



3.0.0.0 Section 3.

Guidelines for Advancement Committees

Council and district advancement committees, which are sometimes jointly advancement and recognition committees, are responsible for implementing and facilitating advancement and processing most special awards and recognitions, respectively. This is done according to national procedures and local practices under the direction of the council executive board. Advancement committees operate under the Scouting America program function. They should cooperate with the other program function elements—outdoor programs, activities and civic service, and training—and also with the membership, finance, and unit-service functions. Accepting the responsibilities outlined in the following pages will help to accomplish this.

3.0.0.1 Council Advancement Committee Responsibilities

The council advancement committee often falls under a vice president for program. The committee's members should represent a breadth of experience in all Scouting programs. Normally, district advancement chairs are included. The council professional staff advisor for advancement provides coaching and guidance—especially as it relates to national policies and procedures. The advancement chair and the staff advisor work together closely, and in harmony with the other efforts and functions involved in delivering and supporting the Scouting program.

A full, functioning council advancement committee should be organized to accomplish the following, while always implementing and enforcing the policies in this *Guide to Advancement*.

1. Recruit enough committee members to fulfill the responsibilities described below and achieve council advancement objectives.

2. Ensure all advancement administrators in the council receive periodic, ongoing training to maintain awareness of updated procedures, best practices, and details related to all programs of Scouting America—Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts. See "Building an Advancement Committee," 3.0.0.5.
3. Establish objectives and action plans that stimulate advancement and lead to maximum success.
4. Inspire a positive working relationship with district advancement committees, providing clear guidance and direction on their responsibilities and objectives.
5. Plan, present, and submit for the council calendar those advancement conferences and training experiences that will strengthen the performance of district and unit advancement volunteers.
6. As appropriate, support advancement elements involved in training, and in events and activities presented by other council committees.
7. Support outdoor programs where advancement may take place, such as day camps, resident camp, long-term camping experiences, and specialized activities featuring advancement. See "Advancement in Camp Settings," 5.0.1.0.
8. Establish local practices for adhering to National Council advancement procedures at outdoor programs, summer camp, and events such as merit badge fairs or midways. See especially "Group Instruction," 7.0.3.2.
9. Support and promote Scoutbook Plus and other official internet portals for advancement reporting. See "Importance and Benefits of Electronic Advancement Reporting," 6.0.0.1. Accurate advancement records and backups are critical to program planning and analysis. Councils should work toward 100 percent electronic data entry.
10. Share advancement statistics for use in council fundraising materials and for supporting recruitment and retention efforts and commissioner service.
11. See to an effective merit badge program administered at the council or district level that functions according to national procedures and recruits, approves, trains, and makes known sufficient counselors to meet the needs of the council.
12. Determine, according to national procedures, consistent and appropriate methods for approving Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster service project proposals project fundraising applications, providing Eagle Scout service project coaches, and conducting Eagle, Summit, and Quartermaster boards of review.
13. Determine methods of collecting Eagle Scout or Quartermaster references.

14. Know and precisely follow official procedures for appeals and time-extension requests.
 15. Establish procedures for the use of technology-based tools like Scoutbook Plus according to "Using Technology-Based Tools in Advancement," 5.0.8.0.
 16. Know and follow proper procedures for considering special needs cases involving alternative requirements and merit badges, and registration beyond the normal age of eligibility (RBAE).
 17. If awards committee, participate in considering and presenting special awards and recognitions according to established council procedures. This responsibility may or may not include the Silver Beaver Award.
 18. If awards committee, support and promote awards such as the religious emblems and the STEM Nova awards, as well as those approved by the local council executive board.
 19. If awards committee, process lifesaving and meritorious action awards according to council practices and national procedures.
 20. Notify the media to recognize significant youth achievements, such as Eagle Scout, Summit, or Quartermaster ranks; lifesaving and meritorious action awards; and other noteworthy accomplishments.
 21. Support protection of youth and Scouting America's trademark by assisting the council in establishing written agreements, as described in 7.0.4.9, with non-Scouting organizations that conduct merit badge and other Scouting classes.
4. Maintain advancement records and share them with commissioners, trainers, and other district volunteers who serve units, while respecting the privacy of Scouts. Identify and work with units that are experiencing little or no advancement.
 5. Plan, present, and submit for the district and council calendars those advancement conferences and training experiences that will improve the results of unit advancement volunteers.
 6. As appropriate, support advancement elements involved in training, and in events and activities presented by other committees of the district.
 7. Support outdoor programs where advancement may take place, such as district day camps, camporees, etc.
 8. Support and promote Scoutbook Plus and Scouting America's other internet portals for advancement reporting. See "Importance and Benefits of Electronic Advancement Reporting," 6.0.0.1. Accurate advancement records are critical to program planning and analysis. Districts should work toward 100 percent electronic data entry.
 9. Follow national and local council procedures in administering the merit badge program and in recruiting, approving, and training a sufficient number of merit badge counselors. Provide units, especially those that do not yet use Scoutbook Plus, with access to a current listing of council-approved merit badge counselors.
 10. Follow national and local council procedures as prescribed regarding appeals; references; project proposal approvals; board of review chair selection; boards of review support; and time extensions.
 11. Support and promote awards such as the religious emblems and the STEM Nova awards (if your council supports these awards), as well as those approved by the local council executive board.
 12. Recommend, according to council and district practices, recipients for the Award of Merit and other recognitions, if a joint recognition committee.
 13. Notify the media to recognize significant achievements such as Eagle Scout, Summit, or Quartermaster ranks; lifesaving and meritorious action awards; and other noteworthy accomplishments.

