



Process for Opening a New Group

If scouting isn't available in your community, why not take the initiative and help us start a new group? Experienced volunteers and staff are available through your local office to help you with the process.

Here are the suggested steps to take when setting out to open a new Scout Group.

1. Find a Sponsor / Partner
2. Find a Facility
3. Recruit Volunteers (Group Committee & Leaders)
4. Plan the Program
5. Recruit Youth
6. Get Started

A description of each of these steps is included below.

Find a Sponsor/Partner

A Scout group is formed when a local community organization enters into a partnership with Scouts Canada. These community groups include, but are not limited to, religious institutions, service, fraternal, and civic clubs (e.g. Canadian Legion, Knights of Columbus, Elks, etc.), professional associations, businesses, military bases, public and private schools, and home and school associations. Usually, members of the Area Service Team and/or the Council Field Staff will work with the organization to get the group started.

In many cases, people in the community already have a good idea of a potential sponsor/partner. If not, the first step is to locate an organization willing to take on the task. The organization must agree to subscribe to the Practices and Principles of Scouts Canada, its Mission and its program goals.

Responsibilities for Sponsors/ Partners:

- To apply annually for renewal of the Group/Section Charter.
- To ensure good relationships and information flow between sponsor/partner and Scouting group.
- To receive annually through the group committee, the report of the group's activities, including audited financial statements.
- To assist in providing resources to enable the group to promote the goals and ideals of the sponsor/partner and training for leaders in the goals and ideals of the sponsor/partner, in keeping with the mission, program goals and operating policies of Scouts Canada.
- To set the policy in relation to membership within the group, (i.e. closed or open group).
- If a religious group, to establish the policy for the group with respect to religious exercises and/or instruction as a program element in the group. To ensure that this policy is made known to applicants and/or their parents or guardians as well as making provisions to excuse on parental or guardian request if membership is open to youth of all faiths other than the denomination of the faith concerned.
- To advise with the group committee and, when necessary, rule on fundraising methods if these come into conflict with the goals, ideals or policies of the sponsor/group or with Scouts Canada.
- To assist in providing resources, both personnel and other, for the encouragement of the Religion in Life Emblem program and provide for appropriate recognition of recipients of the emblem.
- To ensure adequate meeting facilities are provided for the group/section.
- To establish any additional criteria unique to the sponsor/partner's requirements regarding the recruitment and appointment of Scouters, Scouters-in-Training and Activity Leaders.

For more information on the partner/sponsor please refer to a booklet entitled “In Partnerships for Youth,” which can be picked up at any Regional office.

Signing the Charter

The sponsoring organization completes and submits the Application for a Group/Section Charter, which is then granted by the Regional Council Office. By signing this document, the sponsor and the new group agree to be governed by the policies and procedures of Scouts Canada and is obligated to carry out its duties and fulfill its responsibilities. The Charter is renewed annually through a review process that includes the sponsor/partner representative, the Group Committee and representatives of the next senior council.

Find a Facility

To run a Scouts Canada program, your group will need a meeting location to hold the group’s activities. Typically, groups use school gyms, church basements, or community centers for their weekly meetings.

For a Beaver colony, you will need ½ a gym to conduct the weekly meetings. Cubs and Scouts need more space for their operations because their program tends to be more active. A full gym would be ideal for these two sections. You will also need storage space for equipment and supplies.

Recruit Volunteers

The implementation of the Scouting program and the administrative support for this program are almost exclusively the responsibility of the volunteers, so it’s essential to start this important task as soon as possible.

Group Committee

Normally, a Scout Group has a group committee that is comprised of at least three people: Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, plus the head leader of each section. (The group may also decide to fill such positions as Vice-Chair and Quartermaster.) The sponsor/partner will help Scouts Canada recruit people to these key positions. In many cases, they will know of individuals within their own organization who would be willing to get involved. It’s important that the sponsor/partner take an active role in this process as they are recruiting from their community for their community.

Once the potential group committee people are located, the next step is to follow the screening process. Every new adult member of Scouts Canada must be interviewed and have his or her references verified. They must also provide a clean police records check. The Area Service Team or Field Staff will assist in this process. For more information on the screening process please refer to the “Volunteer Screening Handbook” (available at your local Scout Shop).

