

Planning Your Troop's Annual Program Budget

What is the unit budget plan? It is implementing the elements of a complete annual Scouting program, committing as a unit to incorporate these elements, and then providing adequate funding for them.

If you like to raise money every month, plan your program as you go, limit your activities based on the unit's income, or not involve the Scouts in the planning process, then this format may not be for you! Those leaders who want a meaningful, exciting, and comprehensive program that achieves the objectives of the Scouting program will find this format the ideal way to go.

The result is a well-managed, well-financed unit.

Recognizing this, Scouting America recommends the following recipe:

1. **Plan** your troop's complete annual program.
2. **Develop** a budget that includes enough income to achieve the program.
3. **Identify** the amount of product (popcorn, for example) that will need to be sold per Scout to reach the income goal.
4. **Identify** service projects that the troop can participate in to bring income to the unit.
5. **Get** commitments from parents and Scouts.

BASIC EXPENSES

1 Registration Fees. When a Scout joins, the unit normally asks the Scout to pay their full \$85 national registration fee.

If the Scout joined using online registration, the family pays national registration fees directly.

The national registration fee is \$85 for an annual membership for Scouts and \$65 for adults. Check with your local council for how it handles registration fees for new Scouts and how it impacts rechartering. Local councils might also have additional activity fees they collect.

2 Unit Liability Insurance Fee. Troops are required to pay an annual unit liability insurance fee of \$100. This fee is submitted with the troop's annual charter application and helps to defray the expenses for their general liability insurance.

3 Scout Life. *Scout Life*, the official magazine of Scouting America, is recommended for all members and volunteers at the special discounted rate of \$15. Every Scout and leader should subscribe to *Scout Life* because of the quality reading and the articles related to your unit's monthly program. It is part of every Scout's growth and provides a monthly connection to Scouting. Scouts who subscribe to *Scout Life* stay in Scouting longer and advance more quickly.

4 Unit Accident and Liability Insurance. Protecting the leadership and parents from financial hardship due to high medical bills from an unfortunate accident is a must for all involved in Scouting. Specific details on insurance programs are available from the local council.

5 Advancement and Recognition. Every Scout should earn and advance a rank each year. The Scouts BSA advancement program has a number of options that include achievements, rank advancement, and merit badges.

6 Activities. Well-conceived and well-planned activities are critical to a successful annual program plan. Traditionally, such activities as hikes, camping, or high-adventure trips are financed by the Scout and his or her family over and above the dues programs. It is suggested that the complete cost of these outings be built into the unit's budget.

7 Summer Camp. Central to Scouting is a summer camp experience. Local and national opportunities abound for Scouts BSA members to have an exciting, program-rich summer experience.

8 Program Materials. Each unit needs to provide a certain amount of program materials. Depending on the type of program, these could include craft tools and supplies, camping equipment, videos and books, or ceremonial props. (Note: Units may not hold title to property; only chartered organizations or the local council legally can own property.)

9 Training Expenses. Trained leaders are the key to delivering a quality and safe program. Both adult- and youth-leader training should be considered an integral annual expense.

10 Full Uniforms. Traditionally, the individual pays for the uniform. We suggest that these expenses become part of the total cost of Scouting. The full Scouting program includes the full uniform!

11 Reserve Fund. The reserve fund might be established by a gift or loan from the chartered organization, by members of the committee, or by a unit money-earning project. The reserve fund should meet unexpected expenses. A new member's initial expenses may be met from the fund.

12 Other Expenses. These could include a gift to the World Friendship Fund, meeting refreshments, and/or contingency funds.

SOURCES OF INCOME

One well-planned fundraiser per year, such as selling popcorn, will help prevent having to ask families for extra money every week.

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

Paying your own way. This is a fundamental principle of Scouting America. It is one of the reasons no solicitations (requests for contributions from individuals or the community) are permitted by units. Young people in Scouting are taught early on that if they want something in life, they need to earn it. This principle is among the reasons that adults who were Scouts are found to have higher incomes. The unit's entire budget must be provided for by the families, through either fundraising or other means such as dues or fees.

Except for council-sponsored fundraisers, all other fundraising projects require the submission of the Unit Money-Earning Application, No. 34427, to the local council. To ensure conformity with all Scouting standards on earning money, leaders should be familiar with the eight guides listed on the back of the application and in the financial record books.

The Troop Operating Budget Worksheet

To develop your troop's budget, complete the worksheet and then share it with the Scouts' parents. In the case of Scouts BSA troops, the patrol leaders' council reviews the budget and puts it in final form prior to study and adoption by the troop committee. Be sure to keep parents involved and informed. Program calendar and budget information needs to be communicated regularly to families, especially at the start of the program year.