

Annual Program Planning by Jamie Niss Dunn, Pack Trainer, Pack 512, Blaine/Coon Rapids, MN, Cub Scout Training Coordinator, Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner, 3 Rivers District, Northern Star Council

Summer is traditionally the time when packs plan their upcoming program year. Most packs do this by holding a program planning conference, a meeting where interested leaders and parents come together to craft a new program for a full year of fun and exciting events and pack meetings. The meeting should not be a simple exercise in taking last year's calendar, and putting new dates on all the events and meetings held the previous year. Rather, this should be an opportunity for the pack leaders and parents to think about the quality of the pack's program, and make improvements. Remember, the single most important factor in why families and Scouts choose to join your pack, and more importantly stay in Scouting, is the program they receive.

This meeting should be held in a relaxed atmosphere – such as a picnic, a potluck dinner or pizza fest. You should anticipate that this meeting will last two hours, at a minimum. Ideally, this is an adults-only function. If children must be present, try to have someone to supervise them, so the leaders and parents can concentrate on the business at hand. You should invite all of the pack's leaders and parents to this meeting. Your Chartered Organization Representative and your Unit Commissioner are good people to invite as well.

Make sure you have all the resources you need for the meeting. These include your current roster of Scouts and leaders; completed Parent and Family Talent Survey Sheets; the *Cub Scout Leader Book*; at least one copy of *Cub Scout Program Helps* for the upcoming year; the pack's budget for the previous year and a current Treasurer's report; and calendars from your school district, the council, and your chartered organization. The pack's copies of the Unit Advancement Reports submitted for the year should be available. If you have conducted a parent or Scout evaluation of your program, bring those completed forms as well. You may want to bring photocopies of “**How do I Rate as an Effective Leader**” from page 34-10 of the *Cub Scout Leader Book*, and the *Pack Program Planning Chart #26-004*. (This chart is also in the Program Planning Insert in *Cub Scout Program Helps*.) Also bring your current copy of *The Pack Record Book* if you use it.

The steps in the program planning conference should include:

- Evaluation – what did we do well, and what could we do better?
- Goal Setting – what do we want the pack to achieve this year?
- Program Features – What events will allow those goals to be fulfilled? What themes or special features should we incorporate?
- Calendaring & Assignments – when are we going to execute the program events that will fulfill our goals? Who will carry out the program?
- Budgeting – what financial resources do we need to make the program happen?
- Communication – no plan is complete until you have informed your Scouts and parents. How and when will you communicate your plan?

Appoint a recorder for the meeting, who will transcribe all your results and decisions, and be responsible to report the results to the pack. This may be the Pack Secretary or another individual. You may divide the responsibility among a number of leaders, for instance, delegating the financial section of the plan to the Pack Treasurer, the Program Features to the Cubmaster and the Communication to the Newsletter Editor.

Recorder for the meeting :Pack Secretary _____ or
another individual _____ or

Financial section Pack Treasurer _____ or

Program Features to the Cubmaster _____ or

Communication to the Newsletter Editor _____ .

Evaluation

Your first step is to look back at the previous program year. Use Chapter 24 of the *Cub Scout Leader Book* to look at program strengths and weaknesses.

Areas to look at include:

- how the boys view the program
- the contents of the program itself
- the pack's leadership performance and future needs
- advancement, and pack management.

You can also use the new "*Pack Self-Assessment*" form to help in the process. (This form is appended to the end of this document)

- What awards did the pack and leadership qualify for this year?

- Did you earn the Centennial Quality Unit Award and the National Summertime Pack Award?

- Have you set goals to earn them during the coming year, including completing the Centennial Quality Unit Commitment form?

- How many dens earned the National Den Award?

- Did any of your leaders earn the Cub Scout Leader Training Awards?

While attaining these awards is not totally definitive of a good program, they provide indicators that your pack is on the right track.

- What service projects did the pack perform this year?

- Was at least one of them for your Chartered Organization?

An established pack may have many strengths, and only one or two things that you'd like to add or tweak. A newer or rebuilding pack will have more issues to resolve. Try to identify priority features that will do the most to attract and retain Scouts and families. Don't try to fix everything at once.

Look at your membership.

- How many Scouts do you have?

- How many joined this year?

- How many of the Scouts who joined last June or September are still with the pack?

- If you find that the pack signs up 15 or 20 (or more) new Scouts each year, and then loses half of them, you need to evaluate why this is happening.