Once the group committee is in place, they will be instrumental in starting the group. Initially the new group committee will:

- Decide which sections to open in consultation with the sponsor/partner.
- Help to recruit section leadership.
- Decide along with the new leaders and Partner when the sections will meet.
- Help the new leaders get their program materials, uniforms, etc.
- Determine the membership fee.

Leaders

Statistically speaking, the overwhelming majority of leaders within Scouts Canada are parents of youth members, so that's the best way to start. Parents who have expressed interest in getting their children involved should be approached.

Another effective way to locate interested leaders is through information nights held by the sponsor/partner and group committee. Field Staff and/or the Area Service Team can do presentations in local schools to promote the group.



Once the leaders are located, the next step is to follow the screening process for each one as outlined above.

Once the leaders are approved, the Group Committee will work with the Area Council to offer training to the new members. A general orientation should be held as soon as possible, with the leaders being encouraged to take subsequent training in the near future.

Plan the Program

If the leadership team is in place, the next step is to plan the program. The Area Service Team should be very involved at this point. They will help the leaders to prepare the first few months of programming. Program support materials such as Jumpstarts and the Program Builder CD are excellent resources (available at your local Scout Shop).

It's recommended that a start-up meeting be held with the leaders, group committee, partner/sponsor representative and service team to prepare for the program. The focus of the meeting should be to:

- Plan at least the first 3 months of the group's operation. Use the Jumpstart packages if needed. List all supplies required for the meetings.
- Create a calendar of planned meetings. Note the dates of special events like Scout-Guide Week, holiday celebrations, camps, etc.
- Prepare a group budget. Include revenue items (e.g. registration fees, fundraising proceeds, and donations) and expenses (e.g. council registration payments, uniforms, supplies, etc.).
- Decide what type of fundraising your group will take part in. Make note of special Scouts Canada fundraising programs such as Popcorn and Hot Chocolate. Include dates for these programs in your calendar.
- Open a group bank account. The account should be under "Scouts Canada" along with your group name and number. Three people from the group committee must have signing authority on behalf of the group (usually the chair, the treasurer and one other).



Obviously, the group won't accomplish everything in one meeting, but it is important to start these processes. Dividing up the tasks is important. These responsibilities should not fall to just one or two people. Teamwork is essential.

It's a good idea to plan on visiting other groups in your area, if possible, to see how they operate. This can be very helpful in the planning and execution of your group's program.

Recruit Youth

Once all the other pieces are in place, the last step is to recruit youth members. Tell people in your community about the new group. Ask for a notice to be read in local church and service club meetings. Publicity materials are available through your council office.

Invitations can be sent to local schools. School talks are a tried and true recruitment method. Council Field Staff and/or service teams go into the schools and speak directly to youth. The results are often amazing. For more information on school talks, speak to your local Membership Development Worker or Council Field Executive.

Get Started

You made it! You have found your sponsor, formed a group committee, recruited leaders and planned your program. Now it's time to welcome your youth members.

The most common way is to hold a "Fun Night" or "Registration Night". This date has been advertised through the various promoting venues your group has used. Be prepared to handle a large number of youth and parents, all with lots of questions.

Your leaders should be prepared to do some activities with the youth while the group committee members speak with parents. Make it fun, energetic and engaging. Have information sheets prepared to hand out to the parents with the details of the group (i.e. dates & times of meetings, costs, uniform info, etc.). Bring application forms for the youth and be prepared to accept money from the parents.

Registration

Every member of the group must be registered, including youth, leaders and group committee members. You can register on-line through our web site at www.scouts.ca. Registration is due at the end of October for each current Scouting year. See the web site, or contact your local council office for more information.

Helpful Resources

The following is a list of resources to help make your job easier. The print materials and CD-ROM are all available through your local council office or Scout Shop.

- Gateway to Scouting
- Volunteer Screening Package
- In Partnership for Youth Booklet
- By Law, Policies & Procedures Manual
- Leader's Handbooks for Beavers Cubs, Scouts, and Venturers
- Jumpstart Packages for Beavers, Cubs and Scouts
- Program Builder CD-Rom

To contact your local council office, call: **1-888-SCOUTS-NOW.**