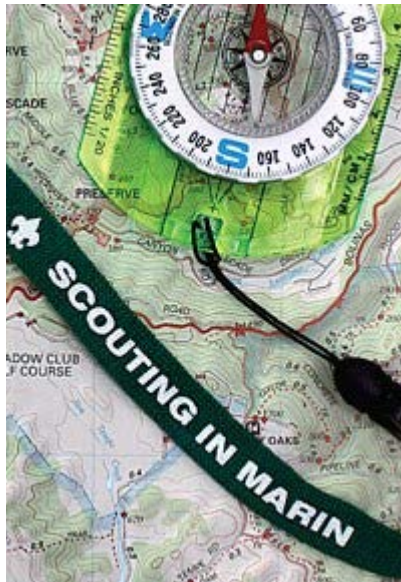


2017 Membership Development

Scouting in Marin provides unique, life-changing experiences youth can't get anywhere else.



The core of every Scouting program includes teaching young people applicable life skills, providing them opportunities for real leadership experience, and supporting them through sustained, ongoing adult mentoring relationships. Scouting's core strengths, our easily accessible camping facilities, and a culture dedicated to Positive Youth Development distinguish the Marin Council in our service to youth.

We know that our service to youth will change lives. Our Scouts will form connectivity with the community and others around them, developing a sense of caring. The competencies they have in real-life skills will serve them forever, and build within them a foundation of self-confidence. They will epitomize individuals of good character and as adults will become the next generation's positive leaders.

However, the dramatic life changing impact Scouting offers young people can only occur when we serve an ever increasing and dramatic number of Scouts and when we open our doors to new members.

2012 to 2016 - Where We've Been

At the close of 2016 the Marin Council served 1,772 youth representing a 8.2% share of Marin County's Scouting eligible youth market. Our 2016 youth membership declined by 7% from 2015; 2016 was the fifth consecutive year of membership declines.

The 2012 to 2016 decline directly coincided with a period of change at a national level surrounding BSA membership policies which effected many internal and external customers of the Marin Council. That matter was resolved during the late summer of 2015 when a nondiscrimination policy, in keeping with Marin County's prevailing attitudes, was adopted by BSA nationally. However, while the membership standards issue has been resolved, the controversy's prolonged impact on the general public's perception of Scouting will undoubtedly linger over time and losses experienced during this period will impact the council until sufficient younger new members are brought in to offset those that left Scouting during the downturn.

While five years of declining membership is a concern, it is important to place that decline in perspective against the five year growth trend that preceded 2012. Our membership at the close of 2011 was 2,048 youth representing a 10.2% share of our eligible market. Over the period of membership decline, 2012 through the close of 2016, the council has lowered enrollment by 276 youth; this can be corrected with growth across the council of only an additional 5 youth per unit.

We do believe that the turmoil of the past five years and its negative impact on membership is waning. Our 2016 Fall recruitment cycle produced an increase in Cub Scouts of lower grades seen especially with a 8.2% increase in Tiger Cubs and an increase in total number of new Scouts recruited. This would indicate market receptivity has returned and that we are entering into a growth cycle with membership increases forecast in 2017.

2017 Forward – Where We’re Heading

More youth joined Scouting in the last few months of 2016 than had in 2015 or 2014. It was a trend experienced by the Marin Council as well as in a number of other Scouting Councils throughout the Bay Area, signaling the start of a reversal in Scouting’s declining membership.

Over the course of the next two years, we will return the council to our 2011 membership strength of over 2,000 youth. Our first step, to be achieved by 12/31/17, will be to reach 1,865 youth, an increase of 5% over the previous year.

Areas of emphasis for growth in 2017 will be in Cub Scouting (increase of 5%), stabilization in Boy Scout programs, Venturing (increase of 17%), and Exploring (increase of 6%).

Council-wide initiatives to achieve that membership increase will be focused on growth in every unit through a dynamic scorecard measuring an “Open Door” to new members and families.

2017 Strategy – The Open Door

The Open Door Concept:

For far too long, many have hoped for membership growth to be a result of just quality program. This has been characterized as the “If you build it, they will come” method. While quality programs are a factor in attracting and retaining members, quality programs alone do not correlate to membership growth if potential members do not know about joining opportunities or are unaware of Scouting units in their community. If we only rely on quality program for recruiting, we only speak to our current members and we, whether we realize it or not, have closed our door to new recruits.

Our 2017 membership strategy is designed to correct that issue through a dynamic process driven scorecard that will track leading indicators related to having an “Open Door” for each and every unit in the council. By encouraging an “Open Door” throughout every neighborhood, general awareness of Scouting will increase, joining opportunities will increase, and membership growth will result.

