consideration of the aims, objectives and priorities of the national Scout association; this includes the formulation of appropriate educational objectives for the Youth Program of each age section.
- Evaluation of practical experience with the current Youth Program; this should take into consideration feedback from participating members.

A Youth Program resulting from this process of program development will reflect the unity of Scouting through its purpose and method, which are fundamental; and the diversity and flexibility required to respond to the variety of situations and milieu (social, geographical, economic, etc) in which it operates.

Among the critical indicators of quality in Youth Program which may be considered in program development are:

- - An increase in membership penetration (ratio of members to available youth population);
- - An increase in the number of members receiving certain advancement awards or ranks;
- An increase in participation in certain types of activities, for example, camps and jamborees;
- The visibility and positive image of Scouting, both within the movement and externally, and its perceived relevance and usefulness to society.

The Youth Program of an association should be evaluated regularly, through formal and informal means, and adjustments made as required. A major review of the Youth Program should be undertaken at least every 5 - 10 years; carried out according to the process described above, this would normally lead to more substantial change in content or design of the program.

The Delivery of Youth Program

The delivery (implementation) of the Youth Program lies in the hands of Adult Leaders, working in partnership with youth members; they provide programs of varied activities, based on the participants' interests, to young people in each age section.

A high quality Youth Program which is attractive to young people and is perceived to be relevant to the social reality, in which it is offered, will also attract Adult Leaders committed to supporting its implementation.

The Youth Program should be implemented in the manner in which it was designed (i.e. in keeping with the Scout method).

The National Program Commissioner and the National Training Commissioner together should analyze the role of leaders, identify their training and personal development needs and evaluate the effectiveness of that personal development in terms of its impact on the implementation of the Youth Program.

The Elements of the Youth Program

The National Scout Association which sets out to provide a high-quality Scouting experience for its members must consider four inter-related dimensions of Youth Program.

All four dimensions are essential; if any one or more of them is missing or deficient, the quality of Scouting offered to Scouts through the Youth Program will not meet the demanding standards young people seek and deserve.

These four elements of Youth Program are:

- A program for each age section comprising activities carried out according to the Scout method and designed to achieve the purpose of Scouting.
- Regular and systematic program development to ensure these programs are up-to-date and in tune with members' interests, while remaining faithful to the fundamental principles of Scouting and method which are timeless and universal.
- An appropriate delivery network in the form of an adequate number of trained leaders to make sure the programs of each age section are implemented as they were designed to be and reach the young people who wish to be scouts.
- A support infrastructure staffed by qualified and active leaders, to carry out program development and monitor the effectiveness of the programs of each age section.