

Tools for Effective District Scout Leading

A. Actively Supporting Troops

Module Overview

As the first line of support to Sections and Section Leaders, a District Leader can really make the difference. Your understanding of the issues and needs of the Sections in your District is essential to planning the support you can offer.

Expected Outcomes

In this module, it is expected that you will:

- Identify the needs, wants and issues of the Sections in your District
- Devise a plan to offer appropriate support to your Sections
- Design a series of Section visits with a support purpose
- Establish a pattern of review and self evaluation for each Section in your District

Practical Outcomes

The needs, wants and issues identified for the Sections in your District are real. Providing support to your Sections is a core function of your role, so every aspect of this Module has a truly practical purpose.

Amount of Work

Depending on the number of Sections in your District and the current standards in place will determine the work required. It is anticipated that this module will take between six and nine months to complete. This will begin and end with a face-to-face meeting with your RCYP and two or three interim review meetings to monitor your progress. You will be required to visit most of the Sections in your District during this time and hold face-to-face meetings with the Section leadership of each.

In This Pack

To support the implementation and running of the module, the following resources are provided:

- Regional Commissioner Youth Program's Briefing
- Participant Briefing
- Module Resources
- Module Completion and Feedback

Other Modules in the Scheme

Following this module, you might like to consider one of the other modules in the scheme:

- District Communications
- Recruitment, retention and supporting adults
- District Events and Activities
- Scout Leadership Courses
- Accessing the award scheme
- Training others

About the Tools for Effective District Scout Leading Scheme

This scheme was introduced in 2008 to support the work of new and existing District Scout Leaders. There are several modules in the scheme focusing on different areas of the role. District Leaders should negotiate with their Regional Commissioner (Scouts) to decide which modules are most relevant to your situation. The modules are designed to be practical in nature and completed in any order. For more information, visit www.nsw.scouts.com/scouts/districtleaders.htm.

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Region Commissioner Youth Program's Briefing

This module can be run with an individual or with a number of District Leaders. The outcomes for each participant are the same. Your set up and review of progress may be structured differently if working with a number of District Leaders.

Your Role in this Module

After the initial input and set-up of the module, your role in this module is to provide support, advice and example resources from your own operations or those you have seen in use. You may find it useful to collect these into a resource folder before starting the module and adding to the resource over time. This module requires a larger amount of support than the others and it is expected that you will conduct two or three interim review meetings with the participant during the project time. At the end of the module, the Region Commissioner Youth Program must review the module's effectiveness and submit the review report to the State Commissioner Youth Program.

Setting Up the Module

The module should be set up during a single set-up session with the participant(s). This should preferably be done face-to-face where practical, but can be achieved over email or telephone.

The session would cover:

- Understanding and acceptance of the module outcomes
- Review of current skills, knowledge and experience
- Review of the resources available in this pack and elsewhere, written and human
- Outline plan for development, including milestones and timescales
- Identification of support required and a plan to provide it
- Expectations of completion and review – how do we know we have finished?

This session may or may not form part of your regular Region Training Meetings.

Support to the Region Commissioner Youth Program

Support is available to you in facilitating this module from your State Commissioner's Team. This could include telephone support or further working examples of communication types. You should also look to the District Commissioner and other members of your Region Team for ideas and advise on this topic. Where another District Leader is already supporting Sections effectively, you could use them as a model and encourage your District Leaders to meet with them.

Measuring Success

Scouting has always been based on doing your best. With this in mind, measuring success can be a very subjective task. Emphasising the positive achievements of the participant(s) will further build confidence. Remember the expected outcomes of the module and measure against those –

Did the participant(s):

- Identify the needs, wants and issues of the Sections in their District?
- Devise a plan to offer appropriate support to their Sections?
- Design a series of Section visits with a support purpose?
- Establish a pattern of review and self evaluation for each Section in their District?

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Tools for Effective District Scout Leading Actively Supporting Troops

Participating District Leader's Briefing

Welcome to the Actively Supporting Troops module of the Tools for Effective District Leading scheme. This is not a formal training scheme, but a practical, project driven support scheme designed specifically to support and develop you in your Scouting role.

Your Role in this Module

You will meet with your Regional Commissioner Youth Program (RCYP) regularly to discuss the expected outcomes and progress of this module. Part of that plan will involve you working alone and with others to develop plan to support your District. Although there is room to experiment and trial different approaches, ultimately, the module will lead you to a working model that will be the basis of your future support.

