

Guidelines for Advancement and Recognition Committees

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

Advancement committees operate under the Boy Scouts of America program function. They should cooperate with the other program function elements—outdoor programs, activities and civic service, and training—and also with the membership, finance, and unit-service functions.

3.0.0.1 Council Advancement Committee Responsibilities

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

A full, functioning council advancement committee should be organized to accomplish the following.

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

15. Establish procedures for the use of technology-based tools in advancement according to “Using Technology-Based Tools in Advancement,” 5.0.8.0.
16. Know and follow proper procedures for considering special needs cases involving alternative requirements and merit badges, and registration beyond the normal age of eligibility.
17. Participate in considering and presenting special awards and recognitions according to established council procedures. This responsibility may or may not include the Silver Beaver Award.
18. Support and promote the religious emblems program and other awards as determined by the council executive board, such as STEM/Nova, for example.
19. Process lifesaving and meritorious action awards according to council practices and national procedures.
20. Notify the media to recognize significant youth achievements, such as Eagle Scout or Quartermaster rank, the Venturing Summit Award, lifesaving and meritorious action awards, and other noteworthy accomplishments.

3.0.0.2 District Advancement Committee Responsibilities

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

1. Recruit enough members to fulfill the responsibilities and accomplish any objectives established by the council advancement committee or executive board.
2. Provide members with ongoing training to maintain awareness of updated procedures, best practices, and details related to Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, Venturing, and Sea Scouts. See “Building an Advancement Committee,” 3.0.0.5.
3. Establish objectives and implement action plans that stimulate advancement and lead to maximum success in the Journey to Excellence.
4. Maintain advancement records and share them with commissioners, trainers, and other district volunteers who serve units. Point out units with little or no advancement.
5. Plan, present, and submit for the district and council calendars those advancement conferences and training experiences that will improve the results of unit advancement volunteers.
6. As appropriate, support advancement elements involved in training, and in events and activities presented by other committees of the district.
7. Support outdoor programs where advancement may take place, such as district day camps, camporees, etc.
8. Support and promote the BSA’s internet portal for advancement reporting. Accurate advancement records are critical to program planning and analysis. Districts should work toward 100 percent electronic data entry.
9. Follow national and local council procedures in administering the merit badge program and in recruiting, approving, and training a sufficient number of merit badge counselors. Provide units with access to a current listing of council-approved merit badge counselors.
10. Follow national and local council procedures as prescribed regarding appeals, Eagle Scout and Quartermaster references, Eagle Scout service project proposal approvals, Venturing board of review chair selection, boards and bridges of review support, and time extensions.
11. Support and promote the religious emblems program and other awards as determined by the council executive board, such as STEM/Nova, for example.
12. Recommend, according to council and district practices, recipients for the Award of Merit or other recognitions.
13. Notify the media to recognize significant youth achievements such as Eagle Scout or Quartermaster rank, Venturing Summit Award, lifesaving and meritorious action awards, and other noteworthy accomplishments.
14. To strengthen units through strong advancement programs, consider the following:
 - a. Assist unit commissioners and others who serve units.
 - b. Serve as a resource for roundtables.
 - c. Develop relationships with unit advancement volunteers.
 - d. Provide units with advancement reports, summarizing and explaining what they mean.
 - e. Assist unit leadership with advancement planning and promotion.
 - f. Visit pack, troop, team, crew, and ship committee meetings, as warranted.
 - g. Visit boards of review, as warranted.
 - h. Help troops, teams, crews, and ships avoid pitfalls as qualified youth strive for Eagle Scout rank, the Summit Award, or the Quartermaster rank.

- i. Encourage prompt and proper recognition, ceremonies, and courts of honor.
- j. Recognize units excelling in advancement.
- k. According to local council practices, assemble lists of consultants and other resources important to Venturing advancement.

