

Advancement News

NOVEMBER

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Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Learn More About the *Guide to Advancement*

(And spend a week in the Florida Keys: Jan. 16–21, 2012)

The Florida Sea Base beckons. Escape the cold or snow, and join us at tropical Islamorada in the Florida Keys, about two hours south of Miami. Space is limited and registration is first-come, first-served. Reservations must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2011. The course begins with check-in Monday afternoon, Jan. 16, 2012, and concludes Friday, Jan. 20, 2012. Housing will be provided through Saturday. Wednesday afternoon is devoted to free time to enjoy local attractions. Spouses are welcome to attend, although no family programs are offered. The \$400 course fee includes meals, dormitory housing, sheets, towels, and course materials.

To obtain a registration form, send an email to judy.maldonado@scouting.org. See the "Training" page on www.scouting.org for more information.

Course Description: The Mechanics of Advancement

Advancement is a key indicator of a successful unit. Learn how to enhance the program for your Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Venturers, and Sea Scouts by increasing your knowledge of the BSA's procedures governing advancement. This conference—designed for unit, district, and council-level volunteers and professional Scouters—will connect participants to the essentials of advancement, steer them toward a wealth of advancement resources available on www.scouting.org, and engage them through group discussions on effective ways to resolve advancement issues and challenges. The new *Guide to Advancement* and revised Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook will be featured and covered in detail.

About Advancement News

Advancement News is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America national Advancement Team. Its intent is to support and clarify procedures found in the *Guide to Advancement*, announce various changes and updates in advancement, and to assist advancement committees in making decisions that can help increase the rate of advancement. The plan is to distribute it monthly, but we're flexible. It will go out when there is something important to say. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at advancement.team@scouting.org.

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On Increasing Advancement

Using Internet Advancement and ScoutNET's Record Achievements

The introduction of Journey to Excellence with its metrics for Cub Scout and Boy Scout advancement has heightened interest in recording advancement. As this takes place, the BSA's Information Delivery Group is frequently asked a number of questions. We think the readers of *Advancement News*—especially those entering advancement at the council service center—will also be interested in the answers provided by the IDG.

Is Internet Advancement supported by Internet Explorer or other browsers?

Currently Internet Explorer is the supported browser for Internet Advancement. In the future, a migration to multiple browser support for advancement entry will take place as part of a much larger deployment of a new membership system with both member and unit information management capabilities.

Will the advancement rank information in a member's person profile count toward Journey to Excellence?

Yes, the Journey to Excellence dashboard uses the rank information that is stored in the member person profile.

When we update the member's advancement record through achievement entry in ScoutNET, does this appear on the District Advancement Report and count toward the Journey to Excellence?

Rank advancement entered through Record Achievements will count toward the statistics shown on the District Advancement Report. Rank advancement that is entered to individual member records is counted by the Journey to Excellence dashboard.

Is it true that after a unit expires, and until the new charter is posted, the unit cannot access Internet Advancement?

No. Internet Advancement remains available if the unit is in "lapsed" status. Advancement earned before the unit expiration date can be submitted for the members active in the unit when unit expiration occurred. New members not yet registered will not be included until the renewal is posted by the council.

Does Internet Advancement provide a report of advancement by member to verify the data appearing on the JTE dashboard?

Currently there is no separate reporting for the number of rank advancements from Internet Advancement that will provide the information as measured by Journey to Excellence.

How often is it recommended that units submit reports from Internet Advancement?

Generally monthly, or as needed, with at least one final report made each year in December. This is important as it ensures the Journey to Excellence record for the year is accurate.

Managing Subscriptions to *Advancement News*

***Advancement News* is designed for council and district advancement chairs, advancement staff advisers, and Eagle processors. However, any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.**

Subscribing. Please send a message to advancement.team@scouting.org, with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. We will add the subscription to the distribution list within the next two weeks.

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The Cub Scout Angle

Cub Scout Advancement Likely Underreported

The *Guide to Advancement*, in topics 3.0.0.1 and 3.0.0.2 (which cover advancement committee responsibilities), calls for the establishment and implementation of action plans that will stimulate advancement and lead to maximum success in the Journey to Excellence. For a council to achieve one of the JTE award levels in item 7, Cub Scout advancement, the following will be required in 2012.

Bronze: 40 percent of Cub Scouts must advance at least one rank, or the rate must increase by 2 percent—for example, 36 percent to 38 percent.

Silver: 55 percent of Cub Scouts must advance at least one rank, or 40 percent and an increase of 2 percent.

Gold: 75 percent of Cub Scouts must advance at least one rank, or 55 percent and an increase of 2 percent.

Nationally, the percentage of Cub Scouts who advanced at least one rank increased from 45 percent to 51 percent from 2008 to 2010, and 61 percent of councils have reported an increase during 2011. This suggests the rate could approach 55 percent for the year. However, it is highly likely Cub Scout advancement is underreported, and the actual rate may be significantly higher.

It makes sense, then, that the first step in an action plan would be to improve accuracy by initiating an effort to increase advancement reporting. The most efficient method may be email messages and phone calls to pack advancement coordinators, Cubmasters, or pack committee chairs urging them to report advancement. An email message could provide a link to Internet Advancement and information on how to obtain a unit access ID, and how to get started making entries.

