

VENTURING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION ADMINISTRATION GUIDE



VENTURING® BSA

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide will help youth and adult volunteers, as well as professional Scouters, to not only start Venturing Officers Associations (VOAs) on a council level, but also provide methods for maintaining them. Research has shown that councils that have a VOA in place lose fewer members and, in some instances, demonstrate membership growth.

One of the unique program opportunities Venturing offers comes from the fun that takes place beyond local crews—activities that are organized and delivered by and for Venturers themselves. These activities are supported by Venturing Officers Associations.

While this guide will be of most interest to Venturers and Advisors at the district and council levels, it is also of interest to area and region level officers and Advisors as they work to support the establishment and program goals of local council VOAs.

While most of the language refers to districts and councils, the information may apply equally well at the area and region levels.

This is a guidebook—not a rule book. Practices described here have been found to be of value in operating VOAs across the nation. Your local circumstances may vary. Use the guidelines presented here paired with good sense and the recognition that Venturing is operating well when well-prepared and well-supported youth officers lead a fun and invigorating program for their peers.

Suggestions for improvements or additions to this document should be directed to program.content@scouting.org. Include in the subject line the words “VOA Administration Guide.”



PART I. THE VENTURING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

The purpose of the Venturing Officers Association (VOA) is to provide support and guidance to maintain and grow the Venturing program. VOAs collaborate with other committees in providing training for Venturers and Advisors, programming for crews, and monthly or quarterly forums to bring together youth and Advisors.

What Is a Venturing Officers Association?

A team of officers (youth president and vice presidents for administration, program, and communication), supported by an Advisor, keeps the VOA organized. This forum provides a voice for youth to help strengthen the Venturing program. A VOA holds several meetings during the year and hosts a few events that help to bring the crews, districts, councils, or areas together. Each event may have a different goal: training, adventure, recognition, fun—or all of the above.

How Do VOAs Operate?

In many ways, VOAs operate like a crew. A crew plans activities that are fun and of interest to the members of the crew. A crew plans activities that build a well-balanced program of adventure, leadership, and service. The VOA does the same things, but it offers a program and leadership opportunities that extend beyond an individual crew. And VOAs, like your crew, make sure that everyone has fun as a key part of the program.

What Does a Venturing Officers Association Do?

Venturing Officers Associations provide opportunities for adventure, leadership, personal growth, and service (ALPS). By doing so, they serve to model best practices in programming for local crews and to provide a program resource for Venturers and Advisors throughout the VOA's area of operation.

Venturing Officers Associations provide opportunities for personal growth and leadership for their officers, just as the leaders and members of the VOA provide programming of interest to their constituents. A strong VOA usually means strong crews. Program and training events offered by the VOA give Venturers the chance to meet other Venturers to build friendships and networks, to learn from their experiences, and to have fun!

The purpose of VOAs is not to hold meetings but to provide fun and informative program opportunities for Venturers. In many ways, the VOA serves as a forum for planning and carrying out great program. The leadership and Advisors for a VOA know they have done their job well when they see that the efforts of the VOA have served to strengthen the Venturing program in their area of operation.

Benefits of Having a Venturing Officers Association

Operating a Venturing Officers Association meets several needs that support Scouting and Venturing in your local community. As a youth-led program and governance body, the VOA is in an excellent position to take charge of its own Venturing destiny through the activities it supports.

Benefits to Venturing Crews

- A VOA is especially helpful to new or struggling crews. VOAs provide preplanned activities, ongoing support, and resources to help the crews grow and succeed. New and struggling crews are also introduced to more successful crews, which will provide them with additional ideas and lessons learned.
- A VOA is helpful to more established crews by offering an opportunity for leadership beyond the crew. A VOA will showcase the strong crews and help those leaders flourish through the program and training offered by the VOA. The VOA helps sustain these strong crews.
- A VOA promotes an awareness of recognitions available to Venturers and Advisors, such as hosting a Venturing awards dinner, and creating a selection committee for Venturing Leadership Awards.

Benefits to the Overall Venturing Program

- Creates a body of youth leadership from within the district or council.
- Creates and maintains communication channels between all crews, the council, and higher levels of the Boy Scouts of America to bring them together to help promote and grow the Venturing program overall.
- Provides youth and adult leadership to plan, promote, and facilitate district or council Venturing events (including weekend activities, summer camps, social activities, etc.). These events may be of a scale or complexity that a normal crew would not be able to do on their own.
- Provides leadership for Venturing forums and roundtables that include training for Advisors and allow more experienced Advisors and youth to share their experiences with new units.
- Provides opportunities beyond the crew for youth to explore and exercise leadership, planning, and communication skills.



Benefits to Councils and Districts

Money. A VOA can provide a self-sustaining and self-financing program resource for Venturers in local jurisdictions. VOA-sponsored activities are typically delivered as Tier I adventures for participants: Members of a crew can usually just show up and receive a high-quality program. Operation costs are modest and should not prevent Venturers from taking part in activities that the VOA sponsors.

Membership and Retention. Because of the VOA, crews have better program available to them, and the crews are able to do better programs themselves. Program drives membership and retention.

Long-term strength is provided as the VOA develops a base of adult volunteers and talented young adult leaders who give ongoing support to Venturing. There are also additional opportunities to serve as mentors and to provide the “institutional memory” as Venturers join the program, mature, and depart from the program. Previous VOA members may be recruited as adult mentors upon aging out of the program.

Manpower and Service. The VOA can also provide youth leadership (or staff) for training such as Introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews, National Youth Leadership Training, and Kodiak Challenge, as well as district- and council-level volunteer training, etc. If your local council has a youth development or program committee, the Venturing president can provide a crucial “youth voice” to this committee.

How Does a Venturing Officers Association Operate?

The Venturing Officers Association operates similar to a crew. The *Venturing Advisor Guidebook* describes a Venturing crew as a “local group of young adults who plan and lead a Venturing program.” (p. 10). That’s a pretty good description for a VOA as well. The program planned and led by the VOA leadership is designed to bring together Venturers from a wider geographic area.

Ideally, a VOA seeks to plan and carry out four activities or events every year. That may be a challenge too great to achieve during your first year or two, but it is a goal that every VOA should aspire to accomplish. The ALPS program model designed for use at the crew level works well for program delivery at the district, council, area, and region levels, too. The activities that VOAs organize provide a well-rounded program that addresses a variety of interests.

A VOA may exist at the district or council level. District and council VOAs have the potential for eight different events annually. However, this is likely too many as it would detract from the opportunity for a crew to plan and deliver its own program. Coordinating district and council VOA-sponsored events is essential. The goal is to meet the program needs for Venturers, not to supplant them.

The following table provides a summary of how the ALPS program model comes to life under the leadership of a Venturing Officers Association.

Type of Event	Nature of the Event
Adventure	Adventure is the key to Venturing, and developing outings with a sense of adventure is the key to the crew having fun and learning something new about themselves. As a Venturer, you not only will participate in outings and adventures, but you also will lead them. As your leadership skills develop, you will become a mentor to other Venturers as they take on the role of leading an adventure or activity. What the adventure looks like is up to you and the crew. Your VOA has an opportunity to plan and carry out an adventure that serves the needs and interests of the crew members in your service area. Consider organizing a fun Venturing event as your first task to support the crews in your district, council, area, and region.
Leadership	Leadership is the tool you will use as you help the crew plan its adventures. You will grow as a leader during your service to Venturing through the VOA. It is important to note that a leader is far more than a label—leadership is about taking action. An activity with a strong leadership component should work toward sustained, positive transformations within Venturing (individually and organizationally). Part of serving as an effective leader is having the right tools in your “leadership toolbox.” A VOA can help members of crews by providing training courses that are designed to support the crews and to develop leadership skills.
Personal Growth	Personal growth comes when you learn from your experiences as a Venturer. While you will grow both personally and as a leader during your service as a VOA officer, an important responsibility for a VOA is to recognize the significant accomplishments of Venturers at the crew and VOA level—and to offer recognition to the Advisors who support your efforts as a VOA officer. An annual recognition event is a great way to celebrate personal growth.
Service	Service is the gift we give to others. It allows us to sustain our communities by identifying needs and targeting them. Venturing’s commitment to community service will allow your crew to develop a program full of opportunities to serve others—and to have fun while doing so. The power of service, said Martin Luther King Jr., draws from the idea that “everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. ... You only need a heart full of grace.” Giving back to your community through an annual service event shows the power of Venturing to the community—and more importantly, to those who offer the service themselves.

There are many additional ideas in Part VI of this guide for inspiring your VOA leadership and attracting Venturers to come out and have fun.

What Else Does a VOA Do?

To organize your VOA to deliver the program described above, there are some other tasks that need to take place. The following table addresses the responsibilities associated with a council-level VOA. Keep in mind that these functions and responsibilities may be part of a successful district, area, or region VOA as well. Use these functions as part of an ongoing commitment to build and refine support for a successful Venturing program.

Function	Description
Officer Selection	<p>The officer election or selection process ensures that Venturing is ready to thrive in the year ahead. The term of office for all national, region, and area youth officers is from June 1 to May 31 of the following year. Councils are encouraged to adopt this schedule.</p> <p><i>(Led by VOA vice president of administration)</i></p>
Represent Venturing	<p>The VOA offers an opportunity to represent Venturing interests nationally and regionally, and in areas, councils, and districts. The VOA president is encouraged to submit written or oral annual reports to members of the various executive boards (national, regional, area, council, and district), in person if possible. The VOA president may be a member of an executive board.</p> <p><i>(Led by VOA president)</i></p>
Newsletter	<p>Regularly publishing a newsletter (on a monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly basis) promotes Venturing within the VOA's area of operation and the local Scouting community. VOAs are encouraged to publish at least quarterly newsletters per year. For many VOAs this is a great opportunity to make use of their social media expertise (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, webpages, etc.) and to share the Venturing message with a wider audience.</p> <p><i>(Led by VOA vice president of communication)</i></p>
VOA Meetings	<p>Meetings should be held to manage the progress of projects and to deliver engaging programs. The frequency may vary from monthly to quarterly. Additional monthly or quarterly VOA meetings may be needed to manage progress of a project and to deliver an engaging program. VOA meetings need to have a clear focus and purpose, and not be held unnecessarily. Additional meetings could be held via the internet, teleconferencing, or Twitter conferences, as well as face-to-face meetings.</p> <p><i>(Led by VOA president)</i></p>
Financials	<p>A VOA treasurer ensures that events are solvent and operate in a fiscally sound manner, guided by an Advisor. It is strongly suggested that the VOA work with the adult leaders and the BSA professional(s) assigned to the VOA to set up an account to collect and distribute funds that may roll over from year to year. The VOA should work to ensure that this account follows the fiscal standards and guidelines that may be in place in the region, area, and/or council.</p> <p><i>(Led by VOA treasurer)</i></p>

Function	Description
<p>VLA Selection</p>	<p>The Venturing Leadership Award (VLA) is presented by BSA local councils, areas, regions, and the National Council to Venturers, Advisors, committee members, and other adult leaders who have made exceptional contributions to Venturing and who exemplify the Scout Oath and Scout Law. A limited number of awards can be presented in any calendar year. Your VOA has the responsibility of convening a selection committee, composed of youth and supported by an Advisor, to carry out an annual selection meeting that identifies worthy recipients of the Venturing Leadership Award. A youth serves as the selection committee chair. All members of the panel should be previous VLA recipients.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Led by VOA vice president of administration)</i></p>
<p>Council Standards of Venturing Excellence Award</p>	<p>The Council Standards of Venturing Excellence Award is presented by the BSA National Council to the councils that complete the requirements during the calendar year. An active VOA is one of the requirements to achieve this award. Responsibility for documentation is shared by the VOA leadership, Advisor, and VOA staff advisor. The CSVE is a tool that has been developed to measure the effectiveness and success of a council VOA. (See www.venturing.org.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Led by VOA vice president of administration)</i></p>
<p>Orientation</p>	<p>Hold a yearly officer orientation for the newly elected officers. Support and contribute to the organization and delivery of council- or district-level training for Venturers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Led by VOA vice president of program in consultation with previous VOA officeholders)</i></p>
<p>Programming</p>	<p>Conduct an annual council Venturing interest survey among crews and individual Venturers to guide program development.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Led by VOA vice president of program)</i></p>

VOA Officers

Venturing participants can be elected or appointed to hold office within a VOA. Applications for youth officer positions are available at www.venturing.org, and all applicants require the prior approval of their crew Advisor and local council Scout executive. Position descriptions for officers and advisors are in Appendix 1 of this document.

The term of office for all national, regional, and area youth officers is from June 1 to May 31 of the following year. It is strongly recommended that all councils adopt the same term for their VOAs.

Note that all Venturing youth officers must be under age 21 throughout the term of office.

Each youth not selected for an office should be offered the opportunity to be considered for the next tier down. If the candidate accepts this opportunity, the application should be promptly transferred to the selection panel of that office for consideration.

If no applicant for an office exists at the time of selection, the volunteer Advisor and professional staff advisor for that office may extend the current officer's term.

It is important to understand that a Venturer may hold only one area, region, or national position during his or her term. It is recommended that a Venturer hold no more than one crew, district, or council position while holding an area, region, or national position.

Crew Presidents

Crew presidents, with the VOA officers, make up the youth membership of the VOA. Crew presidents represent the interests of their crew in the VOA.



Activity or Committee Chairs

In addition to the VOA positions of president, and vice president for program, administration, and communication, youth can participate as activity chairs.

All activity and committee chairs are leadership positions that support Venturing at each level of the program. These positions are appointed by the Venturing youth president at that tier with the approval of that president's volunteer Advisor and the applicant's crew Advisor. Additional youth positions may be appointed and those youth serve at the appointer's discretion. Some examples include webmaster/social media specialist, activity chair(s), liaison to religious organizations, council or district committees, or other groups the VOA leadership believes need representation by a Venturing participant. Chairs may be appointed for one event or may serve throughout the year.

VOA Advisors

VOAs are led by Venturers with support from their Advisors and associate Advisors.

VOA Advisor

The VOA Advisor shall be appointed by the top volunteer officer at each tier (e.g., national, regional, area, council, and district chairs) with the approval of the candidate's council Scout executive. His or her responsibility is to provide advice and support for the officers who lead the VOA and to appoint associate advisors and activity advisors. Advisors are appointed to annual terms with opportunities for reappointment.

