



Scouts
NSW

Planning in the Group Made Easy

INTRODUCTION

Developing Sectional Programs, both short and long term, are fundamental to the way we deliver the Scouting Program. Yet rarely does a Group, as an entity in itself, take time out to consider where it is heading and how it is going to get there? This form of planning is often referred to as **Strategic Planning** and is fundamental to the growth and sustainability of any Scout Group.

Setting Strategic Plans are common practices at National and State levels; and these documents are used to make sure there is a road map to assist Scouting to achieve its mission:

The Mission for Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

This is achieved by:

- *Involving them throughout their formative years in a non-formal educational process.*
- *Using a specific method that makes each individual the principal agent in their development as a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person.*
- *Assisting them to establish a value system based upon spiritual, social, and personal principles as expressed in the Promise and Law.*

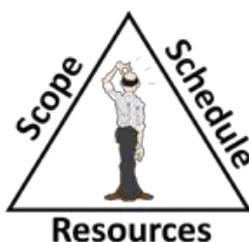
Ensuring that Groups are also setting these types of plans is the responsibility of the next level of governance (e.g. District) and they should be reviewed from time to time to ensure that goals being set and the commitments being made are coming to fruition or, if not, altered to reflect the current course of the Group.

WHAT IS A GROUP PLAN?

Put simply, it is a tool that assists a Group in organising all its resources in order to progress from its current state to its desired future state.

Improvement in living the values of Scouting, offering attractive programs to youth, preparing qualified leaders, having well established traditions, managing efficiently, increasing financial resources, strengthening the Group's place in the community, and increasing membership are things that do not happen by accident.

Therefore, a plan must be made. To make a plan is to confront a situation and improve it through organised action. We must know exactly where we want to go, how to get there, when we want to get there, and who will do things that must be done in order to get there. We must never forget that the future belongs to those who plan for it.



WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF A PLAN?

The plan begins by reviewing the current condition of the Group with the objective of identifying the principal challenges it faces. It is important to reflect upon why the Group is where it is at and what are the key learning's from the past that need to be kept in mind for the future.

Next, goals must be set. A goal is a clear description of the improvement that the Group wants to make and must be clearly measurable.

Setting goals is **not** enough. Also, it is necessary to design the specific actions which must be carried out in order to reach the goal and set deadlines for completing the actions.

The actions require people who are responsible for making them happen. Therefore, particular people **must** be assigned the responsibility for making certain that each action is completed by its deadline. This is the only way the plan can be put into action.

Finally, it is necessary to evaluate whether the desired results are being or have been achieved. Evaluations should occur periodically during each year, and especially at the end of each year.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO PLAN FOR?

All Groups will find themselves at different stages of the planning lifecycle. Some will find that in certain areas they are strong and in others not so strong. In this resource book the common focus areas for consideration centre around:

- Membership - Youth
- Membership – Adults
- Program
- Group Operations
- Community Involvement

Additional guidance in reviewing these focus areas is provided in the “Tips to Planning” at the back of this publication

This is not to say there may not be other specific areas that a Group should be considering. To help facilitate this some blank worksheets have been included.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

A great place to start is with a SWOT Analysis. Put simply, in an open forum (a combined Group Council / Group Committee meeting would be a great place to start) identifying, what the Group is strong in, where it has weaknesses, what the threats might be to it achieving its goals and what might be the opportunities to take it forward is a way to get thinking started.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Finally, it is important to set priorities. Trying to complete everything at once often leads to nothing getting done. The best way to do this is to list each of the actions you have identified and their completion dates in order of date. As a combined team reflect on what is to be achieved and by when. Where actions have common dates discuss your ability to achieve all of these concurrently. In some cases, you will **need** to change some dates. Remember, planning is just a much of a journey as it is arriving at the end. Setting realistic timelines is just as important as setting the action itself.

MEMBERSHIP – Youth

(An abbreviated example has been provided in appendix “A” to help get you started)

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party
Does the Group have at least 3 Youth Sections?					
Does each Section have at least 18 members in each?					
Is there an even age spread of youth in each Section?					
How many youth members have successfully linked from one Section to another in the past 2 years?					

MEMBERSHIP - Adults

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party
Does the Group have a Group Leader and does each Section have at least (2) Leaders?					
Is there a structured ongoing Training Plan for all Leaders in the Group? (e.g. working towards the Wood Badge)					
Is there a diversity of age and gender in leadership in each Section?					
What succession planning is currently in place?					

PROGRAM

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party
Is there a minimum of (6) out of doors activities per Section p.a.?					
Are there well-constructed long term, medium term and short term programs?					
Do the youth councils meet monthly and how involved in the planning of the Sections are they?					
What is the spread of progression through the Achievement Pathways?					