Entering advancement through Internet Advancement represents the most efficient method to ensure advancement is recorded to the JTE dashboard.

As more packs consistently report advancement, an accurate baseline can be derived and plans to increase advancement directed to where they are most needed.

Advancement Committee Mechanics

Committee Size Makes the Difference—Continued!

In the October 2011 issue of *Advancement News*, council advancement committee responsibilities outlined in section 3 of the *Guide to Advancement* were discussed, and a list of 12 positions for a committee suggested. It is through this recommended practice that a council may develop the capacity to accomplish everything called for.

In the “What Do You Think” survey question in that issue, we asked advancement chairs to tell us how many volunteers were active with their committees. You told us the average size of a council advancement committee—not counting district advancement chairs—is eight people. The average size of a district advancement committee is six. There were only a few councils responding with more than the recommended 12 members, but it is likely many of their volunteers focus on the priorities of Eagle Scout boards of review and service projects.

For advancement committees to make that leap toward positively influencing the rate of advancement—especially in Cub Scouting—most councils will need more volunteers. Pack and troop advancement coordinators—or assistant unit leaders who understand how to support their Scouts in a strong rate of advancement—are among the best prospects for advancement committee members at either the district or council level. Prospecting methods such as “Friendstorming On Tour,” No. 510-003, have the potential to identify additional willing volunteers. Stay tuned for more ideas on increasing advancement committee size and effectiveness.

From the Guide to Advancement

Active Participation and Applying the “Third Test”

The *Guide to Advancement*, in topic 4.2.3.1, takes a new approach in determining whether a Scout has been “active” to the extent required for rank advancement. Three sequential tests are set forth. The first two require a Scout to be registered and in “good standing.” For the third test a Scout is evaluated against his unit’s reasonable expectations that refer to

a level of activity. If he does not meet these expectations, however, he may still be considered active for the purposes of advancement. In summary, here's how it works.

First, a board of review must agree that Scouting's values have taken hold and been exhibited. The *Guide to Advancement* expands on this on pages 21 and 22. If such agreement can be reached, then one of the following must be established:

1. The unit's reasonable expectations that refer to a level of activity have not been met due to other positive endeavors in or out of Scouting. For example, activity with the Order of the Arrow, his religious institution, school, sports, or clubs that also develop character, citizenship, or personal fitness, may be considered and "counted."
- OR
2. The unit's reasonable expectations that refer to a level of activity have not been met due to noteworthy circumstances that have prevented a higher level of participation. These may be medical, educational, family, or other issues that for practical purposes limit the Scout's ability to participate. If it can be established that the Scout would have been more active if he could have been, then he is deemed "active" for the purposes of advancement.

It is important to note that it is up to a board of review to make the determination. The Scout's level of activity should be discussed at the Scoutmaster conference, along with considerations of Scout spirit, and reasons why the Scout has not been more active. As a result, it is possible the Scout may decide he is not ready for advancement, or perhaps that the Scoutmaster may support the Scout's view that he should be considered active in spite of unit expectations. Regardless, the Scoutmaster does not have the authority to hold back a candidate for rank advancement. There is no requirement that a Scoutmaster conference must be "passed."

Eagle Issues

Submitting Eagle Applications Approved by Board of Review Under Disputed Circumstances

The *Guide to Advancement* in topic 8.0.3.2, "Initiating Eagle Scout Board of Review Under Disputed Circumstances," provides for a district or council board of review when a unit leader or committee chair does not sign the Eagle Scout Rank application, if a unit leader conference is denied, if it is thought a unit will not provide a fair hearing, or if the unit leader or project beneficiary refuses to sign final approval for what might be considered a satisfactory service project.

In cases where the unit leader or committee chair does not sign, the Eagle Scout Rank Application may still be filed electronically. The dates for those signatures are left blank. The date of a unit leader (Scoutmaster) conference, however, is required for electronic processing. If a Scoutmaster refuses to hold one—in spite of the procedure outlined in the *Guide* (see topic 4.2.3.5)—the Scout may enter the date of any personal conference or meeting he had with the unit leader since becoming a Life Scout. If no such meeting was ever held, then the application must be sent with an explanatory letter to the national Advancement Team for manual processing.

What's in a Name?

A contributor to the SCOUTS-L Digest said after the release of the new Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook, "I've always advised Eagle candidates that the document is called the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project Workbook for a reason; that demonstrating leadership was the point, not necessarily the service." He went on to imply that leadership is no longer an important aspect of the project.

Leadership, of course, is no less important, but the writer is not alone in his concern. Even several of the volunteer reviewers who assisted with the new workbook voiced this. However, consensus was that though leadership is critical, the requirement does not emphasize it above the other elements involved. It says, "Plan, develop, and give leadership to a service project. . . ." Project management, as suggested in "plan" and "develop," is equally important with "service" and "leadership." It would be just as inappropriate to approve a project proposal that does not provide an opportunity to give leadership, as to approve one that does not offer a challenge in planning and development and impact through meaningful service.