VOA Associate Advisors

Associate and other subsidiary Venturing Advisors shall be appointed by the top Venturing volunteer Advisor at that tier, be approved by the Venturing staff advisor at that tier, and serve at the appointer's discretion.

VOA Activity Advisors

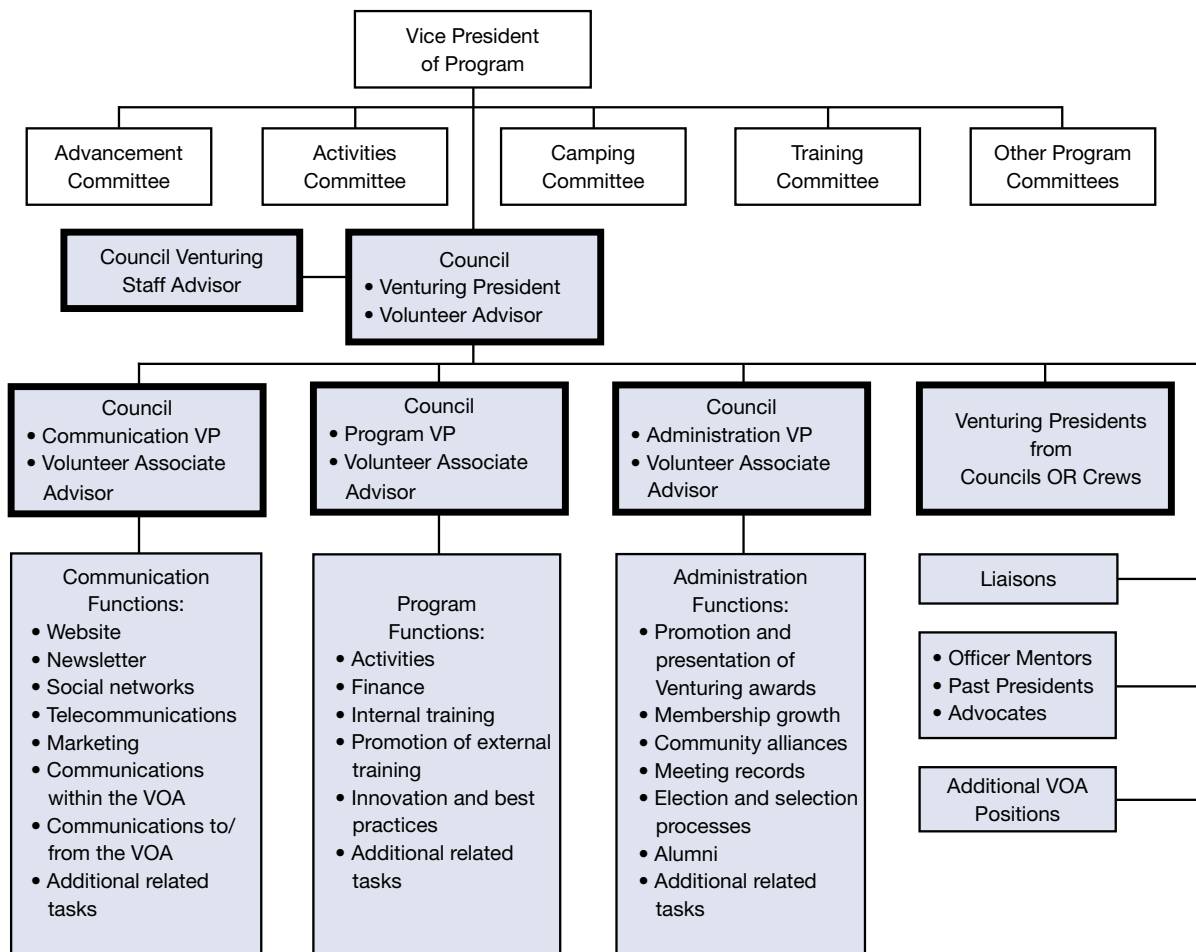
Advisors may also be appointed for specific activities and serve to mentor the Venturing participant leaders who are involved in the activity. They follow the same appointment process as VOA associate Advisors.

Professional Staff Advisor

The VOA professional staff advisor shall be appointed by the Scout executive at each tier (e.g., national, regional, and area, council, and district chairs) and serve at the appointer's pleasure. His or her responsibility is to provide support and guidance to the Advisors and officers of the VOA, provide access to the resources of the council, ensure compliance with council and national policies, and in many councils, provide support regarding the financial operation of the VOA.

VOA Organization Chart

A standard VOA organization chart has been recommended by the National Venturing Officers Association. It is described in Venturing Standard Operating Procedures. For councils that operate a VOA and a district or council Venturing committee, a Key 4 model (staff advisor, VOA Advisor, Venturing committee chair, and VOA president) may be employed. The local council VOA is generally accountable to the local council vice president of program. Some councils may also find it appropriate to have the roles of the council Venturing advisor and council Venturing chair to be a single individual.



Building Success: The Council Standards of Venturing Excellence Award

The information above offers some perspectives on what Venturing Officers Associations do as they offer a fun and engaging program to Venturers and Venturing crews in their local councils. One of the important resources that can be used to help set goals for success is the annual application for the Council Standards of Venturing Excellence (CSVE) award.

The Council Standards of Venturing Excellence Award is presented by the BSA National Council to councils that complete the requirements during the calendar year.

The measures of success in the CSVE are associated with high-quality, successful Venturing programs. Using the CSVE as a program assessment opportunity by your VOA can help identify areas for growth and celebrate areas of strength in local council Venturing programs. The presence of an active VOA is one of the requirements, and the VOA president is one of the three individuals who sign the document before submission to the National Service Center of the Boy Scouts of America. The form, which is subject to annual updates, is located on the national Venturing website: www.venturing.org.

Meeting the standards at different levels provides direction for growth, or higher levels of achievement, and, consequently, higher levels of recognition. The requirements are in two broad categories: core requirements and electives.



PART II. VENTURING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OPERATIONS

Effective leadership requires having a vision, setting clear goals, and planning to achieve those goals. Having a clearly defined vision is the first step in forming a successful VOA program. Your vision should define what you want your VOA to be—its destiny—and all of your activities will serve as the steps you take to achieving that vision. This chapter is designed to be of special help to councils establishing their first Venturing Officers Association.

Vision

A vision helps you to design and carry out your VOA's program with your VOA officers. It keeps you on the right track and ensures that everything the VOA does is pointed toward bringing that vision to life.

A large part of making sure your vision is brought to life is by sharing that vision with all of the VOA officers. By sharing a vision and maintaining common goals, your VOA will maintain similar expectations and work as a unit. See the *Handbook for Venturers* for guidelines on crafting a crew vision, and use those insights to help establish a vision for your VOA.

Be sure to use your vision. Put it at the top of your agenda for VOA meetings. Use it to reflect on each VOA activity: *Did this activity help your VOA achieve its vision?* The answer to that question speaks to the alignment between the VOA's program and its vision.

Bylaws

Bylaws help your VOA deliver its program to the Venturers it serves. While not required, bylaws spell out the processes you use to deliver the VOA's program. Your VOA bylaws are guided also by the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures developed by the National Venturing Officers Association. These are available for your inspection and review at www.venturing.org.

Your local practices must be aligned with the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures. In addition, your VOA bylaws should reflect the following:

- Governance
- When, where, and how VOA meetings will be held and conducted
- How VOA officers and Advisors are to be appointed or elected
- Voting procedures, such as what constitutes a quorum, so that your VOA can make a decision
- How committees are created and discontinued
- How the bylaws can be changed or amended

Constructing a set of bylaws can help your VOA stay organized. Bylaws serve as a platform to maintain structure and can help your VOA regulate expectations. Bylaws, of course, should be revisited regularly to ensure that they still serve the purpose for which they were designed.

Depending on local council practices, district VOAs may not have their own bylaws but operate under the auspices of the council VOA.

Beginning a New VOA Program Year

As you begin your tenure as a VOA officer, you are starting a new VOA program year. Like a trip in which the way you begin affects how well the trip goes, your first three months as a VOA officer can affect how well the VOA operates and how much you enjoy serving as an officer.

While every VOA is unique, most effective VOAs follow a program year similar to the program year followed by your crew. Typically, the year begins with elections and then continues with the VOA officers planning the year's activities before it moves on to the detailed planning for each adventure and its execution. Some of the steps may be reordered, depending on the needs of the VOA. In the case of some VOAs with established practices and protocols, wide interests, and varied capabilities, some steps may even be skipped.



Selection of VOA Officers

Selection or election of officers for a one-year term should be held annually.

For a new VOA, it is common for the first president to be selected by the youth involved. Your first selection of officers may be conducted based upon who is interested in the different officer positions. One of the important roles of a VOA Advisor involved in the establishment of a new VOA will be to help identify candidates for the inaugural VOA president.

The selection of officers at the area, region, and national level is guided by the current version of the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures. These officers are determined by an application and selection process. The selection process is guided by an Advisor, but the selection is conducted by Venturers.

Councils with well-established VOAs may have an election process in place. Local council and district VOAs may elect VOA officers through a process determined by the local Venturing Officers Association.

An officer election process may take place as part of an annual Venturing gathering or meeting.

Electing Officers

Election of officers is one way that the VOA and participants of Venturing in a district or council can provide leadership to the program. An election provides the most direct interaction in determining the direction of a VOA and the Venturing program for Venturing participants. This direct involvement often helps Venturers feel more a part of the VOA even without holding office. The visibility of a well-run election can also spur interest in what's in store for the years ahead.

If your VOA uses an election process, it is important to develop and communicate clear guidelines so that the elections operate with integrity. *Robert's Rules of Order* may provide your VOA with guidance when developing an initial election process. Some points to consider:

- How are candidates nominated?
- Are there qualifications that candidates must meet in order to stand for election? Who determines eligibility?
- How is the election carried out—voice, secret ballot, electronic voting?
- Is campaigning for office acceptable? What norms need to be established for the election to commence?
- Who is eligible to vote?
- What constitutes a quorum?
- If more than one candidate runs for an office, is the winner selected by a plurality of votes cast, or must the winner receive a majority of ballots?
- Who counts the ballots?
- When does the winner take office?
- How are irregularities in elections addressed?

Selecting Officers

There are different ways to select the VOA officers. Within the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures is a suggested process for the selection of the VOA president. The following steps are recommended:

1. Eligible applicants should submit an application.
2. The council Venturing volunteer Advisor, the area VOA president or designee, the current council VOA president, and any council VOA vice presidents and crew presidents who are not candidates will form a selection committee to interview and select a new council VOA president from the qualified applicants.
3. Then an interview of the applicants should be conducted. The interview process may be determined by the council VOA leadership and may include remote conferencing.

For the vice presidents, the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures also suggest a selection process involving the following:

1. Eligible applicants will submit an application by the date of the president's announcement at the tier for which they are applying.
2. The president-elect will review all the applications.
3. The president-elect can determine his or her own selection process.
4. The volunteer Advisor must approve of each vice president selection.
5. It is recommended that the appropriate volunteer associate Advisor be involved in the selection process.

Both of these processes can be edited and modified according to the needs of your individual VOA.

Officers Briefing

Right after the election or selection process, the Advisors and the new VOA officers should schedule a VOA officers briefing. This two-hour meeting can take place after school, on an evening, on a Saturday morning, or whenever convenient for the group. Choose a location where the briefing can be held without interruption.

The new youth president chairs the VOA officers briefing with guidance and assistance from the Advisor. Consulting with the previous officeholder should help guide the efforts of the new president. Before the meeting, the new VOA president should carefully review the following areas with the Advisor so that he or she is fully prepared to chair this meeting effectively.

1. The president and Advisor should review the previous programming delivered by the VOA.
2. The Advisor and the president should review the purpose and agenda of the upcoming VOA officers seminar and outline the tasks that need to be completed prior to the seminar (including the Council Venturing Interest Survey forms).
3. If this is a functioning VOA, the president should be ready to discuss the vision statement and either affirm that it represents the vision of the VOA or decide that it needs to be revised to speak better to the officers and members.
4. Also review bylaws and operating procedures. If this is an established VOA, the records from the previous officers should be given to the new officers.

This meeting should be fast-paced—it's your kickoff meeting! Its purpose is to prepare the new VOA officers for the upcoming VOA officers seminar, which is probably the most important event in the first three months of an officer's term. The VOA Advisor should distribute a Venturing Planning Calendar, No. 331-012, to each officer in preparation for the VOA officers seminar.

Following the VOA officers briefing, schedule the VOA officers seminar.

VOA Officers Seminar

The VOA officers seminar serves as a training and planning seminar for newly selected officers. It is led by a VOA officers seminar facilitator provided by your council or district (if available), with the assistance of the Advisor, associate Advisors, and crew president. This important session provides in-depth training for officers and the development of the year's program of activities. In many cases the seminar facilitator is the former VOA president.

This meeting should provide training opportunities for new officers and serve as a kickoff for the new program year.

If a council has both council and district VOAs, it is strongly recommended that a single seminar be conducted for both council and district officers.

The objectives of the VOA officers seminar are:

- To have you, the youth officers, learn your position responsibilities
- To build a working leadership team
- To acquaint the officers with Venturing leadership skills and the contents of the *Handbook for Venturers and Venturing Awards and Requirements*
- To plan the VOA's program of activities for the coming year
- To discuss the vision of the VOA leadership for the term
- To establish expectations and goals for the term

This important seminar is an experience that, in one day, parallels the kind of leadership that will be needed throughout the coming year. It is probably the most important step you make as an officer. What you do here affects the entire district, council, or area.

This is the first time that the officers will actually undertake their leadership responsibilities. At this hands-on seminar, officers will plan the VOA's program and clarify the VOA's expectations and goals. Then the group will consider how to share and publicize the program to encourage and recruit participation from throughout the district, area, council, or region.

Consider holding the crew officers seminar in a retreat setting such as a weekend campout or at a motel. An area VOA might host this event for council VOA officers and advisors, or a council VOA could host it for district VOA officers and advisors. Use this opportunity to have some fun while working, and don't rush the task.

This seminar is a great opportunity for your team to build relationships and gain a sense of trust and teamwork. Some of your officers may not be acquainted with one another, so providing a chance for them to bond can really set up your VOA for success. Utilize this event to its full potential by providing plenty of information *and* an element of fun.

