

Advancement News

OCTOBER

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From the Guide to Advancement

In this regular feature, *Advancement News* will provide clarifications and rationale behind the procedures found in the *Guide to Advancement*.

Introducing the Guide to Advancement

The long-awaited—and much anticipated—new *Guide to Advancement* is finally finished. Your electronic copy can be accessed via this link: <https://rcpt.yousendit.com/1248434208/aa3b5cf4b81427d26dabf4562825f940>. It is currently on the press and will be delivered for sale at Scout shops in the fall. The guide has been reorganized for easy reference and features a list of the questions most often asked of the national Advancement Team. It is a complete rewrite of the *Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures*, which it replaces.

Councils may choose to make a transition over the next few months from the former advancement publication to the new *Guide to Advancement*. After January 1, however, the new guide must be consulted for all advancement procedures. Until January 1, Eagle Scout candidates may choose to use either the new *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook* or the one we have been using. The new workbook in fillable PDF will be added shortly to www.Scouting.org. A nonfillable version is attached. See the article in this issue on the new workbook.

Because the new guide has been completely rewritten, it is difficult to cite specific differences. However, a number of sections merit close review. These can be found in the guide under section 1.0.2.0, "Significant Changes." Note that the contents pages and index based on the new section numbering system should make it more efficient to find various references on advancement procedures.

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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The New Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook

You will find a nonfillable version of the new workbook as an attachment to *Advancement News*. The fillable PDF document will be available shortly at <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/resources.aspx>. Like the *Guide to Advancement*, it has been completely rewritten. The new workbook supports the revised wording in Eagle Scout requirement 5, which calls for a project *proposal* to be approved by the council or district, rather than “the project plan.”

Scouts have a choice to use either the new workbook or the one it is replacing. If they have already had their Eagle Scout service project approved by the council or district under the current wording of requirement 5, using the current workbook, they should continue with the same workbook. If their project has not yet been approved by the council or district, they may elect to use the new wording and the new workbook. For Scouts who choose to use the new workbook, those approving Eagle Scout service projects must evaluate projects accordingly, using the procedures outlined in the *Guide to Advancement*, and judging candidates’ project proposals.

Those responsible for council or district project approval do not have the authority to require use of the previous workbook edition if Scouts have elected to use the new requirement and the new workbook.

We are aware of issues some Eagle Scout candidates have encountered using fillable PDF workbooks. Though we have taken some measures to improve the fillable PDF, some may still experience difficulties with it. As a solution, we are currently working toward a new approach to the workbook that may involve an online, interactive, downloadable application. If testing proves it to be a superior document, fully functional on virtually any operating system, we will abandon the fillable PDF version. Regardless, the workbook will continue to be available for printing a hard copy that can be completed by hand or with a typewriter.

On Increasing Advancement

In this regular feature, *Advancement News* will provide ideas, best practices, and commentary that may have the potential to increase the number of youth members who advance.

Unnecessary Barriers

Each edition of *Advancement News* will feature an article on increasing the rate of advancement. This one relates advancement to the aims and mission of the BSA. In general, the more our youth members advance, the longer they remain in the program, and the better our chances of seeing development in their character, citizenship, and personal fitness, and their ability to make ethical and moral choices throughout their lifetimes.

Advancement is a carefully designed method that we use to achieve the aims and fulfill the mission of the BSA. It provides hurdles, but those are surmountable. When leaders add or intensify requirements, they raise the height of the hurdles to an unintended level. This means fewer youth will clear those hurdles.

BSA Mission Statement: The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout law.

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

Perhaps leaders intend to enhance learning in the subject matter at hand. It could also be they desire an even higher level of character development. In either case higher hurdles or other unnecessary—and unauthorized—barriers tend to decrease the rate of advancement. When that happens, it results in fewer youth involved, and though those remaining may have learned somewhat more, this actually represents a decrease in mission achievement.

District and council advancement chairs and their committees are encouraged to consider in every decision how the outcomes might contribute to the rate of advancement. The key is to facilitate and promote a program in which every member advances at a good strong rate. Too often, however, those decisions result—perhaps unintentionally—in preventing or impeding the earning of ranks.

Managing Subscriptions to Advancement News

Advancement News is designed for council and district advancement chairs, advancement staff advisers, and Eagle processors. You are receiving it because your Scout executive or an area, regional, or national administrator believed you would find it helpful.

Unsubscribing, Subscribing, and More

Unsubscribing. To decline future issues please reply and enter "REMOVE" in the subject line. We will take you off the distribution list within the next two weeks.

Adding Subscribers. Scout executives or their designees may add subscribers by sending their names, council, position title, and email address to angela.elliott@Scouting.org.

Receiving Multiple Copies. If you receive *Advancement News* at more than one email address, choose the one you do not want and reply with "REMOVE" in the subject line. Include a message requesting that we remove only that email address.

Address Change. If you want *Advancement News* sent to a different address, reply and enter "ADDRESS CHANGE" in the subject line. In your message, enter the email address you prefer.