3.0.0.3 Unit Advancement Responsibilities

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

1. Support and facilitate the unit leader's vision for advancement, providing consultation on the policies and procedures put forth in the *Guide to Advancement*.
2. Educate parents, guardians, unit leadership, and committee members on appropriate methods to stimulate and encourage advancement. For example, help build unit programming rich in advancement opportunities, encourage members who are advancing slowly, and post advancement charts.
3. Help plan, facilitate, or conduct advancement ceremonies. In troops, teams, and crews, schedule and support regular courts of honor—quarterly is generally sufficient. Ships will want regular bridges of honor, and packs should make recognition a key part of every pack meeting.
4. Obtain necessary badges and certificates, etc., and arrange for timely presentation of ranks, adventure belt loops and pins, merit badges, awards, and other recognitions. It is best to obtain and present these as soon as possible after they are earned. They can then be re-presented in more formal settings.
5. Ensure Cub Scouts advance in rank annually by school year's end and are recognized in a meaningful ceremony.
6. Know and understand the advancement procedures for the program served, especially those applicable to Eagle Scout, Summit, and Quartermaster candidates.
7. Assist the unit leader in establishing practices that will provide opportunities for each new Boy Scout to achieve First Class rank within 12 to 18 months of joining, and Star rank soon thereafter.
8. Arrange for timely (monthly suggested) boards of review, and see that youth ready for them are invited.
9. Maintain advancement records and submit reports to the unit committee. It is appropriate in Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, Venturing, and Sea Scouts to involve youth leaders in this process.
10. Use the BSA's internet portal to report advancement to the local council.
11. Keep a current and accessible copy of the district or council merit badge counselor list. As needed to fill in, develop and maintain a list of unit merit badge counselors. Note that all merit badge counselors must be registered as such, annually, and also approved through the council advancement committee.
12. In troops, teams, crews, and ships, work with the unit's youth leadership to maintain a library of advancement literature, such as merit badge pamphlets and the annual *Boy Scout Requirements* book.
13. Learn about other BSA awards and recognition opportunities that may be helpful in delivering a well-rounded unit program. A good resource for this is the *Guide to Awards and Insignia*.

3.0.0.4 Awards and Recognitions

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

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

A separate publication, the *Guide to Awards and Insignia*, No. 33066, is a central source for building a deeper understanding of the opportunities available.

3.0.0.5 Building an Advancement Committee

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

1. District/unit advancement chairs support
2. Volunteerism
3. Advancement promotions specialist
4. Advancement training and events coordinator
5. Camping committee and outdoors program liaison
6. Records/Journey to Excellence
7. Technological reporting support
8. Merit badge counselor and Supernova mentor coordination
9. Eagle, Summit, and Quartermaster issues
10. Special needs Scouting
11. Awards and recognition
12. Religious emblems

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

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

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

3.0.0.6 Orientation and Education Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Training is the foundation for successful leadership in the BSA, and this is no less true for those working in advancement. Volunteers, in conjunction with the National Advancement Program Team, have produced a number of educational presentations based on the *Guide to Advancement*. These presentations may be downloaded from www.scouting.org/advancement. The sessions are of varying lengths and suitable for personal review or use in instructor-led training. Each presentation has an expiration date and instructions on how to download an updated version when the time comes. New courses will be added periodically to meet specific advancement needs according to feedback received through advancement.team@scouting.org . Additional resources such as Advancement News provide ongoing information as well to help advancement administrators provide quality service.

Upon release of this edition of the Guide to Advancement, the following educational presentations were available at www.scouting.org/advancement.



The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling. This PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, 60 to 90 minutes, helps merit badge counselors understand their role in the BSA advancement program and the proper methods to use in working with the youth.

The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling

Expiration Date
This presentation is not to be used after May 31, 2015.
Obtain an updated version at www.scouting.org/advancement



On Increasing Advancement. As presented by national volunteer advancement administrators at the BSA National Annual Meeting, May 2013, Grapevine, Texas. Includes an introduction and thoughts on increasing volunteerism, building a fully functioning advancement committee, promotion of advancement, purposeful management of the advancement function, increasing advancement reporting, and a conclusion.

Why Advancement? In this series of videos, individuals give testimony about the quality of their Scouting experience and how advancement was important in their personal growth. The clips were filmed during the 2014 conference, "Increasing Advancement by Delivering Excellence," at the Philmont Training Center.

Guardian of the Gate. View nationally recognized Scouting volunteer and author Darnall Daley reading his article, "Guardian of the Gate." The piece has appeared in *Advancement News* and is considered by the National Advancement Program Team to be the most accurate accounting of the proper approach to advancement.

Getting the Most from Internet Advancement. This PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes and an FAQ sheet, 60 to 90 minutes, guides participants through methods to make effective use of the Internet Advancement software.

The Eagle Scout Service Project Coach. This PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes is designed for Eagle Scout service project coaches who have been designated by councils or districts to provide guidance to Scouts whose service project proposals have been approved. It delivers the basic knowledge and skills needed to get started. It can also serve as a refresher for veterans. It is intended as an instructor-led presentation to project coaches of any experience level and takes 60 to 90 minutes to complete.

Cub Scout Advancement: Delivering Adventure. This presentation provides new and prospective pack advancement coordinators with the basic knowledge and skills needed to get started, and can serve as a refresher to others. Participants will learn about the Cub Scouting advancement process, as well as related BSA national policies and procedures, and gain a better understanding of how to improve the quality and rate of advancement. The updated Cub Scout program effective June 1, 2015, is also covered.