Adapt the seminar agenda in the *Handbook for Venturers* (p. 91) to set up a training and planning session for your newly elected VOA.

SAMPLE AGENDA—OFFICERS SEMINAR

- Why are we here?
 - Introductions
 - Review the vision of the VOA either from bylaws or perhaps from the officers seminar. If this is a council/district seminar, have the council officers describe their vision and help the district officers to create one.
- What is the VOA?
 - Review the structure of the VOA and its meetings.
 - Review position descriptions.
 - Hold breakout sessions to set goals (if this was not completed at the officers briefing). Breakout sessions might be organized around functions, such as gathering together all of the vice presidents for administration.
- What does the VOA do?
 - Review: What activities are planned? How are they conducted?
 - Review responsibilities for officers in Venturing forums or roundtables. Identify resources.
 - Review event planning skills.
 - Review committees for each of these (if applicable). Introduce the concept of activity chairs and event advisors.
 - Break out to districts (if applicable) to plan the year and discuss specific goals.
- Get the VOA going.
 - Turn over the seminar completely to the new officers, and start a VOA meeting.
 - Review old business: events from last year, new information from the council.
 - Activity breakouts: Break out or have the entire VOA discuss activities or events for the year.



Venturing Officers Association Annual Program

A yearly plan is vital and can be a lot of fun to put together. This plan is important for a variety of reasons:

- It enables the VOA to achieve its vision. If a major adventure is what the crews want, training and preparation goals can be built into the annual plan.
- It enables the VOA to build a balanced activity plan of adventure, leadership, personal growth, and service into its annual program using the ALPS model.
- An annual plan allows Venturers and Advisors to mark their individual calendars. Participation in VOA activities increases when crew members know what to expect.
- An annual plan enables the VOA president to start appointing activity chairs to be responsible for planning and leading each activity the VOA will sponsor during the year.

Annual program planning also helps map out weekly and monthly programs. At the crew level, for example, if a crew is planning a cross-country bicycle ride as a Tier III adventure, they can plan meetings around fitness, bike repairs, first aid, and transporting and acquiring gear, and build a series of endurance rides into their monthly and weekly program.

For a district, council, or area VOA, having an overall plan makes sense even though it is probably not going to lead to the delivery of a VOA-wide Tier III adventure. The long-range planning may revolve more around the articulation of VOA-led Venturing events throughout the year. How does the annual recognition event connect with an annual Venturing fun event—or does it need to? These are questions that the VOA leadership needs to consider when preparing plans.

A VOA may begin by planning a schedule for meetings and other activities that will start in the fall. But of course, each VOA is different. The key is to look at the year ahead and develop a plan.

The first step in building your VOA's annual program is "preparing to plan." Start by identifying the individuals who will help inform the plan, gathering resources, considering alternatives, and laying the groundwork for the detailed program planning to follow. Carrying out the organizational steps will allow the VOA to apply the planning model with ease and efficiency. Note that to ensure integration with the overall council calendar, a group of officers will probably be naming and scheduling events and activities that the next set of officers will plan and carry out.

When it comes to developing an annual program plan, the initial preparation process involves three basic steps.

Step 1. The VOA Advisor, in consultation with the incoming president, holds a VOA officers briefing immediately after the VOA's annual election and starts the program planning process. The Advisor and president explain the process, goals, and what each officer needs to do to prepare for the next step. This process is often supported by the outgoing VOA president.

Step 2. Gather the following key information:

- Key school dates, such as holidays and exams that are relevant to your local council or district
- Community event dates, such as proms, homecoming, and graduations
- Personal dates that may affect your VOA's activities, such as the Advisor's anniversary cruise
- Key district, council, area, and region dates
- Data from the annual Council Venturing Interest Survey
- Last year's VOA annual plan, if you have it
- VOA priorities and goals
- CSVE performance from previous year

Step 3. After collecting each crew's and each member's annual Council Venturing Interest Survey (see below), hold the annual VOA officers seminar, where officers plan the program for the coming year. It is recommended that the Council Venturing Interest Survey be carried out electronically, in order to collect and organize the information more efficiently.

- Align the program plan with the Venturing areas of program emphasis: adventure, leadership, personal growth, and service.
- So that you have plenty of uninterrupted time for the process, it is recommended that this be conducted in a retreat setting over a weekend. This could be the most important meeting of the year. Do it right!

The VOA will be better prepared for the coming year if you develop this plan and possibly even alternate plans. It's especially important to plan thoughtfully. Dates and events will need to be placed on your council calendar and shared with individual crews so that they can build council VOA activities into their crew calendars.

Planning Helps: Council Venturing Interest Survey

The Council Venturing Interest Survey should be conducted before developing the year's program of activities at the VOA officers seminar. It's important to know the interests of the Venturers in your district and council in order to make this program meaningful. Be sure that:

- All members and all crews are surveyed for their interests. Depending on the size of your council, you may find that it is more appropriate to survey crews rather than individual Venturers.
- The survey is carried out electronically. This will allow for greater involvement across your council and will also allow results to be more rapidly compiled and analyzed.
- The results of the surveys are put into writing and filed for easy access.
- The survey process ensures easy participation.
- The survey process is communicated widely.
- If your council has a major annual VOA event, this is a great time to conduct the survey.

Preparation for the Annual VOA Activity Planning Process

Preparation for planning is as important as the planning itself. The process described here encourages your VOA leadership to do quite a bit of advanced prep before creating the actual plan your VOA will follow during its program year. Gathering information from a variety of sources—crew members' interests, Council Standards of Venturing Excellence performance from the previous year, the results from your annual Council Venturing Interest Survey, and an assessment of what your VOA can reasonably deliver—will help your VOA members form a plan that is likely to be successful. This process makes use of the resources gathered in the three steps described above. A sample council assessment is available in Appendix 2. Feel free to adapt it to meet your needs.



Once the plan is developed, the VOA president, in consultation with the VOA vice president for program, assigns a member of the VOA as the activity chair for a particular activity. The chair convenes a meeting, guided by one of the VOA's Advisors, to put the plan into action. One of the key tasks of the activity chair is to publish a timeline/calendar that will communicate to the members of the VOA (and to all of the crews in your local district and council) not only *what* is taking place, but *when*.

The Annual VOA Officers Seminar: Developing the Annual Activity Plan

Now you are ready to develop your VOA's annual activity plan as part of your annual VOA officers seminar. Start with these ground rules:

- Respect each other's views. Listen carefully and avoid interrupting other speakers.
- Keep focused on the task, which is to plan the VOA's annual program. Try not to get sidetracked.
- Use the planning model to keep everyone on track and to be sure that all questions are addressed. This will help deal with unintended consequences.
- Write out ideas so everyone can see them.
- Be in agreement.

With these five guidelines in mind, the planning process may be broken into six steps:

Step 1. The VOA president and/or Advisor leads a discussion on the VOA's goals for the coming year. Write the goals on a flip chart or eraser board and narrow them down to a final list of goals for the year.

Step 2. Brainstorm ideas of what the VOA might do based on the Council Venturing Interest Survey. Write the ideas on a flip chart. Remember—don't critique the ideas while brainstorming.

Step 3. Evaluate the ideas that have been developed. Do you have the resources needed for each idea? How might these activities be implemented? What resources have been used in the past? What new resources need to be acquired?

Step 4. Take a look at your annual program "from 35,000 feet" to ensure the program is balanced and uses the ALPS model of adventure, leadership, personal growth, and service.

Step 5. Draft the plan and calendar, including big activities, meetings, support activities, and key dates that apply. Officers approve the final calendar in consultation with the VOA volunteer and professional advisors. Identify the activity chair and consultants, and organize teams/committees to lead the work.

Step 6. Distribute the annual plan and calendar to the Venturers, and through district, local council, and area communications streams. Once the annual activity plan is finalized, the chairs for the various events can begin working on their activities. It is up to them to keep the process moving forward and to report progress at the regular VOA officers meetings and VOA meetings.

Choosing Program Chairs for Each VOA Activity

The activity chair for an event is selected by either the vice president of program or the VOA president (depending on your VOA's practices and size) and Advisor. This individual is responsible for planning, promoting, and staging the activity. For relatively simple activities, the activity chair alone may be sufficient to carry out these three responsibilities. However, some activities in a VOA are more complicated. For these, the activity chair recruits a committee. Depending upon the activity, the chair receives help from the Advisor

and consultants as well. When a committee works with the activity chair to plan an activity, the activity chair and the committee should go through the seven planning steps together. It is the responsibility of the activity chair to be sure that the activity planner is filled out and filed with the VOA records. This will help create “institutional memory” that will make it easier to plan and organize future VOA events.

Areas of Program Emphasis—Building a Balanced Activity Program

The Venturing areas of program emphasis should be used to suggest things in which Venturers might wish to take part: adventures and fun activities, leadership-building exercises, setting goals to achieve personal growth, and performing service in your community. It should serve as a tool for year-round VOA program planning for the Venturers that your VOA serves. Once you have completed your annual program plan, review it to ensure that you have a fun, balanced plan that helps crew members become involved in each of the areas of emphasis.

The ALPS model provides an opportunity for balanced programming and personal development for members of a Venturing crew, and it offers the same breadth of programming for activities sponsored by your VOA.

Adventure

While your Venturing Officers Association is not likely to organize Tier III adventures for the Venturers it serves, the value in bringing together young adults with a common interest in Venturing at a Tier I level for an evening, a full day, or a weekend of fun is an adventure for those who plan the activities as well as for those who participate. Indeed, you may find that preparing for an event represents a Tier III level of planning for the team organizing the activity, all while ensuring that entry and participation in the event is as simple and straightforward as possible for those who will attend.





Leadership

Leadership in Venturing takes place in a variety of settings. The VOA officers have been charged with developing and leading an annual program. Some will be appointed to serve as leaders for various activities. To help develop leadership, Venturing offers a variety of leadership training courses to help prepare Venturers to lead with confidence, knowledge, and success.

Some smaller crews may have difficulty in delivering the training internally. For this reason, sponsoring an annual leadership training conference is encouraged. From the list below, consider making several of these training courses available to Venturers in your council and helping them to develop the capacity to deliver this training in the future.

- Introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews
- Goal-Setting and Time Management
- Project Management Training
- Mentoring Training
- First-aid training such as American Red Cross (First Aid/CPR/AED for Schools and the Community) or the American Heart Association (Heartsaver Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED)
- Other training as desired by Venturers: Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly!, and outdoor skills of interest
- Help individual crews lead annual crew officers seminar meetings.

Personal Growth

Personal growth supports the gaining of economic independence, lifelong learning, and timeless values. An important part of Venturing, like all Scouting programs, is to help Venturers grow and accrue skills to better themselves. As your VOA plans its annual program, you want to provide opportunities for Venturers to grow and gain independence and autonomy.

Holding an annual recognition event is a great way to support your Venturers in achieving their goals. You can plan your own event or work with your council to incorporate the recognition into one of its council dinners or events.

Recognition provides an opportunity to congratulate Venturers on their achievements. The recognition system leading to the Summit Award and the Venturing Leadership Award are two important benchmarks of accomplishment. These commendations should be recognized at a significant event appropriate to what they represent.

There are two main ways to provide public recognition for accomplishments in Venturing:

- An annual Venturing recognition event sponsored by the VOA. This can be a dinner, a dance, a reception, or other formal recognition event. Recipients of the VLA and of the Summit Award are recognized for their accomplishments.
- Local councils generally sponsor two types of recognition events each year. One is for adult leaders who have achieved recognitions such as the Silver Beaver; the other is for youth who have earned the Eagle Scout award. Your local council VOA has an opportunity to work with the leadership of these events to recognize VLA recipients at the adult recognition event. Summit Award recipients can be recognized as part of a broader youth achievement awards event, which would recognize not only Eagle Scouts but also recipients of the Summit Award and Sea Scouts earning the Quartermaster Award.

Service

Service is a commitment to others and, as such, it forms an important part of your time as a Venturer. As your VOA plans its annual program, be aware of opportunities to deliver service to others. Service provides additional opportunities to build your own skills as a leader, especially as you take on the challenge of leading



service projects as a Venturer. But remember that service is much more than just an occasional project. It is a way of life. This ethic is developed at the crew level; it can be supported at the district, council, and area level through Venturing Officers Associations.

Service is one of Venturing's areas of program emphasis, so a strong program of service is essential. Consider the following as part of your annual programming needs:

- Service hours—24 hours of service are required to complete the Discovery Award; an additional 36 hours of service are required to earn the Pathfinder Award. Providing opportunities for service helps provide additional opportunities for Venturers to carry out community service.
- While crew sustainability projects are designed to be organized and led at the crew level, keep in mind that a fun VOA-led event provides an opportunity for crews to invite prospective members to consider Venturing as a leisure time activity. Successful VOA-sponsored events can provide great ideas for crew members who plan sustainability projects for their crews.

Service also is a great way to communicate to the larger community the value of Venturing and Scouting. The impact of 100-plus young adults carrying out a service project in a community speaks well of Venturing and, most importantly, meets needs of the community that are difficult to address through smaller groups.

Planning VOA Meetings

A lot of planning takes place at VOA meetings (and between the meetings), but making the meetings productive takes planning in itself. This is the purpose of the VOA officers meeting. If you are the VOA officer responsible for a meeting, think through the VOA meeting ahead of time. Each meeting needs a purpose. That purpose will, of course, vary from VOA to VOA and from meeting to meeting. Some VOAs meet monthly; others meet quarterly. But no matter how often your VOA meets, each meeting's purpose will depend on the VOA's goals and its upcoming activities. Meetings will involve discussion and decision-making, but they also can involve active skills training, service activities, and games. There's no reason not to keep the business brief and provide a variety of fun, easy-to-organize Tier I adventures as part of every VOA meeting.

The officer responsible for a meeting should formulate a plan or agenda that takes into account the VOA's goals, input from other officers, and any advice from the volunteer and professional advisors. Once an agenda is developed, make it available at the meeting for everyone to see. The key is to develop and use a meeting plan or agenda that helps the VOA make meetings both productive and fun. An agenda provides the meeting with a basic structure for moving through the business portion quickly and efficiently. Try to focus as much of the meeting as possible on hands-on learning and doing, minimizing the amount of talking and filing reports. Make time spent at VOA meetings a part of the adventure!