Advancement Committee Mechanics

This feature focuses on covering methods intended to help council and district advancement committees manage their operations, expand capacity to increase the rate of advancement, and to accomplish the responsibilities outlined in the *Guide to Advancement*.

Committee Size Makes the Difference

In the *Guide to Advancement*, under "Council Advancement Committee Responsibilities," section 3.0.0.1, and the following section, 3.0.0.2, relating to the district, there are comprehensive listings of what effective advancement committees should accomplish. With all the different functions described, it makes sense to consider a practical organization and the launch of an effort to increase volunteerism related to advancement.

In addition to an advancement chair and a representative for each district, there could be the following positions on a council advancement committee:

- District advancement chairs coordinator (who works with and guides district advancement chairs)
- Volunteerism specialist (who prospects units or districts for possible advancement committee volunteers)
- Advancement promotions specialist
- Advancement training and events coordinator
- Camping committee and outdoors program liaison
- Records keeper, statistician
- Internet Advancement specialist
- Merit badge chair (with committee members to assist with counselor lists and counselor approval processes)
- Eagle Scout issues coordinator
- Specialist in advancement for Scouts with special needs
- Awards and recognition chair (with committee members to consider lifesaving and meritorious awards, etc.)
- Religious emblems coordinator

This sample list calls for 12 council advancement committee members in addition to the district advancement chairs. Any district could build a similar list, and councils with different needs would construct tailor their committee based on their council's current circumstances.

To many, assembling a committee of 12 members would be daunting. However, with prospecting methods such as "Friendstorming On Tour," No. 510-003, it is possible to search out and recruit enough volunteers to fill this committee as well as the others in the council.

Watch this space for more ideas on building advancement committee capacity.

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

In this feature, you will find training opportunities for volunteers who work with advancement, and also ideas for sessions that councils and districts can present.

Advancement and a Week in the Florida Keys—Jan. 16–21, 2012

The Mechanics of Advancement. This training is geared for volunteer and professional advancement administrators, chairs, coordinators and committee members.

The Florida Sea Base beckons. Escape the cold and snow, and join us at tropical Islamorada in the Keys, about two hours south of Miami. Space is limited and registration is handled on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2011.

The conference begins with check-in Monday afternoon, January 16, and concludes Friday, January 20. Housing will be provided through Saturday. Wednesday afternoon is devoted to free time to enjoy the local attractions. Spouses are welcome to attend, although no family program will be offered. The \$400 conference fee includes meals, dormitory housing, sheets, towels, and—of 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 *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook* will be featured and covered in detail.

The Cub Scout Angle

This will be a regular feature on improving advancement in Cub Scouting.

The Inverted Percentage

Many council and district advancement committees spend most of their efforts on Boy Scout advancement and especially Eagle Scout issues. This is understandable; the processes are involved. When considering the percentage of Cub Scout membership, however, we find what some would call “the inverted percentage”: The vast majority of the advancement committee’s time is spent meeting the needs of a very small percentage of our membership.

Each year, about 5 or 6 percent of Boy Scouts and Varsity Scout—less than 2 percent of the total traditional membership of the BSA—earn Eagle Scout rank. However, Cub Scouts make up 60 percent of that total traditional membership. It would make sense then, that 60 percent of advancement committee efforts go to building Cub Scouting advancement—or if not that level, then at least significantly more than is now spent. This would contribute enormously to the retention of Cub Scouts, and since most Boy Scouts transition from Cub Scouting, we should see more Boy Scouts, and eventually more Eagle Scouts.

There are a number of ways to address the inverted percentage and support Cub Scout advancement to the degree it warrants. Here are just a few ideas.

- Develop a clear understanding of “Unit Advancement Responsibilities,” section 3.0.0.3 in the *Guide to Advancement*. For Cub Scouting, the most important responsibility may be No. 2, “Educate parents, guardians, unit leadership, and committee members in ways to stimulate and encourage advancement.”
- Initiate communication with Cub Scout packs, and develop relationships with pack advancement coordinators. Some of them may be candidates for the council or district advancement committee, and could lead the charge in helping packs fulfill their responsibilities.
- Keep Eagle issues in perspective.

The Venturing Perspective

This will be a regular feature on improving advancement in Venturing.

Sea Scout Procedures Covered in *Guide to Advancement*

Sea Scouts is a specialized branch of Venturing with its own handbook, program, and system of advancement and recognition (see "Mechanics of Advancement: In Sea Scouts," 4.4.0.0). A number of advancement procedures for Sea Scouts have been added to the guide. Most deal with the Quartermaster rank, beginning after section 4.4.1.4. The titles and section numbers appear below; Skippers, mates, and ship committees should review this information.