The required elements—planning and development, leadership, and service—work together to contribute to the three aims of Scouting. The mental exercises in project management relates primarily to mental fitness, while the experience of leading—with the related lessons in ethics, fairness, and accountability—has the potential to make a real difference in one's character. Service, of course, is included because of its importance in fulfilling responsibilities of participating citizenship. To emphasize one requirement over the other can lessen the value of the overall learning experience as it relates to achievement of all three of Scouting's aims.

The aims of Scouting: character development, citizenship training, and mental and physical fitness.

Merit Badges—What's New?

Blue Card Is Nationally Recognized Merit Badge Record

The *Guide to Advancement* states the following in topic 7.0.0.2: "Though it has not been clearly stated in the past, units, districts, and local councils do not have the authority to implement a different system for merit badge approval and documentation. In any case, through the years, many councils have created new forms and approaches to the process, some including IT components. In an effort to gather and consider these potential best practices, councils are now asked to submit descriptions and copies of their blue card alternatives to the national Advancement Team."

Note that this does not say that if councils have, up until now, produced alternatives, that they must stop using them. They should, however, understand the "cons" of utilizing anything other than the Application for Merit Badge, commonly called the blue card.

- If the Scout takes a "partial," evidenced by an alternative to the blue card, to another merit badge counselor, he may find that the counselor only accepts blue cards.
- If a Scout moves to another council and must provide evidence of a merit badge, he may find that his new council will not accept anything but the blue card.
- If later in life an Eagle Scout loses his medal and certificate, he must submit evidence that everything was completed in order to obtain replacements. The members of the Eagle Issues Task Force will have to spend additional time assuring that any alternatives to blue cards are, in fact, legitimate and acceptable.

Councils using alternatives to blue cards are encouraged to submit them as potential best practices. The national Advancement Team can then refer to them as it considers how to approach merit badge approvals in the future. Councils, going forward, however, may not implement alternative systems without approval from the national Advancement Team.

Special Necessities

Using Alternative Requirements

The *Guide to Advancement*, in topic 10.2.2.1, "Using Alternative Requirements," indicates that a Scout with a permanent physical or mental disability (or a disability expected to last more than two years or beyond the 18th birthday) who is unable to complete all the requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class rank may, with his parent or guardian, submit a request to the council advancement committee to complete alternative requirements. The same opportunity is available in applying for alternative merit badges for the Eagle Scout rank (topic 10.2.2.3), or for Venturers and Sea Scouts working on their awards and ranks (topic 10.2.3.2).

In the past, qualifying disabilities had to be permanent. Now a Scout who faces challenges he may grow out of, or those resulting from a serious injury, may be approved for alternative requirements or merit badges, and continue working on advancement. If he is 16 years old or older, evidence must be submitted that the disability is expected to last until his 18th birthday. If he is younger than 16 the disability must be expected to last at least two years.

Because of the possibility of improvement in a condition, or recovery from an injury, a youth member must complete as many requirements as are possible before applying for alternative requirements, or as many Eagle-required merit badges as are possible before applying for alternative merit badges. In many cases this may keep a Scout busy through the recovery or improvement period. If he runs out of things that are possible for him to do, given his disability, then he should apply for alternative requirements or merit badges.

Once alternative requirements or alternative merit badges have been approved, the Scout must be allowed to finish them, even if his condition improves to the point where he could fulfill or earn those for which they were substituted. For this reason, Scouts expected to recover before they turn 18, should be approved for only enough alternative requirements or merit badges as can be completed during the period of disability. Scouts working toward Star, Life, or Eagle Scout ranks who have not yet earned all of the nine elective merit badges should be encouraged to complete those first, and then be granted approval for alternative merit badges.

Awards and Recognition

Silver Beaver Processing Change Announced

The Boy Scouts of America's National Executive Board has approved a change in the Rules and Regulations that now allows local councils to process their own Silver Beaver Awards beginning Jan. 1, 2012.

Currently, councils are required to send a list of Silver Beaver recipients to the National Court of Honor, which then prints and returns the certificates. Allowing councils to print their own certificates will make the process more efficient.

Councils will still be required to adhere to their annual quota of Silver Beaver Awards and to send a report on their recipients to the National Court of Honor. Quotas will be posted on MyBSA by January 15 each year and are based on a council's unit count the previous year.

Councils will be able to order blank Silver Beaver certificates and presentation kits from the Supply Group. Questions and comments should be directed to Bill Evans at bill.evans@scouting.org, or by calling 972-580-2427.

What Do You Think?

Survey for November 2011

This month's survey seeks your participation in an initial evaluation of the Guide to Advancement. After collecting respondent contact information, reactions are being sought regarding the list of significant changes in topic 1.0.2.0.

Note that anonymous responses are not accepted for this survey. This is because of the importance the national Advancement Team places on the ability to communicate with survey respondents should more information be needed about their answers.

Please click on the link below. We want to know what you think!

<https://bsa2.allegiantcotech.com/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=AAT5VJ>

Note: For the results from the October 2011 survey, see the article in "Advancement Committee Mechanics," on page 3.