How many Scouts are attending pack and den meetings? You should be tracking this as part of the Centennial Quality Unit Award process.

- Do their parents and families come to the pack meetings?

- What percentage of your Scouts advanced this year?

If very few Scouts are earning badges, their den leaders and parents may need help with the program.

- What other awards did the Scouts earn?

- Achieving the World Conservation Award

- Outdoor Activity Award

- The National Summertime Pack Award

- Sports and Academics awards and religious emblems

These are all signs that Scouts and families are engaged and active.

- What percentage of your Scouts attended some sort of camp in the past year? _____

- Most importantly, are the boys having a good time and being challenged?

Conduct a Leadership Inventory. Review each den for two-deep leadership. Look at the Pack Committee roster and see what positions will need to be filled for the next year.

- What leaders are likely to leave the pack this year?

- What positions would you like to add?

- Have you considered requiring each den to supply a committee member to ensure you have enough members?

- What percentage of your leadership is trained for their positions?

- Do you have Den Chiefs as part of your leadership team?

Distribute “How Do I Rate as an Effective Leader?” from page 34-10 of the *Cub Scout Leader Book*. Ask each leader to evaluate him or herself. The results of these evaluations need not be shared with other leaders, but they give each leader an opportunity to think seriously about how they performed as a leader this year, and to rededicate themselves to a higher standard of leadership in the future.

Review the pack finances.

- How much money did it take to present the pack program this year?

- What is the cost per Scout of your program?

- Did you reach your fundraising goals?

- Did you continually have to conduct additional fundraisers to keep cash in the bank account?
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- Are the dues or fees you collected sufficient to pay for the pack program?
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- Do you have a sufficient, but not huge, surplus to carry the pack into the new program year?
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- Have you prepared a formal budget for the pack, and tracked your expenses?
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- If not, begin an annual practice of doing so, using *The Pack Record Book* or the budget provided at: <http://www.scouting.org/cubscouts/resources/packbudget.aspx>
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Keep in mind the purposes of Cub Scouting:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| × Character Development | × Respectful Relationships |
| × Spiritual Growth | × Personal Achievement |
| × Good Citizenship | × Friendly Service |
| × Sportsmanship and Fitness | × Fun and Adventure |
| × Family Understanding | × Preparation for Boy Scouts |
| and the Core Values: | |
| ✓ Citizenship | ✓ Honesty |
| ✓ Compassion | ✓ Perseverance |
| ✓ Cooperation | ✓ Positive attitude |
| ✓ Courage | ✓ Resourcefulness |
| ✓ Faith | ✓ Respect |
| ✓ Health and fitness | ✓ Responsibility |

- Think about whether your program incorporated these purposes and values. If it didn't, why not?
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- What do you need to do to make sure it will in the future?
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Goal Setting

- Now is the time to set goals for the pack. You know what your weaknesses are. How are you going to address them? _____

- You know your strengths. What will you do to enhance them? What milestones should the pack reach this year?

Think in quantifiable terms.

- Set numerical goals for membership and retention.

- Determine what awards the pack will attempt to earn.

- What percentage of leaders do you need to have trained?

- What leaders need to be recruited to serve the boys you will recruit?

- How many boys will advance in rank?

- How many will attend camp?

- What percentage of Scouts (and parents) will attend pack meetings this year?

Set budgetary goals. Determine how much money the pack will need to raise to present the program. If you are adding significant features to the program, then make sure your financial goals support those additions. Consider using only one or two fundraisers to support the pack, with aggressive goals. You can concentrate more easily on a great program when you've not always worried where the next dollar will come from.

Don't forget that fun, inspiration and learning are goals as well. While not measurable in the traditional sense, they can be evaluated through retention, participation, and advancement.

Program Features

What are you going to include in the pack program? Typically, packs plan:

- Outings and field trips
- Camping
- Special events (Blue & Gold; Pinewood Derby, etc.)
- Committee & parent meetings
- Pack meetings
- Attendance at District and Council events
- Service Projects (including at least one for your Chartered Organization)
- Recruiting dates
- Participation in leader training/Roundtables/University of Scouting

These events should be tied to your goals. For instance, if the pack's goals include a 10 percent increase in membership, then special recruiting events should be planned. If camping is a goal, plan multiple camping opportunities.