GROUP OPERATIONS

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party
Are Group Councils and Committees being held monthly with robust agendas?					
Are there long term and short term Financial Plans for the Group?					
Is the Group Hall in good condition? Is there a regular maintenance plan in place?					
Is there regular engagement with Parents? (e.g. functions, news bulletins, etc.)					
Is there a waiting list for new members in place?					

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party
Is there an active Public Relations Officer in place?					
Does the Group participate in at least three (3) local Council or Community events p.a.?					
Is there formal links in place with other key community groups?					
Are there regular visits to places of worship of different faiths?					

OTHER: “

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party

TIPS TO PLANNING

The Three Year Goal - having completed the **SWOT** analysis and reflected upon why the Group is where it is, next comes the task of setting a three year goal. Why so far out, you may ask? The reality is that creating and making change takes time. The old adage “Rome wasn’t built in a day” is just as true in Scouting. Setting a three year goal allows for incremental improvement. Also, it means that regular check points along the way (at least annually) may be undertaken and in need corrections made as the Group changes. Sometimes, a goal that was set for three years is completed sooner or may take longer. Therefore, not only may the actions need to change but the timelines to deliver on them too.

Actions to be taken – is probably the most difficult part of the planning exercise. Working out what needs to be done and being specific requires careful thought. Each goal may give rise to more than one action too. A good start is to brainstorm (writing up on a whiteboard other people’s ideas) all the things that could be done to achieve the Goal. Next break them down further into smaller steps and then look to those that can be done sooner than later. Every Goal should have at least 1-2 actions to be achieved in the first year. Most important is to make sure that the action (and the Goal for that matter) is realistic. There is no point setting an action plan that is so onerous that the other members of the Group lose interest.

Setting a due date – is as much a discipline as anything else. By committing to a date to achieve something and regularly following up progress ensures people are working towards a conclusion. Goals and action plans without a target date rarely happen. Also, having a target date and achieving the goal allows for a celebration of achievement. Like the action plans make sure the date is realistic. Set too soon and it is unlikely people can achieve it. Set too far out, people will lose interest.

Assigning responsibilities – “a burden shared is a burden halved” or more simply sharing the work to be done means everyone achieves the outcome as a Team and no one person is carrying all of the workload on themselves. In any Group there is a wealth of knowledge and skills and tapping into these so that people’s talents are best used to help in achieving the goals is critical. People like to be a part of something successful and they will want to contribute where they feel the workload is being shared around. Often the role of the Group Leader is to act as the Project Manager to make sure all that is planned is on track.

CONCLUSION

For the planning process to best succeed it is important that whatever goals are set they are committed to by the Group team and **SMART**:

Specific – clarity as to what needs to be done.

Measurable – identifiable as to what success will look like.

Attainable – within the reach of the Group, based on where it is at.

Relevant – meet the needs to the Group.

Time framed – a due date for completion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In developing this resource, we wish to acknowledge the primary source document being “Let’s make a Group Plan” – Copyright © The Scout Association of Australia 1993.

Also, the Association thanks **Elston Hynd & Peter Blatch** for their work in preparing this publication.

APPENDIX “A” – an abbreviated example of Planning in the Group

Focus Area	Current situation	Three year goal	Actions to be taken	Due Date	Responsible Party
Does the Group have at least 3 Youth Sections?	<p>2 Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cub Scouts • Scouts 	3 Sections by adding Joey Scouts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct local analysis of 6-8 year olds. • Talk to Parents known with young children. • Hold an information night • Recruit 2 potential Joey Scout Leaders. • Register Joey Scout Section 	<p>2 months</p> <p>2 months</p> <p>4 months</p> <p>6 months</p> <p>8 months</p>	<p>Group Leader with Group Recruitment Officer and</p> <p>Recruiter of Adult Volunteers (RAV)</p>
Does each Section have at least 18 members in each?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cub Scouts (18) • Scouts (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joey Scouts (10) • Cub Scouts (20) • Scouts (20) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct analysis of current ages in Sections and those eligible for linking. • Plan “visit your next Section” events • Leverage the project to establish a new Joey Scout Mob. • Conduct a visit to all local catchment schools (4 identified). • Hold a Group Youth recruitment display at the local Council Street Fair. 	<p>2 months</p> <p>6 months</p> <p>12 months</p> <p>First 6 months in new year</p> <p>Mid next year.</p>	<p>Group Leader</p> <p>Group Council RAV</p> <p>Group Recruitment Officer</p> <p>Group Committee</p>