Setting Up the Module

The first step is to meet with your RCYP. There may be other participants completing the same module, so it would be helpful to meet together and share ideas. In your meeting, you should cover:

- Your understanding and acceptance of the module outcomes
- Review of current skills, knowledge and experience
- Review of the resources available in this pack and elsewhere, written and human
- Outline plan for development, including milestones and timescales
- Identification of support required and a plan to provide it
- Expectations of completion and review – how do we know we have finished?

This session may or may not form part of your regular Region Training Meetings.

Support Available

Your RCYP is probably the central support to you in this module, but you should also talk with your District Commissioner, other members of your District Team and other District Leaders in your Region. The Section Leaders you are supporting are very important in this module and you will arrange visits and meetings with them.

Module Layout

There are five elements to this module:

- Establishing regular visits and evaluation meetings
- Making the most of your visits
- Identifying support to the wants, needs and issues
- Troop self-evaluations

Module Review

You will find information on each over the next few pages.

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Tools for Effective District Scout Leading

Actively Supporting Troops

Element A: Establishing Regular Visits and Evaluation Meetings

As a District Leader, you should feel welcome at all times in all Sections you support. This element helps you establish yourself as a support service rather than part of the management.

The Task

With your District Mindari, establish a plan to visit each Section in your District within a suitable period of time. Note – only some of these visits need to be completed within the time scale of this Module. Your plan will be presented at your first interim review meeting. The exact time scale will be determined by the number of Sections in your District and your time available. At least two visits to each Section per year would be considered a minimum.

How much time should I spend Scouting?

We are all aware of the commitment expected of a Section Leader in Scouting. The “hour-and-a-half-a-week” myth is well known. A District Leader is not considered to be a position of reduced responsibility – if anything, a District Leader should be committing more time to the role than a Section Leader! This affords plenty of time to visit each Section in your District on a regular basis. Although some District Leaders prefer to, it is not essential that you spend an entire evening with one Troop. If distances allow, you could do two meetings in one night.

But my Sections treat my visit with suspicion

Then here is your first challenge! Convincing your Section Leaders that regular visits are part of your role and that they are designed to provide greater support is crucial. This could take some time in some places. Offering to help with an aspect of the program may assist with breaking the ice. Be prepared to get your hands dirty when you visit. The more often you visit, the more accepting of your presence the leaders become. Advice on making the best of your visits is in the next Element.

I turned up and they weren't there!

Then this suggests you are not part of your Section's communications structure. As part of this element, receiving a copy of each Section's medium and long term planning will help. Sections that are performing well will be able to provide this information with ease and without complaint. Those that cannot have immediately indicated one key issue for you to begin your support. Make sure you keep your list of Sections, meeting times and locations up to date. It is up to you and your Mindari to decide if your visits will be announced or surprise, but bear this in mind – would you rather know that somebody is coming to visit if it were your Section? Think about it, if you know in advance you have an extra resource to help, even for a short time, don't you think you would make better use of them? Surprise visits are disruptive, create suspicion, but keep people on their toes! Avoid over-visiting as well – you might as well become one of the leaders!

Resources to Support This Element

We have created some resources for you to support this Element:

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Element B: Making the Most of Your Visits

Our time is precious. The amount of time you are able to spend at each Section is not usually enough to identify all of the wants, needs and issues. This Element helps you structure your visits and get the most from each one.

The Task

Prepare a set of objectives for three visits to three different Sections in your District. As part of the visit, you should run an aspect of the program, spend some time talking with the Patrol Leaders and arrange a short meeting with the Section Leaders before or after the program. Your objectives should address your understanding of the needs, wants and issues of the different Section. You should discuss your objectives with your RCYP ahead of the visit and present the completed report to your next interim review meeting.