Effective Troop Advancement. This presentation provides new and prospective troop advancement coordinators and troop advancement committee members with the basic knowledge and skills needed to get started. It can also serve as a refresher to veterans. Participants will learn about the advancement process, their unique role in it, and the related BSA national policies and procedures. The session is intended to be instructor-led and lasts approximately 60 to 90 minutes depending on the experience level of those attending.

Including Scouts with Disabilities. This PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes provides leaders, and parents or guardians with the basic knowledge needed to implement the advancement plan with Scouts who have disabilities. Topics include: documenting a disability, registration beyond the age of eligibility, alternative advancement requirements, the Individual Scout Advancement Plan, scenarios in working with Scouts who have special needs, and resources available at www.scouting.org.

Developing Council and District Advancement Committees. This PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes provides advancement administrators with the basic knowledge to organize and operate council and district advancement committees to effectively meet advancement responsibilities. It is intended to be an instructor-led presentation and takes approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete.

Video casts based on the Guide to Advancement. These seven PowerPoint presentations of varying lengths, converted to video, help orient volunteer advancement administrators with the following fundamental publications of the Boy Scout advancement program.

1. Introduction to the *Guide to Advancement*
2. Judgment Calls ("Active," Positions of Responsibility, Scout Spirit, and "Reasonable")
3. Boards of Review
4. Boards of Review Under Disputed Circumstances
5. Boards of Review Appeals
6. The Eagle Scout Application Process
7. Eagle Scout Boards of Review

Electronic Advancement Reporting

Reporting advancement is a requirement of the Boy Scouts of America, and entering it directly into the BSA system through an internet portal is the most straightforward way to get it done.

6.0.0.1 Importance and Benefits of Electronic Advancement Reporting

Internet Advancement has been available for reporting Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, and Sea Scout ranks;

Venturing advancement awards; merit badges; and many other awards available across the BSA programs. The next generation of reporting software will also allow the reporting of individual requirements for ranks and awards, with the portal accessible through a computer, tablet, or smartphone. See topic 6.0.0.3, “The Next Generation in Electronic Advancement Reporting.”

As stated in “Reporting Advancement,” 4.0.0.2, all advancement must be reported to local councils.* This is important in keeping member records up to date, and it assures an accurate count in the Journey to Excellence performance recognition program. “Unit Advancement Responsibilities,” 3.0.0.3, suggests the unit advancement coordinator should use the BSA’s internet portal to accomplish the reporting. When this is done, it alleviates issues in documenting progress as Scouts submit Eagle applications or transfer from one unit to another within a council. Consistent and constant reporting also assures accurate records for use by commissioners, other district and council volunteers, and the National Council.

**An advancement report is not required to purchase adventure loops or pins. However, to ensure that each Cub Scout’s record is complete and accurate, all adventures— required and elective—should be posted in the BSA system using the internet portal for reporting advancement.*

These are critical in evaluating unit health, adjusting service delivery, and researching changes in programs and requirements. It is recommended that units report advancement at least monthly with a final annual report each December. These reporting cycles are important because they support local and National Council data collection for the Journey to Excellence program as well as statistical analysis.

Benefits of Electronic Advancement Reporting

- *Provides straightforward and direct method of reporting*
- *Eliminates issues with deciphering handwriting*
- *Helps in local council verification of Eagle Scout Rank Applications*
- *Records ranks, badges, and awards in accordance with BSA advancement rules*
- *Consolidates data files to reduce or eliminate record gaps when Scouts transfer units*
- *Supports national data analysis for advancement statistics*
- *Assures advancement is counted in the Journey to Excellence*

6.0.0.2 About Internet Advancement

With Internet Advancement, units select an advancement processor who is granted access with a council-provided unit ID. Because of documentation requirements, the Eagle Scout rank, and nominated recognitions such as meritorious action awards, are not entered electronically. Internet Advancement is accessed through the local council’s website or from my.scouting.org. When first-time unit processors enter, they are greeted by a welcome page with instructions and invited to log in and accept a confidentiality agreement. Once they have provided some registration information, they move to an overview page with additional instructions. Returning users skip these steps and go directly to selecting members for advancement.

In Internet Advancement, units may choose to upload advancement files generated from PackMaster®, TroopMaster®, or ScoutSoft®, or enter information manually. The best resource for working with Internet Advancement is “Getting the Most from Internet Advancement.” It can be found at www.scouting.org/advancement under Advancement Educational Presentations. This PowerPoint presentation provides orientation for both unit and district volunteers on functionality and covers the operating systems and browsers with which Internet Advancement works or does not work.

Most councils have also established “help desk”-style assistance. Staff members there can answer questions, provide unit access IDs, monitor activity, change passwords, reset profiles and data, and create reports requested by council management for staff and volunteer use.