3.0.0.2 District Advancement Committee Responsibilities

Although the council advancement committee or executive board determines specific responsibilities for district advancement committees, district advancement chairs report to their respective district chairs. The following is a guide to the responsibilities that might be delegated.

1. Recruit enough members to fulfill the responsibilities and accomplish any objectives established by the council advancement committee or executive board.
2. Provide members with ongoing training to maintain awareness of updated procedures, best practices, and details related to Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts. See "Building an Advancement Committee," 3.0.0.5.
3. Establish objectives and implement action plans that stimulate advancement and lead to maximum success.

14. To strengthen units through strong advancement programs, consider adding:
 - a. Assist unit commissioners and others who serve units.
 - b. Serve as a resource for roundtables.
 - c. Develop relationships with unit advancement volunteers.
 - d. Provide units with advancement reports, summarizing and explaining what they mean.
 - e. Assist unit leadership with advancement planning and promotion.
 - f. Visit pack, troop, crew, and ship committee meetings, as warranted.
 - g. Visit boards of review, as warranted.
 - h. Help troops, crews, and ships avoid pitfalls as qualified youth strive for the Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster ranks.
 - i. Encourage prompt and proper recognition, ceremonies, and courts of honor.
 - j. Recognize units excelling in advancement.
5. Ensure Cub Scouts advance in rank annually by school year's end and are recognized in a meaningful ceremony.
6. Know and understand the advancement procedures for the program served, especially those applicable to Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster candidates.
7. Assist the unit leader in establishing practices that will provide opportunities for each new Scout to achieve First Class rank within 12 to 18 months of joining, and Star rank soon thereafter.
8. Arrange for timely boards of review, and see that youth who are ready are invited. It is important that youth are allowed to progress when they are ready, and no youth is barred from achieving later ranks due to delays in holding boards of review.
9. Maintain advancement records and backups and submit reports to the unit committee. It is appropriate in Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts to involve youth leaders in this process.
10. Use Scoutbook Plus to report advancement.
11. Keep a current and accessible copy of the district or council merit badge counselor list. All merit badge counselors must be registered as such annually, and also be approved through the council advancement committee.

3.0.0.3 Unit Advancement Responsibilities

Unit advancement coordinators and those who assist them have the basic responsibility to support the youth's advancement to maximize achievement, and otherwise facilitate a smooth implementation of the process. Specific responsibilities are outlined in the leader literature for each program. The following responsibilities are not all-inclusive, but typical.

1. Support and facilitate the unit leader's vision for rank advancement, providing consultation on the policies and procedures put forth in the *Guide to Advancement*.
2. Educate parents, guardians, unit leadership, and committee members on appropriate methods to stimulate and encourage advancement. For example, help build unit programming rich in advancement opportunities, recognize successes, encourage members who are advancing slowly, and post advancement charts.
3. Help plan, facilitate, or conduct advancement ceremonies. In troops and crews, schedule and support regular courts of honor—every three to four months is generally sufficient. Ships will want regular bridges of honor, and packs should make recognition a key part of every pack meeting.
4. Obtain necessary badges and certificates, etc., and arrange for timely presentation of ranks, Adventure belt loops and pins, merit badges, awards, and other recognitions. It is best to obtain and present these as soon as possible after they are earned. They can then be re-presented in more formal settings.

12. In troops, crews, and ships, work with the unit's youth leadership to maintain a listing of advancement publications and web pages.
13. Learn about other Scouting America awards and recognition opportunities that may be helpful in delivering a well-rounded unit program. A good resource for this is the *Guide to Awards and Insignia*.

3.0.0.4 Awards and Recognitions

Awards and recognitions by definition are not part of the advancement plan. They supplement it in many ways, however, and often lead to increased retention. Some awards and recognitions are for youth members, some for adults, and some for both. Some are earned, while others are presented in honor of service rendered. Awards and recognitions can be administered by a council advancement committee or by a separate committee or task force as determined by the council executive board.

For more information about awards, visit Awards Central at www.scouting.org/awards/awards-central. Application and nomination forms are available at www.scouting.org/forms. In most cases, the forms provide details on where to send the paperwork and also list any additional information that might be required. Questions about awards and recognitions should be directed to the National Program Committee or their designee.

3.0.0.5 Building an Advancement Committee

To accomplish the suggested responsibilities outlined in 3.0.0.1 and 3.0.0.2 above, council and district advancement committees need to be well-staffed and organized. The following positions, in addition to the council advancement chair and any vice chairs, are suggested for a council advancement committee:

1. District/unit advancement chairs support
2. Volunteer recruitment
3. Advancement promotions
4. Advancement training and events
5. Camping committee and outdoors program liaison
6. Advancement records and reporting
7. Scoutbook Plus and other technology for advancement recording and reporting support
8. Merit badge counselor, Nova counselor, and Supernova mentor coordination
9. Eagle, Summit, and Quartermaster issues
10. Special needs Scouting
11. Awards and recognition
12. Religious emblems

For thoughts on what each position might entail, see the information sheet “Building Effective Advancement Committees” that is posted on the Advancement Resources webpage at www.scouting.org/advancement. A list of positions for a district advancement committee could be very similar. The organization of advancement committees is a local council decision. The above is offered only as a guide in establishing a committee that could fulfill its various traditional responsibilities and also positively influence the rate of advancement.

Thoughts on finding and recruiting advancement committee members are also covered in “Building Effective Advancement Committees.”

Unit advancement coordinators are good prospects for district advancement committees. They become well-versed in best practices, policies, procedures, and responsibilities, and may be able to provide vital information on the needs of the units. They also know what it takes to increase the rate of advancement. Note that membership on any advancement committee should reflect and support the variety of programs offered in the council or district.