What themes or program features will be incorporated into the plan? Themes provide focus for your program, but if a theme doesn't appeal to your leadership, try another one. Check www.scoutingthenet.com, and www.insanescouter.com for links and ideas for other themes. Themes can also be switched around, to better fit weather, pack goals, etc.

Calendaring & Assignments

Set the dates for your meetings and events. Make sure you avoid conflicts with school, religious, and council events. These dates can always be adjusted later, if plans change or new opportunities present themselves.

Make as many assignments as possible to those responsible for conducting & contributing to these events. For instance, make sure each den has an assignment for each pack meeting. Know who will chair your fundraisers, special events and outings. Make every effort to ensure that no den leader has a job other than leading their den.

Budgeting

How much is it going to cost to carry out this program? Use the Budget worksheet on page 11-3 of the *Cub Scout Leader Book* as a starting point. Also consult the *Pack Record Book*, or other financial records kept by your treasurer. Budget for both income and expenses. This should be a

preliminary budget, which the Treasurer and pack committee continue to refine over the course of the program year.

Communication

The best plan will not achieve your goals until you share it with the Scouts and their families. How are you going to communicate your plan? Start with publishing a list of the pack's goals and the calendar. Include the themes you'll be using, so the families see what to look forward to.

Distribute this document at your summer pack events and mail it to your families. Parents should also be informed of the pack's budget for the year. After all, it's their money that will be spent to provide the program, and they will be helping with the fundraisers. If they know where the money is going, they're going to be more likely to support the financial goals you've set. Make particularly sure that new parents are provided with this information.

If you have a pack handbook, include the plans and the budget in that publication. For examples of pack handbooks, see:

<http://www.pack512.org/handbook/handbook.htm>

<http://www.pack899.org/pdf/cubs-handbook-2004-september-pdf.pdf>

<http://www.prairienet.org/pack119/Pack%20119%20Parent%20Handbook.pdf>

Regular updates should be provided to parents and Scouts via pack and den newsletters, your pack web site, if you have one, and e-mail or phone trees.

Future Steps

Of course, the plan you create through this process is just the beginning. You need to hold your regular committee meetings to refine and execute the plans you have made. You need to collect data (attendance, advancement, finances, etc.) for next year's planning. You need to evaluate as you go along, to make sure you're meeting your goals, and everyone is having fun. Continually communicate changes and upcoming events to families and Scouts.

Here are some links to sites that have resources for program planning:

<http://www.gswcbsa.org/gswc/programplanning/twpcubscouts.htm>

<http://www.wtsmith.com/rt/pkadmin.html#PLANNING>

<http://www.wtsmith.com/rt/pkadmin.html#PROGRAM>

<http://www.usscouts.org/bbugle/bb0404/bbpackdenadmin.html>



Pack Self-Assessment

Pack Number: _____ District: _____ Date Completed: _____

Completed by: _____ Date Review Meeting Held: _____

Doing a Great Job	Would Like Improvement	Need Help	Comments and Needs
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Quality Criteria

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I. Pack Leadership | A. An active committee meets monthly. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | B. Assistant leaders are in place for pack and dens. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | C. Adult leaders are registered and Fast Start and Basic Training are completed. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | D. All dens have active den chiefs. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | E. An active pack trainer is on the pack committee. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | F. At least one adult is trained in BALOO (Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation). | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | G. All adults are trained in Youth Protection. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | H. Webelos leaders have been trained in Outdoor Leader Skills for Webelos leaders. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| II. Program | A. We develop an annual program calendar and share it with our families. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | B. We operate under the annual budget plan. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | C. We conduct monthly pack leader meetings to plan den and pack meetings. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | D. Den and pack leaders attend roundtables. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | E. We review our program routinely with our chartered organization representative. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | F. We develop an active outdoor program to involve our families. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | G. A good percentage of our youth earn advancement awards regularly. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | H. We conduct a monthly summertime program. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | I. Our unit is 100% <i>Boys' Life</i> with all families. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | J. We conduct at least one service project annually. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

III. Membership/Attendance

- A. We have dens of all ages involved. _____
- B. Our weekly den meetings are strongly attended by our members. _____
- C. We have good participation from youth and parents at pack meetings. _____
- D. Our youth and leaders wear their uniforms to den and pack meetings and on outings. _____
- E. We have an annual plan to recruit new youth members. _____

IV. Quality Pack Award Standards

- A. We annually recharter on time. _____
- B. We earned the Quality pack award last year. _____
- C. We are on track to earn the award this year. _____