Opening the Door: Key Elements:

Determining whether Scouting’s door is open or closed will be based on a small set

of leading indicators that were identified as conducive for growth and highly achievable by Packs, Troops, Crews, and Posts.

It is understood that by directing attention to these leading indicators, volunteers would be creating opportunities for successfully welcoming new families that would as a natural byproduct produce membership growth.

Our leading indicators determining whether Scouting has an Open Door can be divided into three main categories: Community Presence, Be-A-Scout Utilization, and Conducting Consistent Recruitment Activities.

Community Presence:

The fact that the Marin Council serves close to 2,000 young people inevitably comes as a shock to new families that join Scouting; they often have no idea of the breadth of our reach and that so many families in Marin are a part of Scouting.

This fact is a failing on our part. We have not done enough to communicate not just the value of Scouting but also the accessibility of Scouting in every neighborhood.

We need to replace “if you build it, they will come” with “if you show it, they will know” in every part of our council.

To that end, three separate leading indicators related to Community Presence will be focused on by units throughout the council: 1.) Social Media Presence, 2.) Community Presence, and 3.) Service Projects.

Social media is used effectively by many organizations, but in Scouting there is room for improvement. In 2017, the Marin Council will be encouraging broader social

media activity on a grassroots level with activity taking place in every unit. Some will gravitate to the creation of a public Facebook page for a Pack, which can be worthwhile, but more effective is a cultural shift with parents in the unit sharing updates to their individual feeds on Facebook, Instagram, etc. A multitude of activity creating an awareness of Scouting’s reach is what will lead to an Open Door.

In addition to increasing community presence online, units will also be asked to make themselves seen more in the community. We will measure Community Presence through activities such as marching in parades, holding outdoor Pack or Troop meetings in public locations (Show and Do’s), or attending public functions as a unit in uniform. In many cases these will be activities already conducted, but we wish to make it clear to the community that these are Scouting activities as opposed to just a group of kids.

Closely tied to Community Presence are unit service projects which will also increase community awareness of Scouting, especially if shared over social media. Service projects are a valuable leading indicator of whether Scouting presence is felt in a community.

Be-A-Scout Utilization:

Boy Scouts of America has made great strides in recent years in helping families find local Scouting Units online through its Be-A-Scout Website. In 2017, further improvements will be rolled out that will actually allow a new member to register with the BSA online and have that registration forwarded directly to the unit leader.

This is a valuable tool as it creates a year-round opportunity to join Scouting and streamlines the recruitment process.

Utilizing the Be-A-Scout website is a leading indicator related to membership growth for a unit.

Unit leaders will need to, with the support of council staff and volunteers, ensure that information contained on the Be-A-Scout website is updated at least twice a year and that those responsible for the online intake of new member through Be-A-Scout are trained and responsive.

Consistent Recruiting Activities:

While online and community presence help raise awareness and create a culture of an “Open Door” for new families, a literal door must be opened as well. Consistent Recruiting Activities are therefore the third element in our 2017 strategy.

To be considered a unit with an “Open Door”, Packs, Troops, Crews, and Posts will need to conduct two recruiting activities each year – one in each half of 2017.

These recruitment activities should follow the model for presumptive close which was implemented in past years stressing a streamlined sign-up process as opposed to a lengthy orientation meeting that potentially overwhelms and discourages new families. Since new members come to Boy Scout troops both from Webelos transition and youth who have never been in Scouting, Troops will need to conduct recruitment activities targeting both potential members.

Open vs. Closed Doors – A Dynamic Scorecard:

Taken as a whole, if a unit builds its community presence (social media, community presence, service projects), has online presence through Be-A-Scout, and has consistent recruiting activities - that unit would reach enough leading indicators to reasonably predict annual membership growth. We would classify that unit as having an “Open Door” and reflect that status on a dynamic scorecard summarizing all units in the council and shared across all volunteers in the council. By focusing in such a way on leading indicators, in both halves of the year, we will open our doors and return to growth.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Youth Members

No qualified youth may be denied membership in Scouting on the basis of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability. This policy shall not affect Scouting’s requirement that all members subscribe to the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

Adult Volunteer Leaders

No qualified adult volunteer leader may be denied registration by the BSA on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or disability. This policy shall not affect Scouting’s requirement that all adult volunteer leaders subscribe to the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, and the Declaration of Religious Principle or the right of religious chartered organizations to use Scouting as part of their program and to select unit leaders in accordance with their religious principles.

Marin Council, Boy Scouts of America
225 West End Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901
415-454-1081 www.boyscouts-marin.org