

Membership Growth and Retention: A 12-Point Plan





Contents

The Retention Flywheel Equation	2
Purpose & Strategic Intent	3
Our Growth Philosophy: The “Yes And, Not Or” Mindset	3
Membership Objectives.....	4
Strategic Framework: Three Core Pillars.....	4
Recruitment Strategy.....	5
Retention & Onboarding Strategy.....	5
Relationship & Cultivation Strategy	6
Infrastructure: Roles & Accountability	6
Metrics & Scorecard	7
Annual Timeline	7
Social Media & Digital Marketing.....	8
Call to Action: 2026 and Beyond.....	8
National Service Center Commitment.....	9
A Shared Vision of Growth	9



THE RETENTION FLYWHEEL EQUATION

$$\text{Retention} = (\text{Onboarding} \times \text{Leader Quality} \times \text{Program Quality} \times \text{Engagement}) \div \text{Friction}$$

Where ...

Onboarding = Welcome, Launch Kits, clear communication,
New Member Coordinator activation

Leader Quality = Trained leaders + fun, consistent meetings, SAFETY

Program Quality = Adventure + advancement + relevance

Engagement = Family connection + communication +
belonging + community

And ...

Friction = Cost confusion, poor communication, scheduling conflicts,
unprepared meetings, administrative burdens

Why This Matters

Retention improves automatically when we:

- Strengthen onboarding
- Support and train leaders
- Offer high-quality SAFE programs
 - Deepen family engagement
- Reduce friction at every step

This is the **flywheel**.

Remove friction →
momentum rises →
retention improves →
growth accelerates.



1. Purpose & Strategic Intent

Scouting America exists to develop young people of character, leadership, and service. Our Membership Growth Plan equips councils to:

- Recruit more youth and families
- Improve first-year retention and long-term engagement
- Expand Scouting into new and emerging communities
- Strengthen unit, district, and council infrastructure
- Build sustainable pipelines of new units and leaders

This expanded executive plan provides councils a clear, strategic, and actionable framework for growth in 2026 and beyond.

2. Our Growth Philosophy: The “Yes And, Not Or” Mindset

Scouting America councils grow when they embrace an abundance mindset:

- Spring and Fall recruiting
- School-based and community-based outreach
- Direct sign-up nights and experiential fun events
- Strengthening existing units and starting new ones
- Serving legacy families and expanding into emerging communities

The goal is simple: More youth, more families, more impact.



3. Membership Objectives

Councils will set data-informed goals that include:

- Total new youth membership target
- Spring and Fall new youth goals
- Growth by program (Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouts, Exploring)
- First-year retention target
- Webelos-to-Scouts BSA transition goals
- Number of new units started + sustained for 12- and 24-month benchmarks
- Market share growth in high-opportunity ZIP codes District allocations should reflect:
 - Opportunity data and school access
 - Community demographics
 - Unit density and health
 - District staffing and volunteer capacity

4. Strategic Framework: Three Core Pillars

PILLAR 1: Recruitment Excellence

A year-round system anchored by Spring and Fall campaigns.

PILLAR 2: Retention & Onboarding

A welcoming, well-structured first-year experience.

PILLAR 3: Relationships & Infrastructure

Strong partnerships with schools, charter orgs, and community groups supported by strong membership teams.



5. Recruitment Strategy

SPRING RECRUITING

Goal: Build the Cub Scout pipeline early.

- Pack-based sign-up events tied to fun activities
- Individual coaching with pack leaders
- Updated BeAScout.org pins + online registration
- Faith community announcements, peer-to-peer invitations – Scout Sunday
- Leader training on pack readiness and school relationships

SUMMER ENGAGEMENT

Use camp and outdoor programs for recruitment + retention.

- Promote day/resident camp to prospects
- Digital/social media campaigns
- Ensure all youth at programs are registered

FALL RECRUITING

The largest membership intake season.

- District membership teams (3–6 volunteers each)
- Council-wide leader training and Fall launch
- District Fall kickoffs + pack readiness assessments
- School-based sign-up nights with in-school promotion
- Car-line promotion, yard signs, geo-fencing, direct mail
- Pack-hosted second-chance joining events

NEW UNITS & TARGETED OUTREACH

- Identify new pack/troop opportunities using ZIP data
- Strengthen charter partner relationships
- Launch units with 24-month support plans

6. Retention & Onboarding Strategy

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE)

Every new family receives:

- A warm welcome and personal outreach
- Clear communication on calendar, costs, expectations
- Early engagement in fun activities
- Advancement opportunities (e.g., Bobcat, early ranks)

LAUNCH KITS & WELCOME RESOURCES

Councils may provide:

- “Welcome to Scouting” Launch Kits
- Scout handbooks (where funded)
- Launch Videos explaining the program

“DELIVERING THE PROMISE” EVENTS

District and Council level: new Scout adventures:

- Fishing, hiking, outdoor skills
- BB guns/archery (where appropriate)
- Pinewood derby or similar activities

WEBELOS SCOUTS BSA TRANSITION

- Troop visit nights
- Crossover ceremonies
- Parent information sessions



7. Relationship & Cultivation Strategy

SCHOOLS

- Meet with superintendents and administrators
- Clarify flyer + facility use policies
- Build year-round communication and trust
- Recognize principals and school partners