Tips for VOA Meetings

- Be sure that fun is part of every meeting.
- Keep VOA meetings active.
- Be sure there are activities of interest for everyone.
- When planning the meeting, think of it as five to seven short activities instead of one long meeting.
- Be sure that meetings further the VOA's annual program.
- Use VOA meetings to prepare for significant adventures.
- Keep the business parts of the meeting brief.
- Be sensitive to time constraints from school, jobs, and extracurricular activities that young adults experience.
- Team-building games and initiative games provide rich opportunities for members to learn to work together better—and have fun at the same time.

- Follow up with reminders and action items through email, phone, text, or preferred social media.
- VOA leadership, supported by Advisors, should work together to ensure that every meeting is well-planned and ready to go.

It is often helpful to have something to do for Advisors who are not involved in the deliberations of the VOA officers. A series of Venturing forum topics are available for use as training tools. This provides a great leadership development opportunity for Advisors and allows the VOA officers to operate a meeting without undue adult involvement.

Leading and Planning VOA Adventures

Planning every adventure means that you have to be concerned with the high-level details—what the seven-step model provides—and the details that you work out to implement each step in the process.

The annual activity plan helps your VOA identify what the members wish to do for each program year. The seven-step planning model presented here will be useful as you plan VOA-led adventures and service projects. (This same model will also be useful in life when you face project planning and project management tasks.)

This activity planning model is used in the pages that follow. Its purpose is to help you make good decisions along the way as you develop, implement, and assess your plan for a particular activity. Use the points on the cycle to help evaluate your plans as you go along, as well as the Venturing Activity Planning Worksheet. See the *Handbook for Venturers* for this form.

Step 1: Define the Specifics of the Activity

What would the Venturers in your council like to do? Consider what the VOA has done before as well as new activities that relate to Venturers' interests. Narrow down the ideas to create a final list. If your annual VOA plan includes a canoe trip and you have been assigned as the activity chair for that particular activity, work with your Advisor, crew officers, and your consultant to develop a plan for that activity that will be fun, meet the needs of Venturers (as identified in the Council Venturing Interest Surveys), and conform to the safety requirements of the Boy Scouts of America and the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.



Step 2: Define Resources

Determine the time available for the activity, what skills will be needed in the VOA, and the resources available. Also determine the involvement of the local council, support from consultants, whether facilities are available, what the event will cost and how it will be paid for, and other relevant issues such as the availability of sufficient officer and Advisor leadership.

Step 3: Consider Alternatives

Evaluate the ideas you have developed to see whether they match the resources available to your VOA and its audience. Do you have the resources needed for each idea? Are there alternatives that would work as well—or better? What if an emergency occurs leading up to or during the event? How are you prepared to handle changes in circumstances?

Step 4: Commit the Plan to Writing

Draft the plan and calendar, including the activity itself, support activities (such as canoe paddle training and water safety seminars before a canoe trip), and key dates. Review the plan with others to make sure all dates are feasible. Follow up with key dates and times to ensure adequate guidance and accountability to implement the adventure. Be sure to schedule periodic status checks to help execute the plan properly.

Step 5: Promote the Plan

Promote the plan and the event. Have a point of contact for questions to be answered. Consider the tools to use when communicating the adventure: social media or paper handouts? Keep in mind how the audience prefers to communicate. Follow up with multiple messages to keep the excitement building.

Step 6: Implement the Plan

Have fun. Take lots of pictures. Tell lots of stories. Celebrate success. Use your success to promote the next VOA activity.

Step 7: Assess the Activity

Regular assessment checkpoints along the way ensure you are making progress. At the end, debrief the entire experience with the members of the VOA. What went well? What should be changed? What has been learned? What can you do differently next time? Take good notes and put them in the VOA history file to help during the next planning cycle. A reflection after the adventure will allow VOA members to learn from the experience. The next VOA activity should run more smoothly as you apply what you learned when planning and implementing this activity.



PART III. ESTABLISHING NEW VENTURING OFFICERS ASSOCIATIONS

A Venturing Officers Association (VOA) exists at all levels of Scouting in order to provide support. This service and support is youth-led with adult guidance. A VOA is not an end unto itself but exists to support Venturers through their crew program. A VOA allows for programming that is not easily put together at a unit level. It also allows for support to build leadership capacity for crews to develop adventurous and dynamic programming.

Governance

A council VOA serves and supports the crews in the council. Some councils may decide that it is more beneficial to have VOAs in each district (an administrative unit of a council). In this case, the district VOA supports the crews and the council VOA supports the district VOAs. Thus, a district and/or council VOA exists to support the crews in the district/council as an extension and supplement to crew programs. The district/council VOA should be made up of representatives from local crews.

The VOA should be an active participant in the programming of a local council/district Venturing forum. The forum should be open to all crews in order to be a place of conversation and promotion.

Area and regional VOAs exist to serve and support the local councils by providing proper communication within the levels of the program. They serve as a liaison between the national VOA and the local council/district VOAs. Area and regional VOAs should help to strengthen the Venturing program in local councils, ideally through providing resources and support for local VOAs.

The National Venturing Officers Association has a mission to support the Venturing program as a whole. The national VOA works to help advance Venturing as a movement, to promote the ideals and vision of the program, and to support the work of regional and area VOAs so that they can support the local Venturing program.

Steering Committee

When Venturers recognize the need for a VOA at their level of Scouting (most likely the district or council level), they should form an ad hoc team to help establish a new VOA. Sometimes this may actually involve restarting or reforming a past VOA that is no longer active. The ad hoc team will work as a “steering committee” for the formation of a new VOA.

If adult volunteers decide to champion the cause of a VOA (in the case that no youth have expressed this interest), the volunteers should recruit youth from local crews to serve on this ad hoc steering committee. It is vital that the endeavor be led by youth interest and support—that’s the key to Venturing!

A VOA led by advisors is not a VOA! When VOAs and crews deliver programs that the adults want Venturers to experience and are implemented for Venturers, the VOA frequently fails within a short period of time. Participation and input from the Venturers themselves is essential to the formation of a VOA—and to its ongoing operation.

Developing New VOAs

What follows is a general set of steps to follow when establishing a new VOA. These are guidelines—not policies—so the steering committee can use common sense guided by the principles of the Scout Oath and Scout Law to adapt these steps to local circumstances.

Declaration of Interest to Professional Staff/Council

The first step that a steering committee should take is to contact the professional staff member assigned to support the Venturing program at the district or council level. If the committee is not sure who to contact, a local district executive or the council program director should know.

Ideally, the steering committee should submit a short, written declaration of interest in forming a VOA. It can be helpful for the steering committee to demonstrate that youth interest is driving the formation of the VOA. Because a district/council VOA exists to serve the program needs of crews, it could be helpful to share the names of officers in crews who are interested in exploring this concept.

If adult volunteers are the people spearheading the effort to start a VOA, they should be seeking out youth interest and ideas from local crews. These youth should be recruited to the steering committee. Venturing is a youth-led program, so youth involvement from the beginning of any project is essential.

Discussion With Professional Staff/Council

The appropriate local professional Scouter should schedule a discussion with the ad hoc steering committee. A key volunteer may also be involved in this meeting (such as a district Venturing chair, district program chair, council Venturing chair, or council vice president of program). The following questions may be useful for the steering committee and the professional Scouter to discuss during this meeting:

- How much local interest is there in starting a VOA?
- How can information about the formation of the VOA be communicated to all crews?
- What is the youth vision for the purpose of this VOA?
- How can a VOA help grow Venturing in the district/council?
- How can a VOA help develop adventures for crews in the district/council?
- How will crews feel supported by this VOA?

Once there is support from the local professional staff and key district/council volunteer(s), the steering committee can proceed with forming the VOA.

First Officer Appointment

You have a few options in terms of deciding on officers. The steering committee should carefully consider how to set an image of engagement with all local Venturing crews in the district/council. It may be that the youth members of the steering committee are the strongest choices to be officers in the new VOA, but the committee should consider whether this can be perceived poorly by the local crews. (For instance, if youth from a single crew form the steering committee and then are selected as the officers, other crews may feel left out and not welcome to engage with the VOA.) Knowing your local crews well can serve as a good guide for this process.

One option is for the steering committee to appoint officers to start. Appointing the initial group of officers is a very common practice. Once there is a youth president, she or he can appoint the remainder of the officers. If a youth president is not initially identified, the adult Advisor can step in and appoint youth to the positions.

Another option is to select officers by group consensus of the steering committee. Soon after the initial meeting, the youth and adult advisors can discuss and decide as a group who will serve in positions. This is usually decided upon by youth interest in individual positions.

The term of office should also be decided at this point. Will the initial officers serve six months or a year? It is best for all members of the steering committee to agree on this before people are appointed to the offices. A group may decide that the standard term of office will be one year but that initial officers will serve until the first VOA activity in order to give more voice to additional crews. A group may also decide that having initial officers serve a full year will give more continuity to the program as the VOA forms.

The selection of the Advisor(s) will be decided by the professional or volunteer Scouter who serves Venturing at the level in question. For example, a district VOA Advisor will likely be appointed by the district chair (or program chair) in consultation with the district executive. A council VOA Advisor will likely be appointed by a vice president of Venturing or vice president of program in consultation with the professional staff member assigned to support Venturing. Once a VOA Advisor has been selected, it is common for that person to appoint associate Advisors.

Should the VOA president be decided upon before or after the selection of a qualified VOA Advisor? This is a local decision. If the steering committee is empowered by the local council to select the initial VOA Advisor, the committee should decide upon the process for selecting the youth officers before this appointment. This can help you avoid awkward situations that might derail the efforts to form a VOA. (For example, if a parent is selected as the Advisor and the parent then chooses his or her child as the initial president, will the rest of the committee be dissatisfied?)

The initial officers should be energetic supporters of Venturing. Ideally, they will be good communicators who can engage other crews in the VOA. This support can be developed in a similar manner as is common for Advisors and presidents in local crews. Ongoing discussion and support of a new VOA president by a perceptive and accomplished Advisor is essential.

How to Advertise/Market the Initial Meeting

A VOA is only useful to Venturing if it exists to serve the crews in the local district/council. Getting involvement from as many crews as possible is essential. Crews will be more open to support from the VOA if they see it as an accessible group of helpful people rather than a “clique in charge.”

In some ways, social media has made advertising easier than ever before. On the other hand, many of us are so overwhelmed with messages via email, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Yik Yak, Snapchat, etc., that Venturing messages can get lost in the buzz. Develop a list of multiple ways to market the initial meeting to crews. While Venturing is a youth-led program, adult support can help drive interest in the formation of a VOA. Therefore, consider a mix of new and old marketing methods.

Assistance from members of the professional staff can be helpful in reaching out directly to crew Advisors.

Here are some ideas:

- Email blast to local crew presidents, committee chairs, Advisors, and leaders at the district and council levels
- Facebook postings by youth officers who are friends with other Venturers in the district or council
- Posting on the council website or newsletter
- Postal mail postcard to all Venturers and Advisors

Getting people to help form a new committee or organization is not easy. Many times people shy away from new groups because they think they will be required to volunteer too much time or that there won't be any fun programs yet. Here are a few ideas to include in your advertisement to make the group look organized and ready for action:

- Have clear start AND ending times.
- Select an engaging location that can offer meeting space but also something fun afterward.
- Can someone sponsor free refreshments as an incentive to come?
- Is the day/time chosen convenient for potential youth officers?
- Is there a way to organize rides for youth who cannot drive themselves?
- Give some examples of the types of work that the VOA will do—make it appear fun, not dull!

Preparing for the Initial Meeting

The initial meeting for a VOA should be open to all youth and adults on the council and district level—anyone who is interested. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss all the benefits of a VOA to the youth, units, council, and districts. Be prepared to use a short, concise speech that defines the VOA in a few sentences. Make the meeting fun and interactive. Getting the information across is vital, but you want to make sure the youth and adults are engaged. The ultimate goal of the VOA is to support the units and supplement the program, so you don't want to forget the fun aspect.

While much of this first gathering will be focused on sharing information, consider that adding activities of interest may increase attendance. A bowling alley with a meeting room, for instance, could serve as a place to conduct the business of forming the VOA while drawing Venturers and crews to participate.

Be sure to be organized and well-prepared for the initial meeting. This may be a cliché, but first impressions **do** count! It is helpful to have an agenda printed out in advance to guide the meeting. Below is a checklist of things to consider when planning for the meeting.

45 Days Out

- Find and reserve a location that meets your needs (meeting space, activity space if desired).
- Establish a communication plan.

30 Days Out

- Develop a detailed agenda that will keep the meeting on task and engaging.
- Develop some engaging activities that can be conducted during/after the meeting.
- Decide whether there are funds to support refreshments at the event.

15 Days Out

- Order refreshments (if possible).
- Follow through with reminder emails, postings, and/or phone calls.
- Make copies of agendas.

Day of Initial Meeting

- Officers arrive early to set up the meeting space.
- Set up enough chairs for the realistically expected attendance. (It's always better to be seen setting up extra chairs as people arrive than to end up with too many empty seats.)
- Create a space for refreshments.
- Greet people at the door.
- Deliver an excellent and memorable meeting.

BE GUIDED BY HOPE BUT BE PREPARED FOR REALITY

Sometimes an initial meeting might not draw the attendance that you hoped for. Don't despair. Starting a new organization takes time and effort. If only a few people other than the steering committee show up, they deserve as much excitement as a group of 100. Get them engaged and wanting to be involved with the VOA. Many successful groups grow organically, meaning that they grow over time as people connect with their friends and bring them to future events.

Conducting the Initial Meeting

Start the meeting on time and end it on time. Make sure that everyone feels that their time is respected. Also, be sure to engage everyone who attends. Don't turn this meeting into a lecture by the VOA officers—that isn't likely to engender support or engagement by other youth and their crews.

Sometimes those who come may seem disengaged. It could just be that they are shy or not sure what to do in a new social setting (especially if they don't know anyone else there). Be sure to be inclusive and to make them feel comfortable. They might not want you to ask their opinion about every single issue, but give them a chance to share their thoughts or reactions if they desire.

Organizing the First Activity

VOAs exist to serve and support crews. Activities are often the most welcome form of support. New or small crews might be financially unable to conduct some types of adventures, or unskilled in planning and carrying out their own activities.