- 4.4.1.4 Quartermaster Rank
 - 4.4.1.4.1 Time Extensions for Earning Quartermaster Rank
 - 4.4.1.4.2 Submitting the Quartermaster Application
- 4.4.1.5 The Skipper Conference
- 4.4.1.6 Sea Scout Bronze Award
- 4.4.1.7 Other Sea Scout Awards
- 4.4.2.0 The Sea Scout Bridge of Review
 - 4.4.2.1 Purpose and Timeliness of Bridges of Review
 - 4.4.2.2 Composition of the Bridge of Review
 - 4.4.2.3 Conducting the Bridge of Review
 - 4.4.2.4 Particulars for Apprentice Through Able Ranks
 - 4.4.2.5 Particulars for the Quartermaster Rank
 - 4.4.2.6 Quartermaster Bridge of Review Beyond the 21st Birthday
 - 4.4.2.7 Initiating Quartermaster Bridge of Review Under Disputed Circumstances"
 - 4.4.2.8 Appealing a Quartermaster Bridge of Review Decision

Eagle Issues

Check this feature for reports on real cases and insight and guidance from the national volunteer Eagle Issues Task Force.

Who Hears National Eagle Scout Rank Appeals?

When an Eagle Scout board of review rejects a Scout, he has the opportunity to appeal the decision. He begins with his local council; if necessary, he can elevate an appeal to the National Council. There it is reviewed by the national Advancement Team and forwarded to the Eagle Issues Task Force.

Several experienced Scouters with extensive background and training in the Eagle process form the membership of the task force. The foundation for their deliberations and decisions is the most current edition of the advancement procedures book, along with a firm grasp of the mission and aims of the BSA. As of the date of this issue of *Advancement News*, the most current edition of that book is called the *Guide to Advancement*.

It is common for the Eagle Issues Task Force to consider 35 to 40 cases per year. Most are Eagle Scout rank appeals and "belated" Eagle recognition requests. Belated requests have to do with adults who, for a variety of reasons, were not awarded the Eagle Scout badge while a youth. Years later, however, they find materials that lead them to believe they qualified and should have received it. Applicants are required to provide compelling evidence of having completed all the requirements that existed when they were Scouts. Without such proof, they may not receive the award.

The other group of requests deals with appeals from current Scouts who, in most cases, had a board of review but were turned down at the local council level. Only after such a process does an appeal come to the Eagle Issues Task Force. The best way for a council to avoid such appeals is to train advancement committees to judiciously follow the procedures outlined in the *Guide to Advancement*.

Again, the goal for the "Eagle Issues" feature in *Advancement News* will be to provide insight and guidance into a variety of cases that are part of the Eagle process and may sometimes lead to an appeal. We will identify common problems across the nation and clarify the procedures for handling them.

Merit Badges—What's New?

This feature covers reports and plans from the national volunteer Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force.

Chess Merit Badge Rollout

After many months in research, planning, and development, Chess is the most recent in a series of new merit badges. The requirements were posted at www.scouting.org on September 7; pamphlets and badges were available in Scout shops and at www.scoutstuff.org on September 10. That same day, a launch event was held in St. Louis, Missouri, during the opening of the World Chess Hall of Fame.

The badge will be featured in mid-November during the National Scholastic K–12 Championship chess tournament in Dallas. Thanks go to the United States Chess Federation, developers of the badge.

New merit badges are considered and introduced through the efforts of the BSA Innovation Team. Welding is planned for release in late 2011, followed by Kayaking sometime after that.

Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force Takes Shape

Few things in Scouting are as iconic as the merit badge program. For our badges to remain relevant and—most of all—fun for boys, the newly formed Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force has accepted the charge to continually update the requirements and pamphlet library for the existing merit badges. The goal is simple: to encourage more Scouts to earn more merit badges. By year's end, the task force will have the best merit badge review team in place, made up of volunteers from every region of the country.

The main focus for the first quarter of 2012 will be to ensure that all badges dealing with health and safety issues are consistent with updated BSA policies. Many merit badges emphasize different aspects of our overall program, such as the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subject badges, while others provide introductions to vocational and recreational opportunities with life-changing potential. These, along with every other merit badge, will be reviewed and prioritized for revision. Watch this space for news and progress reports.

What Do You Think

In most issues of *Advancement News*, we will ask for feedback or opinion on an advancement topic. Questions or surveys will target either specific groups, or all recipients in general. We encourage all those targeted—whether they received *Advancement News* directly from the national Advancement Team, or as a forward from someone else—to respond.

To respond, simply click on the link below. We will provide the results in a subsequent issue of *Advancement News*.

Survey Questions for October 2011

1. Number of Council Advancement Committee Members

This question is for council advancement chairs only. We are looking for the number of active members of the council advancement committee—including the chair—who are not district advancement chairs. It doesn't matter if they are registered in the council or not, or if they attend meetings. If they are active on the committee, please count them.

2. Number of District Advancement Committee Members

This question is for district advancement chairs only. We are looking for the number of active members of the district advancement committee, including the chair. It doesn't matter if they are registered in the council or not, or if they attend meetings. If they are active on the committee, please count them.

Please click here to begin the survey:
<https://bsa2.allegiantecetech.com/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=75S68T>