

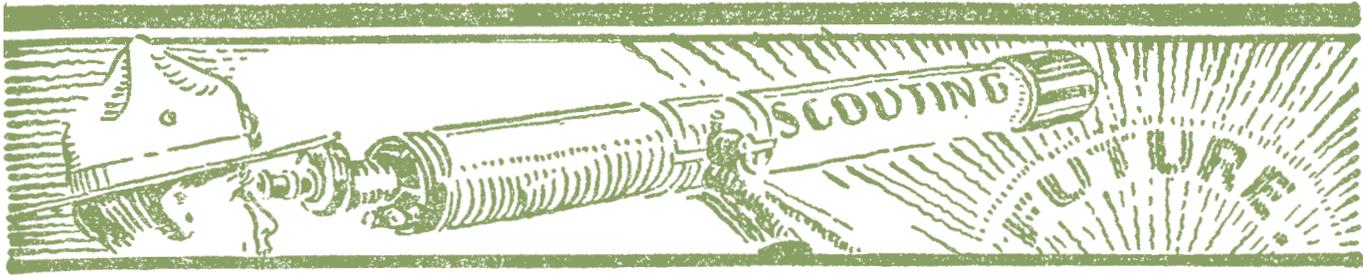
**Recommendations for  
Regional and Area Volunteers  
Supporting the Advancement Program**

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See also "On Increasing Advancement"



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®



## Recommendations for Regional and Area Volunteers Supporting the Advancement Program

In response to the implementation of the Journey to Excellence and inclusion of standards in Cub Scout and Boy Scout advancement, regional and area committees are challenged to support advancement in their local councils. These efforts are handled through program impact subcommittees, and sometimes through volunteers with the title, advancement chair. This additional support has coincided with the release of the *Guide to Advancement* and the *Advancement News* e-newsletter. As a result, awareness at every level of the importance of the advancement method, its effect on retention, and how it should be implemented and administered may be at an all-time high.

In order to coordinate service delivery according to the needs of each council, those supporting advancement report through their regional and area leadership, as do other volunteers with similar responsibilities. In support of their efforts, the advancement staff within the National Design and Development Department suggests the following may have positive results in terms of achievement in the Journey to Excellence.

### Four Essential Responsibilities for Regional and Area Advancement Support

Although a council's actual needs depend entirely on local circumstances, it is recommended that regional and area volunteers with responsibility for advancement accept the following four general responsibilities.\*

1. Help councils increase the number of members who advance at least one rank annually.
2. Promote compliance with procedures set forth in the *Guide to Advancement*.
3. Establish regular communications with and between council advancement committee chairs.
4. Contribute to a general increase in volunteerism and service to units.

These responsibilities will be achieved by consulting the annual area operational plans, the various levels of council leadership, and *On Increasing Advancement*, which is a companion document to this one.

\*Note this is not meant to be an all-inclusive list. There will likely be other duties as outlined by regional or area committees.

## Increasing the Rate of Advancement

“On Increasing Advancement” offers a number of suggestions that may have a more direct effect on the rate of advancement calculated for the Journey to Excellence. These include, for example, the following:

- Strengthening council and district advancement committees so they are able to carry out the responsibilities put forth in section 3 of the new *Guide to Advancement*
- Establishing advancement objectives with action plans to achieve them
- Offering advancement conferences and training experiences that will strengthen performance of district and unit advancement volunteers
- Increasing advancement reporting through Internet Advancement

Increasing the incidence of council or district merit badge fairs or similar events is not advocated unless they can be held according to BSA procedures. Doing so requires each participant to individually complete requirements as written. It is better that we encourage units to plan activities rich in opportunities for Scouts to earn ranks.

## Promoting Procedural Compliance

Advancement volunteers who understand national procedures and related local council practices are more likely to make the connection between advancement and retention, and thus generate an increase in advancement. This occurs, for example, when it is understood that adding requirements—or intensifying them—adds unnecessary, unintended, and unauthorized barriers to advancement. It is better that instead of “guarding the gates” of rank achievement, we stand inside the gates and advocate for Scouts as they work to pass through them.

Encouraging councils in the following ways can help them achieve increased advancement through breaking down unnecessary barriers and improving efficiency, thus allowing them to focus on other opportunities.

- Consistent and appropriate methods for handling Eagle Scout issues, such as approving service project proposals, collecting references, and conducting boards of review
- Establishment of local council practices for adhering to national advancement procedures at outdoor programs, summer camp, and events such as merit badge fairs or midways
- Familiarization and compliance with procedures concerning appeals, time extensions, special needs cases, and alternative requirements



## Establish Regular Communications Between Council Advancement Committee Chairs

As advancement administrators at any level become more informed, and face the challenges of initiating gains in advancement and implementing correct procedures, they will develop expertise and arrive at "best practices" that should be shared with others. Regional and area advancement volunteers can take several steps to open the lines of communication and support the interaction that should take place.

- Establish area advancement committees consisting of the council advancement chairs from each council in the area.
- Conduct area advancement committee meetings throughout the year via telephone conference, or electronic video conferencing or in person as needed and possible. The agendas can include common advancement issues and concerns, updates on national procedures and interpretations, sharing of best practices and resources, training opportunities, and announcements and invitations regarding various regional, area, or individual council events that may be of benefit.
- Initiate regular communications between meetings using newsletters, phone calls, and email to set goals that support the Journey to Excellence, to monitor progress toward them, and to exchange advice and best practices.



## Contributing to Increases in Volunteerism and Service to Units

Regional and area advancement volunteers should recognize that as councils progress in strengthening advancement committees, increasing the use of Internet Advancement, and promoting awareness of BSA procedures, significant and sustainable gains in advancement may depend largely on far-reaching unit service. "On Increasing Advancement" suggests units must achieve a program threshold where advancement can flourish, and that this can be done most efficiently through building volunteerism in commissioner service, training, and roundtables.

Regional and area advancement volunteers may contribute to increases in unit service by doing the following:

- Develop relationships with regional and area commissioners and support their efforts to improve roundtables and to extend at least some level of direct service to all units.
- Develop relationships with regional or area training chairs and support their efforts to extend at least some level of training to all units.
- Become familiar with and promote Friendstorming on Tour as a method to generate additional prospects for district and council volunteer service.