For the VOA's first activity, try to plan modestly. Sometimes the simplest activities are the most rewarding. Activities that are fun and easy to plan could be anything from a picnic at a local forest preserve to a group movie night. Have an activity that is fun and achievable. Whatever is chosen, it's important to pay attention to the process. This may be a difficult task so allow yourself enough time for planning. Another key point is promotion: Be sure to promote the event to all the local crews. It is important that the units are encouraged to get involved.

Be sure that local crews have a voice in selecting the activity, or else the VOA might find itself planning an activity just for itself. Balance the passions and interests of the VOA officers with the interests of the local crews. The Council Venturing Interest Survey (see Appendix 2) can help in this. See guidelines for planning annual programs in Part II of this guide.

Interest Survey/Program Development

Something that can aid the VOA in deciding on different activities is completing an interest survey. After your first event you can have all units complete the survey, which will provide the VOA with ideas of activities that the youth are interested in.

People are surrounded by requests for surveys, so be sure to keep the interest survey focused and convenient. Long and complicated email or internet surveys might provide a lot of data but not if people are too annoyed or busy to fill them out. Sometimes just asking youth or adults (via email, Facebook, or even a paper survey delivered to crews by a commissioner) for a list of three activities they'd like to do can yield great ideas for a VOA's program calendar.

As the officers become more comfortable, the VOA should be adding events throughout the year. Depending on the participation level by local crews, events can be as large or small as desired. Including a special annual event gives crews the opportunity to interact and make connections with one another.

The VOA can provide program across all four experience areas: ALPS. Offering an array of program gives all crews opportunities to advance and to attend activities that fit the needs and desires of their members. Because crews have an array of interests, diversifying your program will allow the council or district VOA to plan activities that hit the interests of all crews involved. The most important part of program is making sure it is fun! Youth need to be interested in the activities you are planning. A VOA is there to support Venturers and their units by providing engaging events that they are excited to participate in.

Selecting Permanent Officers

A Venturing Officers Association will only be truly representative and sustainable once permanent officers are selected or elected on an ongoing basis. The steering committee decided upon officer terms when the VOA was formed (one-year terms are common but not required). Remember that VOA officers need be under 21 years of age the entire time that they are in office.

Officer terms should be set up to be most beneficial to youth in your district/council. Does a calendar year make sense for terms? A school year? Note that the term of office for area, region, and national Venturing officers is from June 1 to the following May 31 —so this too may be a consideration.

The more inclusive a VOA is, the more support it will have from local crews. Therefore, plan for good communication with all local Venturers about the VOA elections. The VOA should decide how the elections will be conducted (electronically or in person). Additionally, the VOA should decide whether all individual youth Venturers in a local area are eligible to vote or if each crew will cast votes for officers. Election results will be respected more if the rules are clear to everyone in advance.

Finally, will the new officers take over immediately after the election? Will there be a brief period of time where new and old officers overlap to allow for a better transition?

PART IV. THE COUNCIL VENTURING COMMITTEE

Council operating committees help implement the programs of the Boy Scouts of America. The members of these committees have yearly appointments. Some committees have district representation as recruited by each district chair, and most committees have at-large members appointed by that particular committee chair. Members evaluate current programs and make decisions regarding future program enhancements. Typical committee functions include membership and relationships, finances, and program (which includes camping, activities and civic service, training, and advancement and recognition). Youth development committees (which may be present rather than program committees) and a district and council operations committee are also used to organize the functions of the local council.



Special council committees operate to focus on specialized tasks such as employee relations, government relations and funding, legal counsel, strategic planning, risk management, health and safety, alumni relationships, property and maintenance, marketing, and the nominating committee.

Also frequently included in the committee structure of the Boy Scouts of America is a council Venturing committee. See *Administration of Venturing for Councils and Districts*, No. 34534, for more details on the administrative concerns related to Venturing.

Council Governance Structure

Governance is focused on developing and maintaining relationships so that the tasks of the organization are accomplished. Sometimes, local council governance structures are modified to meet local needs. In the case of Venturing, there are several possible approaches that may be implemented:

- No VOA and no council Venturing committee
- Council Venturing support and no VOA
- A stand-alone VOA without a council Venturing committee
- A Venturing committee and a VOA

No VOA and No Council Venturing Committee

This approach is least desirable for obvious reasons. Without an organized body to advocate for Venturing, the program languishes. It is especially helpful to have a coordinating body or a forum to facilitate crew-to-crew interactions. Without Venturing advocates, the program runs the risk of becoming marginalized.

Council Venturing Support and No VOA

There are two basic options here:

- Incorporating Venturing into existing operating committees
- Having a stand-alone Venturing committee that handles all functions

Option 1: Incorporating Venturing into Existing Operating Committees

Many guidebooks designed for council and district committees recommend organizing committees on the basis of function. For example, advancement committees handle all advancement-related activities for all Scouting units; activities committees plan and run council or district activities to help supplement what Scouting units offer.

This is the recommended approach for districts: supporting Venturing through your normal district operations. A good reason for this approach at the district level is numbers. Most districts don't have enough available staff members, volunteers, or energy to run separate district-level committees. Therefore, volunteers are recruited to represent Venturing on each of the standing committees at the district level:

- Advancement and recognition
- Camping and other activities
- Marketing
- Commissioner service
- Training
- Finance
- Membership

A concern associated with this option is that Cub Scouting or Boy Scouting, which may be the strongest areas of your Scouting program and have the most membership, could take all the attention of the committee members and resources of the council or district, leaving Venturing shortchanged. People you have recruited for Venturing could become discouraged and quit. Two keys to avoiding this issue are to have a chair who personally gives attention to all three areas and to recruit members who can effectively support Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Venturing.

Option 2: Stand-Alone Venturing Committee

A stand-alone Venturing committee might have the same functions as outlined above (advancement and recognition, camping/activities, marketing, commissioner service, training, finance, and membership), but at your committee meetings, you would discuss only Venturing.

Many councils have found this method attractive for council-level support. The stand-alone committee usually covers all the functions of other council committees except unit service, which is best covered by the commissioner service.

There are pros and cons with this option. An advantage is that volunteers are immersed in Venturing and all their energies go to that one area. One report or action easily leads into another, creating continuity. But a disadvantage is that Venturing may be seen as essentially separate and different from Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting, and the three areas may not interact; such interaction can benefit everyone. Spend some time discussing possible challenges or roadblocks to supporting Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Venturing equally.

At the council level, the size of your Venturing committee depends on the number of districts and Venturing crews you support, your council size, the availability of volunteers, and other factors. You could have subcommittees for each function, with a chair for each subcommittee; or you might have just one person in charge of some functions.

You will have to determine how many people you need and develop a plan to recruit them. Committee members need not come from within Scouting: Look for volunteers among the consultants for your Powder Horn course. New graduates of the Powder Horn course and Venturing training at Philmont Scout Ranch or the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base are also ideal candidates.

A Stand-Alone VOA Without a Council Venturing Committee

In some local councils, this is an optimal and successful arrangement. Much as an Order of the Arrow lodge does not require a separate “Order of the Arrow Committee” to provide support or supervision, a strong, stand-alone VOA can provide a successful Venturing program within a council.

A challenge associated with this model is that the VOA is designed to focus on program and leadership opportunities for Venturers in a local jurisdiction, whereas a council Venturing committee focuses on areas beyond program and leadership development such as advancement and recognition, camping and other activities, marketing, commissioner service, finance, and membership. A VOA is not fully equipped to manage those sorts of operations.

A Venturing Committee and a VOA

The VOA is designed to act much like a crew with members drawn from all of the crews in the council for programming adventures, leadership development, personal growth, and service. The VOA also acts as a representative body in that all crew presidents and their Advisors serve on the VOA. The Venturing committee should offer support to the VOA just as a unit committee supports a crew.

Some details are provided below for councils that maintain a council Venturing committee and a Venturing Officers Association.

Structure and Membership of the Council Venturing Committee

The role of a council Venturing committee (CVC) is to support the delivery of the Venturing program in the local council.

The purpose of a council Venturing committee is not to supervise the Venturing Officers Association, but to *work with it* to support Venturing in a local council.

Ideally, the council Venturing committee works as an advocacy team for supporting Venturing in a local council. The table below represents the most appropriate relationship among the various committees.

Members of the council Venturing committee have assignments to participate in the various operating committees of the local council advocates for Venturing. They are also charged with sharing with the CVC any updates of interest to the other members of the committee. The CVC chair’s responsibility is to bring this information to the council VOA Advisor and council Venturing president to keep them updated on Venturing issues that are addressed in the various operating committees.

For example, a Venturing representative on the council training committee advocates for Venturing leaders to receive appropriate training. The council training committee may ask for participation by Venturers or Advisors in delivering the training. Relaying and confirming this request would be a responsibility of the training representative on the council Venturing committee, who may report to the council training committee that the VOA will host (in consultation with the training committee) a Venturing-specific training event to meet training needs for Venturers and Advisors. The point of these training-related examples is that the CVC works to support program delivery of Venturing, serving often in the role of disseminating information or advocating for program needs. Supervising the VOA is not its role.

In many councils, the VOA Advisor and the council Venturing chair are the same person. However, the functions are quite different. The VOA is designed to act much like a crew with members drawn from all of the crews in the council for programming adventures, leadership development, personal growth, and service. The VOA also acts as a representative body in that all crew presidents and their Advisors serve on the VOA. The Venturing committee should offer support to the VOA just as a unit committee supports a crew.

The council Venturing chair may be the same person as the VOA Advisor, or they may be different.

For councils that support a council Venturing committee, the roles of the council Venturing chair and council VOA Advisor are complementary rather than identical.

COUNCIL VENTURING CHAIR

SELECTED RESPONSIBILITIES

- Appointed by the council president with board status
- Chairs the council Venturing committee
- Is a vice president or reports to the council vice president of program
- Uses Council Standards of Venturing Excellence to provide benchmarks of program progress
- Supports council-level Venturing much like a unit committee chair provides support for his or her unit
- Is the VOA Advisor or may consult on the appointment of the VOA Advisor
- Appoints council Venturing membership chair/ representative to coordinate with the council membership committee and district and unit membership chairs
- Appoints others who will be liaisons with various council committees, such as membership, marketing, training, advancement, FOS, university of Scouting, and so forth
- Encourages the council commissioner to appoint an assistant council commissioner– Venturing and make him or her a part of the council Venturing committee

COUNCIL VOA ADVISOR

SELECTED RESPONSIBILITIES

- Selected with the same care and consideration as applied for selecting an Order of the Arrow lodge advisor
- Provides advice for the council Venturing president and the officers of the VOA much like a unit Advisor does for crew officers
- Advises the council VOA president
- Appoints Advisors to support VOA vice presidents
- Oversees the administrative, programmatic, and communications missions of the officers
- Uses Council Standards of Venturing Excellence to guide development of the VOA program

Council Venturing Committee’s Relationship With the Venturing Officers Association

The CVC and the VOA are both charged with supporting Venturing in local councils. The difference comes from the nature of the participants in each group and how their responsibilities guide their actions. As noted earlier, operating a separate council Venturing committee and a VOA leads to a “Key 4” leadership structure involving the VOA president, the council Venturing committee chair, the VOA Advisor, and the Venturing professional advisor.

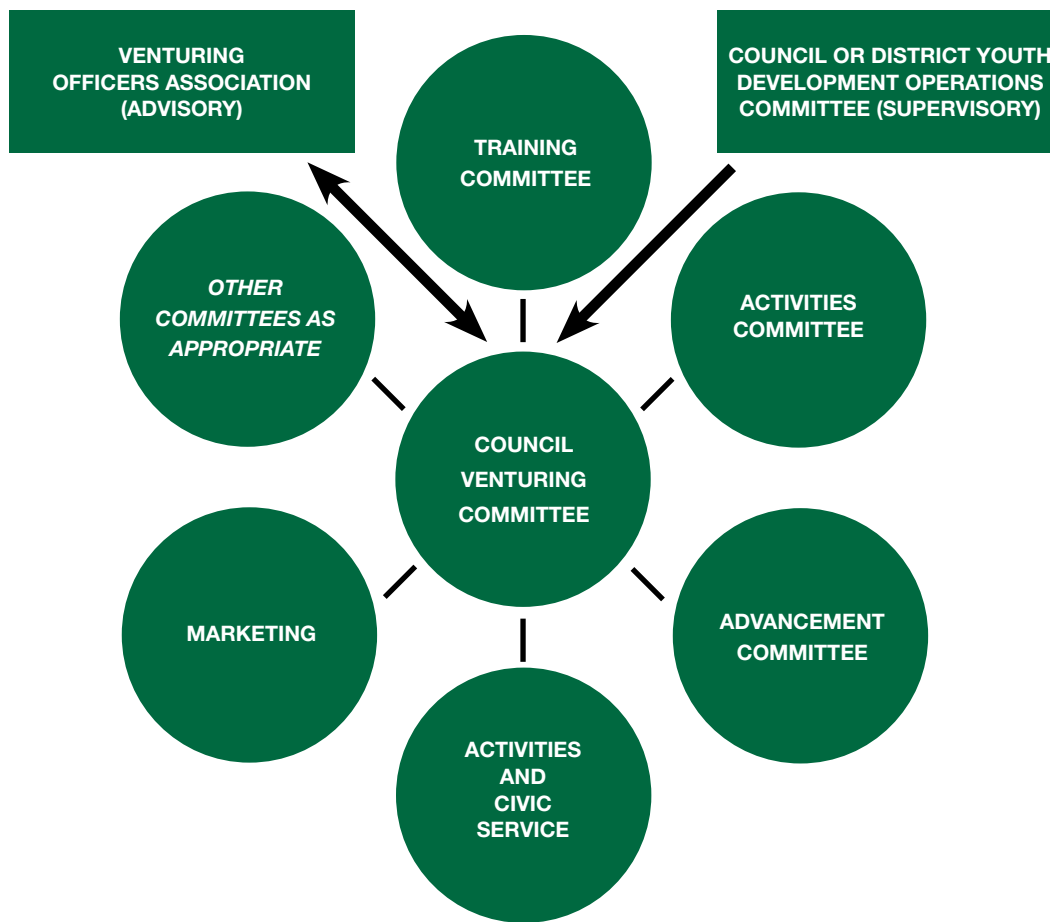
	COUNCIL VENTURING COMMITTEE	VENTURING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults (21+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venturers (14-20) • Advisors (21+)
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports a Venturing program that achieves the mission of the BSA and the aims of Scouting • Supports and grows Venturing within a local council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports a Venturing program that achieves the mission of the BSA and the aims of Scouting • Provides program opportunities for Venturers • Develops leadership competencies among Venturers
METHODS	<p>Provides support in these areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition • Camping and other activities • Marketing • Commissioner service • Training • Finance • Membership 	<p>Organizes and delivers program activities supporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure • Leadership • Personal growth • Service
INTERACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Venturing chair serves in an advisory and support role to the VOA Advisor and VOA president • Council Venturing chair may serve as an ex officio member of the cadre of VOA Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VOA president and Advisor maintain open communications with the membership of the CVC • VOA president and Advisor serve as ex officio members of the CVC

Key Points for Productive Relationships

Successful working relationships among volunteer groups have, at their core, open and frequent communications. That open line of communications is further supported by understanding the nature and purpose of the VOA and the CVC. Use the guidelines below to assist the VOA and the CVC in working together effectively for the good of Venturers, Venturing, and the advisors and committee members who support them.

