

Council Officer Retreats & Fellowship Events



Key leaders in several local Boy Scout councils and other community service organizations have recognized the great value of council officer retreats and fellowship events. Such events offer opportunities for

- Productive time for long-term and strategic thinking.
- Getting to know one another as people with lives apart from Scouting.
- Providing informal training in an area of officer success.
- Cultivation of future top council leaders.
- A bonding experience to develop a leadership team.
- Just getting to know a new council president or Scout executive.

This folder is not intended as a definitive guide on such leadership events, but rather as a discussion starter and list of ideas. Scout executives, council presidents, and council commissioners are encouraged to be creative in bringing key council leaders together outside of the formal business meeting setting.

While ideas presented here focus on gatherings of council officers, they may well be applied to expanded groups of key council leaders, committee chairs, task force leaders, past council presidents, and even the entire executive board and advisory council. Who should attend? That depends on the current needs of the council and the best thinking of the council Key 3.



The Business Component

Some part of the retreat should be devoted to the serious business of building a successful council and developing more effective council

leaders. It is *not* a time to conduct the regular business of the council, but rather to think in the long term or prepare for more effective leadership. Following are a number of possible topics and agenda items. Several such items might be appropriate for your next retreat.

1. Reviewing priorities of the council's current strategic plan.
2. Orientation and preview of the council's next strategic planning cycle:
 - Review the planning process.
 - Present current planning issues (Benchmarks) recommended by the BSA.
 - Discuss possible planning issues unique to the council.
 - Review names for the planning committee.
 - Present proposed subcommittees.
3. Preparing or improving the council mission statement (a statement of the reason the council exists and the results it seeks to achieve).
4. Evaluating how the board is functioning.
5. Asking what new opportunities and new threats from outside the local council may affect the council in the future. What kind of world will the council be operating in?
6. Reviewing next year's council schedule.
7. Orientation on the role of each council officer and major committee chair.
8. Distinguishing between the contrasting roles of executive board and key council staff.
9. Determining the board's role in fund-raising.
10. Addressing effective council committee operation.
11. Discussing how the board contributes to effective districts.
12. Brainstorming board member prospects to be shared with the council nominating committee.
13. Discussing the cultivation, selection, and development of board members.
14. Reviewing the state of the council's districts.
15. Planning for endowment or capital development.
16. Brainstorming new and expanded sources of funding.
17. Discussing how the council can meet community needs.
18. Addressing good volunteer-professional relationships.

19. New officer training (council organization, district operations, commissioner service, staff organization, physical assets, funding the council, and fiscal management and the budget).
20. Addressing your vision for the future of our council/increasing the image of what can be accomplished.

You might consider involving your area director or other regional staff member in assisting with one of the agenda items.

The Fellowship Component

Effective functioning of the council officer group or entire executive board stems from mutual respect, trust, and loyalty among volunteers and between volunteers and key council staff. The council builds these qualities best through interaction outside of formal meetings, such as the relaxed setting of an officers retreat. Some may also call this “team building.”

The venue. There are many possible settings for a good officers retreat. Be sure it is in a relaxed setting that fits the tastes of the participants. You might consider ideas such as

1. A guest ranch with lots of fresh air and unspoiled natural surroundings.
2. A mountain resort or other location in sharp contrast to the city or suburb where most council leaders live and work.



3. A property owned by a board member or a board member’s company.
4. A golf resort.
5. A seaside facility that may offer a nearby opportunity for a half-day or sunset cruise.



6. A tour/reception/dinner at an attractive winery.
7. A major historic site or historic inn.
8. Philmont Scout Ranch or a resort in the Philmont area with time at the ranch.
9. The Florida Sea Base in the Florida Keys.
10. The Northern Tier’s Charles L. Sommers High Adventure Base in Ely, Minnesota, for great fishing and north country recreation. Stay at the base or stay at an Ely hotel and use the base for program and meals.
11. The Dallas/Fort Worth airport area, with visits to the BSA’s national office and National Scouting Museum.
12. A deep-sea fishing trip or fly-fishing fellowship.
13. One to three nights on a cruise ship.

What about spouses? For officers who are often heavily involved in a variety of other organizations, time away from home, family, and personal life is a major concern. So why not consider involving spouses? Remember that it is spouses who often provide the support that enables officers to devote time and energy to Scouting.

Robert C. Andringa and Ted W. Engstrom in their *Nonprofit Board Answer Book* point out that

- “A spouse’s support increases a board member’s commitment and satisfaction.”
- “Spouses who know about the organization have good insights for improvements.”
- “The participation of spouses and families helps the board lighten up and enjoy some informal time together.”
- (And!) “A spouse is usually included in decisions about family charitable giving.”

Consult with the officers as to their wishes about involving spouses. If they are to attend, allow time to socialize as couples as well as separate officer planning time and spouse activity. Scouters will appreciate the council's special thoughtfulness in placing a small gift and note at the spouses' places at dinner or in their rooms. If spouses are not to attend, consider this a time to send a small gift with a note expressing the local council's appreciation for their support of their wife's/husband's service in Scouting.

Other Ideas

- Involve a well-liked local celebrity in part of the retreat.
- Invite past council presidents to sit in for part or all of the retreat.
- Use of a corporate jet could greatly extend the range of possible retreat settings.
- Involve the talents of board members for humor, inspiration, hospitality, and ideas for group interaction.
- Be sure the retreat is well planned but with a relaxed atmosphere and time schedule.
- Be aware of policies and sensitivities related to alcohol use.
- It may be best not to make this an annual, institutionalized event. Instead, make it special, scheduled when the council Key 3 feels the timing might be right.



Honoring the greatness
and the uniqueness of our
council's leaders.

Learning faster than the
world is changing.

Excelling instead of
competing; no one has to
lose for us to win.