6.0.0.3 The Next Generation in Electronic Advancement Reporting

The next generation of advancement reporting software will allow the reporting of not only ranks, but also individual requirements for ranks, badges, and awards. Reporting is done through an internet portal to the BSA system. Over the last decade the portal has been provided through Internet Advancement. In 2015 the BSA acquired Scoutbook, a web application designed for mobile devices, which will aid in advancement recording, reporting, and recognition and help

the BSA connect with members when, where, and how they prefer. Keep an eye on the National Advancement Program Team's Twitter feed, @AdvBSA, and also on *Advancement News* for more information.

6.0.0.4 Electronic Advancement Miscellany

Board of Review Signatures. Because entering rank advancement into Internet Advancement, either directly or via Scoutbook, and printing the system-generated Unit Advancement Reports typically occur sometime after boards of review are held, obtaining signatures on the report may not be practical. Therefore, after a board of review is held, it is permissible for board members to sign a completed copy of the Unit Advancement Report found at www.scouting.org/forms. This signed report may then be attached to the electronically generated report and submitted to the local council.

Scout Transfers. BSA member identification numbers are unique only within each local council. They are not nationally universal, although it is likely they will become so as the National Council updates its computer systems in the future. Thus, advancement data associated with a Scout's ID number cannot be accessed by any other councils. For this reason, if a Scout moves to a different council, he must obtain either a printout of his advancement from the council he is leaving or a copy of the Internet Advancement Member Summary Report from his old unit. Either of these should be attached to the application used to transfer the youth's membership to his new council and unit. It is important to enter the Scout's name and BSA identification number on the youth application exactly as they appear in the records of the former council. Nicknames and other differences will only delay the transfer process.

Dual Registration. If a Scout has multiple registrations with units in different councils, his advancement records should be maintained in only one of the units. As he passes requirements in any other unit, the information should be relayed to his primary unit so only one advancement record is maintained. It is not possible to electronically consolidate data across different units in different councils. If advancement records are maintained in multiple units, then cooperation between the units will be required in order to generate the reports necessary to report and obtain the awards.

Advancement Resources

The following resources provide additional information about advancement. Links are provided to materials that are available online.

General Resources

- [Guide to Advancement 2017, No. 33088 \(PDF\)](#) ; [Online view](#)
- [Advancement Educational Presentations](#)
- [Advancement News](#)
- [Abilities Digest](#)
- [Advancement Report, No. 34403](#) 
- [Boy Scout Handbook, No. 34554](#) 
- [Eagle Scout Challenge, No. 542-900](#) 
- [Friendstorming on Tour, No. 510-003](#) 
- [Getting the Most from Internet Advancement, - Advancement Educational Presentation](#)
- [Lone Scout Friend and Counselor Guidebook, No. 511-420](#) 
- [On Increasing Advancement, No. 512-047](#) 
- [Recommendations for Regional and Area Volunteers Supporting the Advancement Program, No. 512-048](#) 
- [Scoutmaster Handbook, No. 33009](#)
- [Troop Committee Guidebook, No. 616928](#)
- [Troop/Team Record Book, No. 34508](#)
- [Troop Resource Survey, No. 512-116](#) 
- [Guide to Awards and Insignia, No. 33066](#)
- [Venturing Board of Review Guide, No. 512-940](#) 

Rank Advancement

- [2016 Boy Scout Rank Requirements](#) 
- [2016 Boy Scout Rank Requirements - Printable Insert](#) 

- Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730 
- Belated Eagle Scout Rank Application, No. 512-076 
- Eagle Scout Rank Application 2017, No. 512-728 
- Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook, No. 512-927
This is the newly revised Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook. Scouts who have already downloaded the previous workbook may continue to use it. Please let us know how we may further improve your experience. Send comments to advancement.team@scouting.org. 
- Eagle Scout Service Project Coach Application, No. 512-069 
- Individual Scout Advancement Plan, No. 512-936 
- Navigating the Eagle Scout Service Project; Information for Project Beneficiaries 
- Request for Extension of Time to Earn Eagle Scout Rank, No. 512-077 
- Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility, No. 512-935 
- Troop/Team/Crew Advancement Chart, No. 34506
- Venturing Summit Award Service Project Workbook, No. 512-938 
- Venturing Summit Award Application, No. 512-941 

Merit Badges

- Application for Merit Badge, No. 34124
- Counselor's Compass Archives
This e-newsletter provides merit badge counselors with practical advice through a concise, informative approach in order to make badge instruction more efficient and worthwhile.
- The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling - Advancement Educational Presentation
- A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling , No. 512-065
- Merit Badge Certificate (pocket), No. 33414
- Merit Badge Counselor Information, No. 34405 
- Merit Badge Group Instruction Guide , No. 512-066
- Merit Badge List
- Reporting Merit Badge Counseling Concerns , No. 512-800
- Worksheet for Building a Merit Badge Counselor List, No. 4439 