- Understand the purpose of the CVC and the VOA.
- Jointly determine the preferred communications formats.
- Commit to building a strong relationship.
- Focus on governance as leadership.
- Be clear about roles.
- Be clear about the council Venturing committee's mandate.
- Respect boundaries.
- Respect each other.
- Commit to understanding Venturing as a youth development program.
- Honor the youth role in Venturing.
- Respect the wisdom of Advisors.
- Learn Together.¹

¹Adapted from *Strong Partners*. Retrieved on November 25, 2015, from http://www.firstnonprofit.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Strong-Partners_Building-An-Excellent-Working-Relationship.pdf.



Venturing and Commissioner Service

Commissioner service charged directly with Venturing can avert or mitigate issues of quality, recruiting, retention, charter renewal, and training.

Some councils may assign commissioners to special roles, such as an assistant council commissioner for Venturing. This Scouter is charged with recruiting unit commissioners with a deep understanding of the Venturing program. A Venturing-trained unit commissioner should be tasked to encourage recruiting by their units, assist with ideas for retention, make sure they renew their charters, evaluate the units to provide quality control, and be trained in Venturing so they can coach the Advisors and committee members toward a stronger program. Use by unit commissioners of the Commissioner Worksheet for Crews, the Crew/Ship Self-Assessment worksheet, and the Journey to Excellence crew scorecard will help units become stronger and retain more members. The units will also be more likely to renew their charters.

PART V. SUSTAINING AND REVIVING EXISTING VOAS

The initial excitement about founding a Venturing Officers Association can sometimes wane for a number of reasons. The VOA may not feel tangible successes in terms of plans and programming, next generations of VOA officers are becoming hard to find, or officers and Advisors find themselves too busy in other areas of their lives to fulfill the vision of their job descriptions.

To gain a deeper understanding, let us re-examine the roles of each of the key members of the Venturing Officers Association. While Venturing focuses on youth-led leadership, the operations of the Boy Scouts of America are entrusted to the commissioned BSA professionals who work at district, council, area, regional, and national levels of the organization. Because of the BSA's operational structure, it is important to view the Venturing Officers Association within the context of the overall organization. To situate VOAs appropriately within the BSA's operations, it is critical to start with the staff advisor—the top BSA professional assigned to directly oversee and support the VOA.

Staff Advisors to the VOA

Regardless of the VOA's service area within the BSA—whether district, council, area, regional, or national—a BSA professional should be directly responsible for all of the programming, people, decisions, appearances, and actions of the Venturing Officers Association. In many circles, this BSA professional is called a staff advisor. A staff advisor's role with the VOA has some overlap with the VOA's volunteer Advisor (discussed next), but the staff advisor's purview is actually wider, deeper, and more fundamental to the VOA's existence. Thus, it is crucial to a VOA's success that the staff advisor possess an intimate understanding of both the theoretical (i.e., the aims and methods of Venturing) and the practical goals, processes, and guiding principles of adolescent leadership development, advisement of teenage leaders, and best practices of Venturing. The staff advisor has the responsibility to find and/or develop the volunteer adult Advisors who can bring the truest vision of Venturing to life, to continually monitor those volunteer Advisors in their work with the VOA, and to coach and counsel the entire VOA team—youth officers, youth members, and Advisors alike—to act in the best interests of supporting and growing the Venturing program in the VOA's service area. Finding a suitably qualified staff advisor is a challenge, and may require an investment of time and resources by the professional and volunteer personnel appointing the staff advisor to his or her role (e.g., a Scout executive and council president helping a new district director to develop an understanding of Venturing so that he or she can assume the staff advisor role). The appointment of an enthusiastic, committed, and prepared staff advisor is the keystone to the entire VOA operation.

Staff advisors assume a set of weighty responsibilities regarding the overall function and form of the VOA and its activities. The staff advisor ensures that all applicable BSA policies are accurately interpreted and correctly implemented and is committed to Venturing's purposes to foster youth leadership and remain ever interesting and relevant to the target member audience within the VOA's specific service area. In short, the staff advisor is less about “no, you can't do that” and more focused on “let's see how we can make it happen.” With this mindset, the staff advisor selects, develops, and maintains volunteer adult Advisors who adhere to similar tenets of supporting the VOA's youth leadership while also remaining subtly attentive to (but not fixated upon) minimizing risks to health, safety, finance, and public perception of the Venturing program and the BSA. If any volunteer Advisor is not a fit with these goals, the staff advisor assumes responsibility for consulting with appropriate volunteer/professional leadership and either counseling or removing the volunteer from their role with the VOA (see the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures). As staff advisor experience increases, the appropriate balance of being “hands-on” and “hands-off” will develop, but it is important that the staff advisor be neither too manipulative of nor too disengaged from the VOA's operations. The staff advisor can value the consultation and advice of their volunteer Advisor, but should maintain a personal awareness and careful consideration of all that concerns the personnel of the VOA—the volunteer Advisors, VOA officers, and VOA members.

VOA Advisor

The primary adult facilitator of the Venturing Officers Association's operations is the appointed VOA Advisor. The VOA Advisor is a volunteer appointed by overseeing professional and volunteer administration of the service level (see the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures). While the Advisor maintains a broad view across the entire VOA team, the two particular people with whom the Advisor communicates are the staff advisor of the VOA and the VOA's president.

A well-prepared and properly developed VOA Advisor will devote his or her work to supporting the VOA's youth officers and members in their pursuits to enhance and improve the Venturing program across the entire VOA service area. The VOA Advisor is not a volunteer with a personal agenda but rather a volunteer committed to growing, developing, and guiding the ideas and agenda(s) of the VOA officers and VOA members.

Advisors need to find the ideal balance between appropriately supporting the best ideas of the VOA while still framing and guiding the VOA's work to be within the policies and best practices of the BSA.

Keeping VOAs Operating

VOAs that have a mindset of innovation and continuous improvement are more likely to keep their meetings, programs, and missions relevant and popular versus VOAs that focus on maintaining traditions and setting up policies and procedures. Below are some suggestions for conversation starters for VOA members to ask themselves as they evaluate their meetings and programs.

VOA OVERALL EVALUATION

- What purpose does your VOA serve in your district/council?
- Is this purpose still relevant to the "now" of Venturing?
- Do crews see the VOA as a useful resource?
- Do crews feel that the VOA effectively communicates with them?
- Does the VOA feel that it hears the voices of all crews?
- Is the VOA asking too much of officers?
- Is the VOA asking too much of Venturing crews?
- What is driving the selection of activities for the VOA?
- Do members of crews have a voice in the operation of the VOA?
- Is the VOA still led by Venturers?
- Is the role taken by Advisors appropriate?
- Are officers and Advisors appropriate role models for Venturing?
- Are officers and Advisors aspiring to serve as servant leaders?
- Are adult Advisors supportive of the VOA officers and members, or do they have their own agenda?
- Does the VOA successfully attract and retain participants from a variety of crews?
- Whose VOA is it?

Any organization requires effort to keep it functioning and sustainable. A key to keeping a VOA effective and operating is to maintain a youth-led perspective. Continuity in youth leadership often comes in cycles because, as youth officers age, they typically move on to college. Quality adult advisors can help smooth this transition, but it may be tempting sometimes, even to the most caring adults, to “do it themselves” when they see a task left undone. Unfortunately, this often leads to new youth officers becoming bored or disenchanted with a program that is supposed to be youth-led.

Having clear-cut and detailed job descriptions can help officers know what is expected of them and what their duties are. This helps youth make an informed decision when they choose to run for an office as to whether they have the time to be active at the level they are seeking.

The main purpose of a VOA is to serve the program needs of the crews in the district/council. If a VOA is perceived as a clique or a group only out to serve its own “agenda,” it will not be long before very few crews are participating in any of the activities sponsored by the VOA.

Here are some suggestions to consider in keeping your VOA focused:

EVALUATING VOA MEETINGS

- Is attendance growing, steady, or declining?
- What is the ratio of youth to adult attendance at meetings?
- How many crews are represented in the VOA?
- Do VOA members come from all areas of the district/council?
- Are youth officers leading the meetings?
- What role do advisors play at meetings?
- How do youth perceive the adult participation in the VOA?
- Do meetings feel like a productive use of time?
- Are decisions made at meetings (forward looking)? Or are the meetings mostly reporting sessions (backward looking)?
- Do meetings include a quality training opportunity each time?
- Do meetings include something fun?
- Are face-to-face meetings convenient for the members?
- Are virtual meetings (teleconference/web conference) convenient for the members?
- What are the pros and cons of face-to-face vs. virtual meetings for your local area?

- Are the programs that are offered ones that current crews want?
- Are there a variety of program offerings that meet the needs of different crew specialties? (Are all programs outdoor-based? Do all assume a high level of physical skill?)
- Do crews feel a sense of ownership about programs? Are they invited to send representatives to help plan events?
- Are VOA activities supplementing crew programs? Or are they “overtaking” the calendar so that crews find their calendars crowded out by too many VOA-sponsored activities?
- Do VOA activities add variety to the experience of Venturers by focusing on events that individual crews are not able to do by themselves?

- Is the event calendar active and vibrant? Is it exciting?
- Is the event calendar planned well in advance (12-18 months)?
- Is the VOA helping the local district/council meet its goals and mission to serve youth with the program of Venturing?

Evaluating Your VOA: Reset/Reboot

If your VOA reflects on its work and discovers that it is not reaching the majority of crews or that it is having a hard time attracting youth leaders, it is important to consider the need for a “reset” or “reboot.” This is not some sort of admission of failure. Society is changing at a lightning pace. Venturing, just like all community organizations, will continue to face the need to adapt and change as youth interests, time, and choices evolve. Below are some ideas for questions for the VOA to consider as it evaluates ways to change its structure or approach.



PROGRAM

- What level of participation is there at events?
- How many crews are represented at events?
- Are new programs developed or is the same calendar of events repeated each year?
- Are there candidates for all of the youth officer positions?
- Do officers believe that they are leading the VOA?

If the participation at VOA programs or meetings is declining, it may be wise for the VOA to discuss whether it is time to consider one of the following:

- **Reset:** If the overall structure of the VOA seems sound and youth officer and leadership positions are filled, it may be time to consider “resetting” the annual program offered to crews. Seek out input and design a new set of programs that may be more attractive to current crew membership.
- **Rebuild:** If the structure of the VOA is sound but the group is having trouble filling all officer and leadership positions, it may be time to consider “rebuilding” the VOA. This could be necessary even if the program offered to crews seems to be succeeding—because that will only happen for a little longer until there is no active VOA to plan such activities. A new plan for recruiting qualified and capable youth to consider leadership positions is a must. It may be tempting for Advisors to lead the effort, but it is essential that a youth lead the rebuilding.
- **Reboot:** If the participation at VOA meetings and activities is low (or nonexistent) and very few youth positions are filled, it may be time to “reboot.” It may be necessary to bring together many (if not all) of the crews in the district/council to draw up a new structure for the VOA, recruit youth officers, and start by planning one event to build success.

One of the most difficult topics in these situations may be changing the adult Advisor for the VOA. This is not an indictment of the skills or dedication of the person who has been in that role. However, when a VOA is no longer serving the needs of crews and participation is dropping, it is probably time to consider a change in perspective. This should be done respectfully, acknowledging all of the positive work that the Advisor has done in the past. Most often a professional Scouter or a council-level volunteer such as a vice president of program will be the person to share this decision with the current Advisor.

There can be value in appointing new VOA Advisors on a regular basis. This sort of diversity of perspective and experience serves the program well.

It is also important to remember that volunteers in Scouting are appointed to one-year terms, subject to re-appointment. Helping Advisors understand at the outset that the role they serve is not a lifetime appointment makes it easier to retire a struggling Advisor at the time of annual reappointment.

VOA Meetings

The impulse to have regular VOA meetings is a good one. However, when a meeting is held just to hold a meeting—rather than as a means of accomplishing a goal or engaging in meaningful discussions—the meeting itself can become an obstacle.

Use the list below and the VOA meeting evaluation questions above to help improve meetings by improving their purpose and their execution:

- Commit to meetings that are led by officers.
- Ensure that there is a planned agenda for the meeting.
- Give notice of the meeting on an annual calendar, and make sure reminders are sent out in advance.
- Ensure that the meeting is designed to accomplish something constructive.
- Make sure that the meeting is fun.
- Advisors should coach officers to lead effective and productive meetings.
- Meetings are not forums for Advisors and other adults “with an agenda.”
- Do meeting discussions have mostly adult or Venturer input?
- Look for alternative ways to deliver the VOA meeting: Teleconferencing? A Saturday or Sunday afternoon? A quarterly meeting at the close of a VOA-sponsored event?

Re-establishing Program Goals

The expression “if you build it, they will come” has some truth to it. However, this maxim is more effective if what you build is connected to what Venturers would like to do.