CHARTER ORGANIZATIONS & FAITH PARTNERS

- Strengthen relationships
- Support Scout Sunday/Sabbath/Jumu'ah
- Encourage on-site sign-up events

COMMUNITY & EMPLOYER PARTNERS

- Engage nonprofits, civic groups, and employers
- Support Exploring and older youth programs
- Promote service projects as community impact

8. Infrastructure: Roles & Accountability

COUNCIL ROLES

- VP Membership + Council Membership Chair
- Professional advisor + support staff
- Marketing, communications, training coordination
- Weekly/monthly scorecard rhythm (EOS recommended)

DISTRICT ROLES

- District Membership Chair + team
- Recruitment, retention, new units, NMC training, community outreach
- District monthly reporting rhythm

UNIT ROLES

- New Member Coordinator
- Annual calendar of fun and visible activities
- Spring & Fall recruitment events
- Updated BeAScout info and lead follow-up



9. Metrics & Scorecard

Sample KPIs:

- Total new youth recruited (Spring/Fall)
- First-year retention rate
- Webelos Scouts BSA transition rate
- BeAScout lead response time
- Units under healthy size threshold
- New units launched + sustained
- District membership staffing

Scorecard reviewed:

- Weekly at staff level
- Monthly with volunteer leadership

10. Annual Timeline

Q1 (Jan–Mar)

- Finalize goals + district allocations
- School relationship planning
- Recruit/train membership teams
- Spring recruiting preparation

Q2 (Apr–Jun)

- Spring recruiting
- Summer program promotion
- Begin Fall planning

Q3 (Jul–Aug)

- District Fall kickoffs
- Sign-up event scheduling
- Deploy promotional materials

Q4 (Sep–Dec)

- Fall recruiting + second-chance events
- New Scout promise events
- Recharter + planning for 2027



11. Social Media & Digital Marketing

Digital outreach is now a core pillar of membership success. Councils that use social media and digital marketing intentionally—and treat leads with the speed and discipline of a best-in-class sales team—consistently achieve stronger recruiting and retention outcomes. Scouting America encourages every council to build a simple, high-impact digital strategy using the tools available.

Best Practices for Councils

- Activate the Google Ad Grant (up to \$10,000/month in free search advertising). (Ben Buckelew can help you with this).
- Use targeted social media advertising to reach parents by ZIP, school district, or interest.
- Promote every recruiting event digitally.
- Boost unit and district posts featuring real youth activities.
- Maintain a weekly posting rhythm.
- Use short-form video (15–30 seconds) for maximum engagement.

CRM & Lead Conversion Discipline

- Respond to every lead within 24 hours.
- Use CRM tools to track the entire pipeline.
- Assign ownership for follow-up.

- Monitor conversion metrics weekly.
- Automate follow-up messaging.

Digital Marketing Principles

- Lead with outcomes (confidence, leadership, friendship, outdoor skills).
- Target Natural Fit Families and emerging communities.
- Retarget website visitors.
- Use landing pages with clear calls to action.

Digital-first councils consistently see stronger visibility, faster conversion, improved retention, and more diverse engagement.

12. Call to Action: 2026 and Beyond

Council Commitment

As councils finalize their membership plans, we ask each one to commit to five essential practices:

- Build a board-approved membership plan grounded in local opportunity.
- Finalize district goals, roles, and reporting rhythms.
- Prepare intentionally for Spring and Fall recruiting.
- Focus relentlessly on the first-year experience.
- Use a simple scorecard rhythm to guide execution.



National Service Center Commitment

To support every council in achieving its membership goals, the National Service Center commits to:

- Providing timely data, tools, and analysis, including updated CST and national membership dashboards.
- Delivering consistent national marketing assets, including digital campaigns, templates, and messaging aligned with brand standards.
- Maintaining and improving BeAScout, CRM tools, and the digital joining experience, reducing friction for families and councils.
- Offering training, webinars, and office hours to strengthen local membership teams.
- Ensuring rapid support and clear escalation pathways for technology, marketing, and membership inquiries.
- Coordinating national partnerships with schools, youth-serving organizations, and community institutions to open doors for councils.
- Listening to councils—continuously gathering feedback to improve tools, systems, and national resources.

The National Service Center stands as a full partner in your growth efforts. Our commitment is to empower councils with the best data, the best tools, and the best support possible.

A Shared Vision of Growth

Imagine what becomes possible when every council recruits boldly, welcomes warmly, serves consistently, and leads with purpose:

- More young people gaining confidence and character
- More families finding connection and belonging
- More units thriving with strong leadership
- More service transforming our communities
- More Scouts in camp, learning skills that will carry into adulthood

This is Scouting's moment. This is our movement's calling.

And together, we will rise to meet it.

Together We Grow

Scouting grows when:

- Leaders unite behind a shared mission
- Councils embrace innovation and opportunity
 - Communities see Scouting in action
- Every family feels welcomed from day one

Together, we will grow Scouting.

Together, we will strengthen the next generation.

Together, we will deliver the movement our country needs.