Some ideas that are often forgotten:

- Gather information from crews. What would they like for program?
- Keep the program provided active and engaging.
- Don’t over-program crews. Four VOA-sponsored events per year is not only a goal to aspire to, it should also be considered a limit.
- Keep the program manageable. While some VOAs are able to sponsor a 2,000-participant event on an annual basis, it is better for most VOAs to sponsor more manageable activities.
- Make sure the VOA programs serve as supplements to the crews’ program without replacing it.
- Use VOA activities to add variety to crews’ annual program opportunities; deliver experiences that individual crews cannot accomplish.
- Work to achieve a 12- to 18-month program calendar.
- Take into consideration other Scouting calendars when organizing the VOA calendar.

Leadership Concerns

Leadership involves guiding a group of people or an organization to accomplish specific tasks. Leadership involves communicating and sharing a clear vision with others that inspires the members of the team to invest time and talent in meeting the team’s goals.

When a Venturing Officers Association struggles, it is helpful to consider challenges in the leadership of the team. Some possible areas of concern include:

- One or more members of the VOA’s leadership are not prepared to carry out the responsibilities of the position.
- Interests of participants are not considered.
- Communication skills are ineffective.
- Planning and preparation are inadequate.
- Courage to try new activities is lacking.
- There is a lack of investment in growing other leaders.
- Some of the VOA leadership may have “hidden agendas.”
- The culture of the VOA leadership is unhealthy.²

²Adapted from “Six Leadership Failures that Put Your Company at Risk.” Retrieved on November 29, 2015 from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/glennlopis/2015/03/24/6-leadership-fails-that-put-your-company-at-competitive-risk/>.

Unprepared to Carry Out the Responsibilities of the Position

Be sure that officers and Advisors have clear responsibilities and are ready to use them to achieve the goals of the VOA. As Advisors work regularly to coach officers in their roles, so too must professional staff members and senior volunteer leaders work with VOA Advisors to ensure that they are prepared to support the delivery of a successful program.

Interests of Participants Not Considered

The key volunteers in Scouting are the youth. If they do not willingly take part in the program opportunities offered to them, it may be because their interests are not being considered during the planning phases. Scouting is a movement: It must change and adapt to attract and keep participants, or it will fail to thrive.

Ineffective Communication Skills

Poor communication is a factor in the failure of many organizations. Effective and demonstrated communication skills are essential for all members of the VOA—officers and Advisors. Advisors need to be skilled not only in effective communication themselves but also in the ability to coach officers to become more effective communicators.

Lack of Planning and Preparation

Poor planning and preparation skills are often associated with poor communication skills. Communication provides the medium, and the plan offers the content that is communicated. A clear plan helps set priorities—to simplify and guide decision-making, to get the team working together on a project, and to establish the message that the team delivers.

Lack of Courage in Trying New Activities

A tendency to focus on activities that have been successful in the past is a natural approach. However, it has been observed that a successful activity, when repeated multiple times without change and enhancement, tends to decrease interest not only in the activity but also in the perception that the VOA can deliver a strong and engaging program. Experiences must be refreshed regularly for them to remain successful.

Lack of Investment in Growing Other Leaders

Officers are elected or selected annually. Advisors may serve for several years, with an opportunity for annual reappointment. One of the key responsibilities of all VOA leaders and Advisors is to search continuously for new talent. Among the key points for an annual review of the success of a VOA Advisor is the responsibility to identify and cultivate new talent.

Hidden Agendas

A team leader whose purpose is not aligned with the mission of the VOA is rare, but the possibility must be considered. Using a VOA position as a steppingstone to another role in Scouting or as an item to include in a resume are causes for concern and coaching. Success in a Scouting position, or a successfully executed program, should absolutely be considered when other volunteer roles become available, but excellent service in one's current role is the critical part of the process.

Unhealthy Culture

It is important to maintain the youth-led perspective, organizational structure, and program delivery of Venturing. Among many factors, Advisors need to be selected for their proficiency in youth development. Their goal is to coach Venturers to lead a program of interest to young adults. A culture that forgets that essential truth becomes an unhealthy one that misses the point of Scouting.

Professional staff advisors need to be vigilant in watching for such problems and be prepared, in consultation with the key volunteer with Venturing oversight, to remove Advisors who fail in this regard.

Terms of Office

Terms of office should be set for both the youth officers and adult Advisors. An annual election for youth officers is a good starting point for discussion. If youth officers would benefit from shorter terms (e.g., six-month terms might give them more leadership opportunities), the VOA may consider that. In general, adult volunteer roles in Scouting are annually reappointed.

Term limits are not likely to be an issue for youth officers due to the age limits on Venturing, but a VOA may wish to discuss whether limiting officers to a single term in any position might allow more leadership opportunities for individuals and crews.

Term limits can be an important consideration for adult Advisor roles. Venturing benefits from both the youthful excitement of Venturers and the wisdom of past experience from older Venturers and Advisors. However, there are many examples of volunteers who hold on to a role for longer than is beneficial to themselves or to Venturing. Sometimes when volunteers remain in the same role too long, they limit the program because they tend to recruit other adults from their own circle of association, thus limiting the program to one person's perspective.

In general, a good practice may be for a local council to appoint VOA Advisors to terms of up to three years with annual reappointments. There may be times when a second term of three years is appropriate (for instance, a very complex change is occurring and stability will benefit the organization).

A VOA Advisor's main role is to help youth officers succeed. This is probably best accomplished by the Advisor helping to recruit other adult volunteers who can serve as resources to the VOA's youth leadership. It is vital that these adults understand how Venturing operates—they are not being recruited to run committees or make decisions; they are being recruited to work with youth “behind the scenes,” to coach and mentor as appropriate, and to let the youth take all of the credit.

Subject Matter Experts

A VOA should not be limited to officers and Advisors. It will have a better chance for success if subject matter experts are recruited. These are youth and adults who bring specific knowledge and/or experiences that will help the VOA to plan a special event (e.g., recruiting caving experts for a caving activity) or lead a task force (e.g., identifying how to help more Venturers utilize the advancement program for leadership growth).

Recruitment of Officers

A VOA will only be sustainable if there are future officers and leaders. While planning events is always important, preparing for the years ahead should also be a consistent focus. The VOA should have a plan to actively recruit future officers. If a VOA has committees, the committee chair positions can be a training ground for Venturers who may eventually want to serve as officers. In general, a VOA needs to be sure that it is always bringing in fresh youth voices and perspectives. This is a primary responsibility for the VOA president and Advisor.

A good transition plan is also necessary. When new VOA officers are elected, do they get a chance to learn from the past officers? This could be accomplished by a training conference conducted by past officers for the new officers or by having overlapping terms where the new officers “shadow” the current officers for a few months before officially taking over. One challenge with this method is that the officers who are leaving may have other commitments (job, school, etc.) that make it difficult for them to stay in the position through the period of overlap. It’s important to have an open discussion about these issues BEFORE the transition takes place.

Rotating assignments and duties can be an effective method of keeping a VOA energetic and functioning. Youth members of the VOA often find that change makes their roles more enjoyable, and it’s also helpful to cross-train members so that they are prepared for future leadership roles.

There is no one-size-fits-all profile for VOA Advisors, except that they have an understanding of how Venturing works and how to be a good advocate for youth. Ideally, Advisor candidates will be former Venturers, possibly even past VOA officers. This is not to say that quality Advisor candidates cannot be volunteers who were never Venturers. However, council-appointed VOA Advisors should not be merely dedicated volunteers, but volunteers who understand the methods of Venturing, seek to empower youth, and prefer to be in the background without receiving recognition (since that belongs to the youth officers).

Re-engaging Crews and Venturers

A VOA will only be sustainable if there are future officers and leaders. Some suggestions for re-engaging Venturers and Venturing crews include the following ideas, drawn from successful practices in the nonprofit sector.³

Provide Incentives

A reward system is a great way to recognize dedicated Venturers and Advisors and keeps them engaged in your VOA’s mission for the long run. In addition to the Venturing Leadership Award, provided for highly distinguished service, your VOA may establish recognitions for participation, produce profiles of new or re-engaged members through a VOA newsletter or social media posting, or create other means of recognizing participation and involvement.

Create Leadership Opportunities

In addition to defined officer roles, a VOA has numerous tasks that need to be accomplished to support the VOA program as it supports local crew programs. Provide support and guidance to ensure success in projects of the VOA. Independence and autonomy are empowering and provide a strong incentive to participate and contribute.

Communicate Effectively

Mass email and generic social media postings don’t often serve the needs of the recipients. Make sure that communications are targeted to Venturers and Advisors who have expressed interest in the message’s content. Determine what sort of information Venturers and Advisors want by asking them when they start working with the VOA.

Focus on Interests and Skills

People participate in Venturing for many reasons, such as getting involved in their community, meeting new friends, or trying something new. The leadership of your VOA can help them contribute to the success of the VOA by identifying each participant’s skills and interests.

³Adapted from Holt, G.C. (2016). “7 Strategies Your Nonprofit Should Implement to Engage Volunteers.” Retrieved from <http://blog.techimpact.org/7-strategies-nonprofit-implement-engage-volunteers/>.

Provide an Active Program

Much of this guidebook, as well as the *Venturing Advisor Guidebook* and the *Handbook for Venturers*, focuses on how to plan and implement activities of interest. An active and engaging program that is well-publicized and well-planned is the most important tool for attracting young adults to Venturing and to service with your VOA.

Build Teams

Help the members of your VOA build relationships by creating teams to carry out projects that support the VOA. Venturers will meet new Venturers and be able to contribute a unique skill or perspective that will make any project or task more successful.

PART VI. PROGRAM IDEAS FOR VOAS

This section of the guide is designed to “prime the pump,” to use an old expression. The first eight events described below are examples of what a VOA can realistically do to provide a fun and engaging program. The intention is to give you some ideas that have found success in other councils. Use these ideas for inspiration for what might work in your local council or service area.

Keep in mind when organizing a VOA event that it should be on the scale that an individual crew could not accomplish it themselves.

Fun Events (Adventure)

The Annual Titanic Regatta

The annual VOA regatta is a tradition in several Scout councils. The activity is a chance for crews to work together to display ingenuity, creativity, and seamanship skills as they construct and sail their cardboard boats. Prizes are given in categories such as seaworthiness, best design, and largest capacity. The event serves also as an introduction to Venturing for the community. Crews are encouraged to bring guests to the event so that prospective Venturers can share in the fun. The cost is approximately \$10 per person, which is used to cover the cost of the modest refreshments and prizes awarded to crews.



Smiley's Fall Venturing Event

Smiley's Fall Venturing Event is an annual event in the Samoset Council of Weston, Wisconsin. The event takes place in mid-October at the council's Hanna Venture Base. The facility offers a variety of resources to deliver a fun activity. The 2015 event included programming in the following areas: climbing, zip-lining, COPE, shooting sports, self-defense, Dutch oven cooking, and an ethical controversy discussion. The cost per participant was \$40 and included all meals and snacks from Friday evening through Sunday morning. Lodging was available for both tent and cabin camping.

Service Events

Arbor Day Project

For an Arbor Day event, one VOA collaborated with a local park district to restore native trees to a plot of cropland. The project was started and completed in one day, as 75 Venturers worked to plant several thousand trees.



Giving Thanks

In celebration of Thanksgiving, a district VOA worked in concert with a local shelter to provide Thanksgiving dinner for residents of the shelter. The Venturers secured food donations and coordinated with the shelter leaders to prepare and serve the meal.

Recognition Events (Personal Growth)

Annual Recognition Dinner

The Northern Star Council hosts an annual recognition dinner at its urban program site. In addition to providing a catered dinner, recognizing Venturing Leadership Award recipients, and honoring Venturers who have earned the Summit Award, the evening includes climbing, archery, and other activities available at the program site. The cost is \$25 per person, which includes the activities and the meal.



Council Recognition Dinner

The Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council sponsors an annual recognition dinner to honor those who have earned the Eagle Scout rank in the previous year, Summit Award recipients, and adults receiving the Silver Beaver Award. The evening kicks off with a reception featuring Eagle Scout and Summit Award projects followed by the dinner and recognition. The dinner annually features a well-known public figure as the guest speaker. Sponsorships offset the cost to Summit Award and Eagle Scout attendees.

Training Events (Leadership)

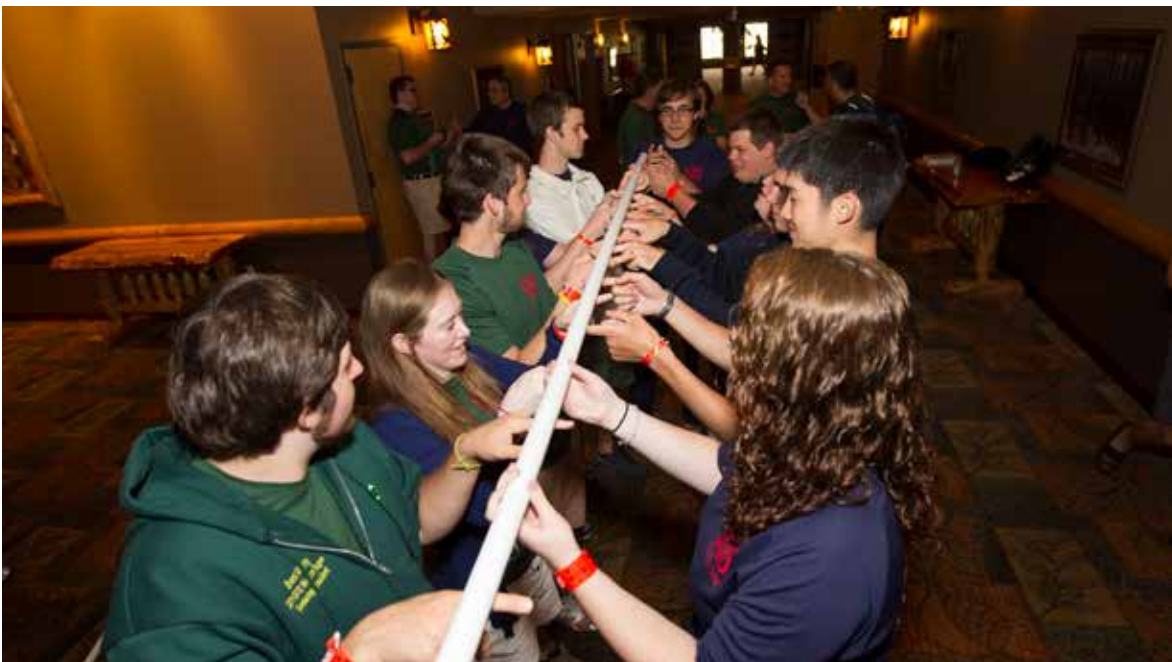
Central Region Area 3 Training Event

This annual event provides multiple training tracks for participants. Youth opportunities include many courses of interest to individual Venturers, such as training in project management and time management. For Advisors, position-specific training and the Crew Committee Challenge course are available. For VOA officers, training and preparation are offered by experienced officers to help the new ones lead a successful program. Additional training introduces crews to high-adventure opportunities. The cost ranges from \$15 to \$30, depending on whether participants spend the night.

Northeast Region Area 3 Event

Offered annually, this event begins with a party on Friday night (including food, music, and opportunities to make new friends) and culminates on Sunday morning with the annual Area 3 meeting and induction of new officers.

The event makes use of a new theme each year to add a sense of fun. The 2015 event used the theme “Hillbilly Hootenanny,” which was evident throughout the weekend. Fun outdoor activities were interspersed among the scheduled training activities. There was also time for relaxation, both organized and informal discussion forums, and an Advisors’ coffeeshouse. The event is held at a local council camp and typically hosts more than 150 Venturers and Advisors.



University of Scouting—College of Venturing

Making use of an annual council training event, a VOA’s leadership can recruit both Venturers and Advisors to deliver training. In addition to content from national BSA training programs, the College of Venturing can share information on local resources and address local training needs. Area VOAs can be a great help in providing course content as well as instructors. Councils may build up a library of courses with provocative titles such as “Why Your Troop Needs a Crew,” “Your Next Step—NAYLE/PLC,” “Putting the WOW Into Your Venturing Program,” “Starting and Sustaining a Crew,” and “Planning a High Adventure.” The experience Venturers gain in teaching these courses not only adds to their leadership development but also shows that Venturing is a youth-led program.

Great Program Ideas for VOAs

The following examples are drawn from the *Venturing Advisor Guidebook*, where their inclusion supports Advisors in brainstorming new program ideas for crews to try. They serve a similar purpose here—for VOA officers to help their VOA leadership come up with new program ideas.

Ideas for Fun Events

- Bowling
- Haunted hike
- (Your Community) After Dark
- Venturing Day at an amusement park
- Road rally
- Venturing campout (which could include many of the elements below)
- Sponsoring an annual Venturing camp
- Bike hike on country roads
- Swimming at a lake or beach
- Sailboat sailing
- Catamaran sailing
- Canoeing expedition
- Whitewater rafting
- Whitewater canoeing
- Caving
- Rock climbing
- Ice climbing
- Houseboat trip
- Snow camp
- Ice fishing
- Scuba diving
- Backpacking
- Fishing trip
- Ropes/COPE course
- Zip-lining
- Snowmobile trip
- Ice skating
- Cross-country skiing
- Downhill skiing
- Waterskiing
- Horseback riding
- Fly-fishing
- Mountain biking
- Camping under the stars
- Sleep in wilderness survival shelters

Ideas for Service Events

- Lend a hand on a farm for a weekend—see where our food comes from
- Meals on Wheels
- Sponsor a STEM camp
- Spring/fall cleanup for elderly neighbors
- Safe driving campaign
- Food drive
- Support a blood drive
- Place wreaths at a cemetery on holidays
- Recognize local veterans
- Buddy up with elementary school students to read
- Eating disorder awareness information
- Book drive
- Perform the national anthem or lead the Pledge of Allegiance for a group other than the crew
- Conduct a flag ceremony for naturalization ceremony
- Provide service for community-run marathon/fitness event
- Provide service for community festival
- Cultural awareness clinic
- Disabilities awareness clinic
- Visit elderly and special needs adults
- Sports clinic for elementary or middle school youth
- Soapbox derby for youth with special needs
- River cleanup
- Prairie restoration
- Hiking trail maintenance

Ideas for Recognition Events

- Annual dinner
- Venturing ball
- Venturing dance
- Support and participation in council annual recognition event

Ideas for Training Events

- First-aid training
- Kodiak Challenge
- Project management
- ILSC
- Time management
- Mentoring training
- Personal Safety Awareness Training
- Crew Committee Challenge
- Advisor-Specific Training (have youth train Advisors)
- Career fair
- Training fair
- GPS training
- EMT or first-responder first aid
- Lifeguarding
- Hunter education

- Historical re-enactment
- Edible plants
- Becoming U.S. Sailing instructors
- Search and rescue
- Treating water in the wilderness
- Wilderness first aid
- Bird calls
- Identifying local plants by sight
- Identifying local animals by track or sight
- Ballroom dancing
- Folk dancing
- American Indian dancing
- Faith walk (visiting diverse faith communities)
- Cooking without utensils over an open fire
- Learning some constellations
- Geocaching
- Observing planets through a telescope
- Help individual crews lead annual crew officers seminar meetings.

APPENDIX 1. POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The information below was drawn from the Venturing Standard Operating Procedures (2015). Note that some flexibility is provided for council- and district-level VOA operation that is not available for area, region, and national VOAs. This allows operations above the council level to be better coordinated and for local council and district needs to best reflect local concerns. As an example, while it is recommended that local councils establish a term of office for officers that runs from June 1 through May 31 of the following year, it is not required.

President

The president is selected by a prescribed process to serve for a specific term of office (June 1 to May 31).

The president:

- Reports to the Youth Development committee chair (see the organization chart if a Youth Development committee has not yet been established) and serves as a member of that committee.
- Works with volunteer Advisors and staff advisors of his or her own VOA and with Venturing presidents at the tiers above and below him or her.
- Appoints and supervises vice presidents, VOA liaisons, and additional optional VOA youth positions.
- Leads the youth officer selection process and interviews.
- Represents the VOA to Scouting leadership at the same tier.
- Motivates and coordinates the three vice presidents and any other appointed VOA members in assigned tasks, and conducts meetings with them as needed.
- Helps train and mentor presidents in lower tiers.
- Plans and leads regular meetings of the VOA.
- Assists VOA members with the selection of subsidiary youth members.
- Assists the volunteer Advisor with selection of subsidiary Advisors.
- Tracks all goals for the VOA and provides regular progress reports to the Youth Development committee.

Vice President of Administration

The vice president of administration is appointed by the president-elect (for a term concurrent with that of the president) and serves at the president's discretion. The vice president of administration:

- Works with an associate volunteer Advisor of the VOA.
- In consultation with the president, appoints and supervises subsidiary youth positions needed to perform the administrative functions of the VOA.
- Develops and implements strategies to increase Venturing membership within the territory of the VOA.
- Actively pursues positive relationships with representatives of BSA chartered organizations, religious groups, businesses, community organizations, and other groups of interest to the VOA and Venturing.
- Develops and maintains knowledge of customs, traditions, and relevant facts about BSA chartered organizations, religious groups, businesses, community organizations, and other groups of interest to the VOA and Venturing.
- Promotes and organizes the youth officer selection application processes (at the same tier). Can also assist the president in communicating with the selection committee, organizing the call, etc.
- Promotes and facilitates the selection and presentation of the Venturing Leadership Award
- Maintains records of recognitions, membership, officer selections, and VOA leadership alumni.
- Keeps in contact with VOA alumni for future mentor or Advisor roles when needed.
- Takes minutes at VOA meetings.
- Performs any other duties as assigned by the president.

Vice President of Program

The vice president of program is appointed by the president-elect (for a term concurrent with that of the president) and serves at the president's discretion. The vice president of program:

- In consultation with the president, appoints and supervises subsidiary youth positions needed to perform the program functions of the VOA.
- Works with an associate volunteer Advisor of the VOA.
- Supervises activity chairs and the planning of activities (conferences, outings, summits, and other events).
- Facilitates internal training events of the VOA.
- Promotes external training events and maintains a knowledge base of all training opportunities available for youth and adult members in Venturing.
- Manages VOA finances, if required.
- Coordinates and implements innovative ideas for development.
- Performs any other duties as assigned by the president.

Vice President of Communication

The vice president of communication is appointed by the president-elect (for a term concurrent with that of the president) and serves at the president's discretion. The vice president of communication:

- In consultation with the president, appoints and supervises subsidiary youth positions needed to perform the communication functions of the VOA.
- Works with an associate volunteer Advisor of the VOA.
- Actively studies and remains aware of the best way to communicate to ensure that the VOA web presence is being maintained, updated, and scaled appropriately for effective publication of information and collection of feedback.
- Periodically publishes a newsletter of past, current, and future events, including articles of noteworthy events and other items of interest to Venturers.
- Submits articles about VOA activities to other Scouting media (e.g., council or region newsletters and websites).
- Actively pursues opportunities to increase VOA exposure by submitting articles, comments, photos, upcoming event announcements, and reports to external publications such as local newspapers and other appropriate outlets.
- Maintains groups, pages, blogs, calendars, message boards, etc., on the most relevant social media and social networking sites.
- Develops and maintains the tools to communicate with all relevant parties using a variety of methods such as telephone, text message, email, and postal mail as appropriate.
- Maintains rosters of VOA members and frequently involved persons, including as many forms of readily available communication as possible, and identifies preferred methods, making them available to the VOA as needed and appropriate.
- Develops, updates, maintains, and makes readily available marketing strategies, solutions, and materials.
- Actively pursues contact information for people, groups, and businesses of interest to the VOA.
- Performs any other duties as assigned by the president.

Subsidiary VOA Member

The subsidiary VOA member is appointed by the president and serves at the president's discretion. The subsidiary VOA member:

- Reports to a vice president or president.
- Completes duties as assigned by the vice president to accomplish the objectives of the VOA.

Ad Hoc VOA Members

A position profile will be established by the president and approved by the commensurate tier volunteer Advisor for any appointed ad hoc (temporary) positions.

VOA Volunteer Advisor

The volunteer Advisor is appointed by the top volunteer officer at each tier (e.g., district chair, area president) and serves at the appointer's discretion. The volunteer Advisor:

- Reports to the Youth Development committee chair and serves as a member of that committee.
- In consultation with the staff advisor and president, appoints and supervises associate volunteer and subsidiary volunteer Advisors to work with any youth appointed by the president.
- Works with the president and associate volunteer Advisors, and coordinates with Advisors at the tiers above and below him or her.
- Serves as a mentor and advocate for the president.
- Ensures fiscal, programmatic, and risk management issues are properly addressed.
- Is familiar with the operations of any relevant Scouting organizations in the territory.
- Appoints associate volunteer Advisors and subsidiary volunteer Advisors.

Staff Advisor

The staff advisor is a professional Scouter appointed by the Scout executive at that tier and serves at the appointee's discretion. The staff advisor:

- Serves as a member of the Youth Development committee.
- Ensures that the policies and interests of the BSA are maintained.
- Approves all adult appointments of the VOA.
- Ensures that Advisors consistently serve with the best interests of the program and officers at the forefront.

Associate Volunteer Advisor

The associate volunteer Advisor is appointed by the volunteer Advisor and serves at that Advisor's discretion.

The associate volunteer Advisor:

- Supervises any subsidiary adults appointed by the volunteer Advisor.
- Serves as a mentor and advocate for the youth members he or she advises.
- Supports the volunteer Advisor in ensuring that fiscal, programmatic, and risk management issues are properly addressed.
- Provides expertise and/or training to specific youth officers to help them accomplish assigned tasks.

Subsidiary Volunteer Advisor

The subsidiary volunteer Advisor is appointed by the volunteer Advisor and serves at that Advisor's discretion.

The subsidiary volunteer Advisor:

- Reports to a volunteer associate Advisor or the volunteer Advisor.
- Supports youth subsidiary VOA members in accomplishing assigned tasks.

APPENDIX 2. COUNCIL VENTURING INTEREST SURVEY

This document can be adapted to suit local needs. It can be administered in a paper format or shared online. Part VI of this guidebook provides more ideas for programs and activities. Keep in mind when organizing a VOA event that it should be on the scale that an individual crew could not accomplish it by themselves.

Council Venturing Interest Survey

The Venturing program gives your crew the flexibility and resources to follow your passions, discover new interests, and Lead the Adventure. We need your help in order to deliver exactly what YOU want in this program.

Please complete the following questions to help your council Venturing Officers Association (VOA) obtain a better understanding of you and your crew's interests.

Council: _____

Unit Number: _____

Name: _____

Generally how involved are you in your council's VOA activities?

- I actively participate in/help plan events.
- I attend events.
- I am not currently involved but would like to be.
- I do not know if our council has events/activities.
- I do not attend or participate in events.
- Our council does not have a VOA that I know of.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

I am satisfied with the number of programs offered during the summer (June–August).

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A

I am satisfied with the number of programs offered during the school year (September–May).

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A

What is the main type of activity or focus of your crew?

- High adventure
- Camp staff
- Order of the Arrow
- School club
- Other: _____

The Venturing program focuses itself around four categories: Adventure, Leadership, Personal Growth, and Service (ALPS model). Please indicate the activities that are of interest to you and your crew. These can be activities your crew has done and would like to see more of or simply activities you want to see. Please feel free to suggest other ideas as well.

Adventure

- Backpacking superactivity
- Intercrew beach party
- Intercrew bowling event
- Camping superactivity
- Intercrew canoeing event
- Intercrew CPR course
- Intercrew climbing/rappelling
- Intercrew cook-off
- Intercrew sailing
- Cycling/mountain biking
- Intercrew sports day/tournament
- Councilwide Venturing fashion show
- Intercrew COPE course
- Geocaching challenge

Other: _____

Leadership

- National Youth Leadership Training
- Intercrew Introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews
- Goal setting
- Model crew officers orientation
- Communication training
- Time management training
- Project management training
- Conflict management training
- Kodiak training
- Meet and greet with: _____
- Other: _____
- _____

Personal Growth

- Career clinic expo
- College/university panel
- Ethical controversy sit-in/debate
- Presentation/talk from: _____
- Religious workshop
- Job interview skills workshop
- Other: _____
- _____

What are your personal goals for this year: _____

Service

Community cleanup project

Conservation project

Assistance to those with disabilities

Emergency preparedness

Hiking trail cleanup

Care package for soldiers

Helping with camporee

Den chief

Volunteer with: _____

Other: _____

What additional support can your council provide to you and your crew? (For example: recruitment help, officer training help, event ideas for crew, etc.)