Identifying Objectives

Your support services are far ranging – just like the diversity of service we expect our Section Leaders to handle week on week. As a subject matter specialist, you are expected to have all the answers to all the possible questions! Each Troop is different. If you know the Troop well, identifying items to look for is easy. For other Troops, it is a totally blank piece of paper. Here are some possible things to consider:

- Leadership – number of adults, quality of leadership, succession planning, personal issues that affect commitment, recruitment and retention issues, child protection
- Youth program – activity, appropriateness, award scheme delivery, safety, variety
- Patrol system – functionality, implementation, success, development of young people
- Relationships – with parents, other Sections in the Group, other Sections in the District
- Group support – working committee, GL support, accommodation, finance, equipment

Setting up the Meeting

For a first visit, you should negotiate with the Section Leader an appropriate meeting to attend. Be transparent with your objectives and why you are looking at them. Discuss a way you can get involved in the program. Be prepared to ask the youth members (especially the Patrol Leaders) for their views and opinions on topics you are evaluating. Maybe you can run a game, deliver some award training to a small group, give a presentation on a forthcoming activity or simply lead a prayer.

Meeting with the adults

Before or after the youth program, arrange some time with the Section Leaders. Make sure you have their focussed attention – not whilst they are setting up or clearing up. Be ready to ask the questions you need to ask, provide the feedback you have and make a support plan for the future. Ensure your discussion is focussed on the wants, needs and issues of that particular Section rather than a general discussion about Scouting that is more appropriate at a Mindari. Record the action points you each take from the meeting and agree the time scale for review.

Resources to Support This Element

We have created some resources for you to support this Element:

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Element C: Identifying Support to the Wants, Needs and Issues

So now you are aware of what a particular Section requires from your support, it is time to provide that support. This element helps you plan to support Sections.

The Task

Using the feedback from the three Section visits conducted in Element B, produce a written plan to provide the required support. The plan should identify actions, resources required and time scales. You will discuss these plans at your interim Module Review Meetings with your RCYP before implementing them. The final result of each plan will form part of your final Module Review Meeting presentation.

Elements of the Plan

Your plan should contain:

- A clear statement of the want(s) / need(s) / issue(s)
- An outline of the support that is required from all parties involved
- A break-down of who is expected to provide the various pieces of support. This should include yourself, members of the Section, members of the Group and others beyond
- A schedule of when this support is needed
- Details of who is contacting each support provider to ensure their support

Discussing your Plan

You must discuss the required support with either your Regional Commissioner Youth Program or with your District Commissioner or possibly both. They can use their existing knowledge of this and other Sections to suggest further support that might be available. Nobody in Scouting is expected to work alone and supporting your wants, needs and issues is part of their role.

Providing the support

As soon as is practical, provide the support you have promised. This might be your own personal resource or contact and engaging others in the situation. At all times consider how you will keep the Section Leader informed of your progress.

Resources to Support This Element

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Element D: Section Self-Evaluations

It would be an easy job if all of our Sections were running at the top of their game. Occasionally, some of them are! It is easy to see an effective Section and think to yourself “they are doing OK, I will give the support to those that need it.” This Element helps you establish a reporting pattern to keep a watchful eye on all of your Sections.

The Task

Devise and implement a regular reporting system for all Troops in your District to provide you core information on their current performance. This might be an existing system that feeds into reporting already done by your Region. Present your pro forma or preferred model at your final review meeting.

Why do I need this?

A month is a long time in Scouting. A Section that is running with very high standards when you visit in March can turn around in just a few weeks with a change in leadership or circumstance. Keeping a regular and set structure of communication gives you an easy way of touching base with your Sections in between visits and District Training Meetings. Many District Leaders and Regional Commissioners like to receive set information from each Section so they can collate statistics that measure progress across the District or Region.

What information should I look for?

Key indicators of a Sections performance include:

- Youth Program – short, medium and long term planning, variety of program events, special events (camps, outings, visits, joint activities), award scheme progress
- Youth Membership – currently invested members, transfers in and out, recruitment opportunities, inter-Section linking, age balance and promotions
- Adult Leadership – quantity of leaders, associate leaders and youth helpers, their training progress and future plans
- Key issues – any challenges or successes that Troop themselves identify

What should I do with the information?

Firstly, and most importantly, acknowledge receipt of it. Comment back to the Section Leader – even if it is a simple “congratulations on presenting three red cords.” Show the Section that you have read the information and have an interest in it. Secondly, review it, compare it to previous submissions. Are there any trends in the information? Is the Section presenting an appropriate number of major awards for the membership attending? Does their membership suggest sustainability or collapse ahead? How are their relationships with other Sections? Are there any great activities you could share with other Sections? Discuss the information with your Regional Commissioner Youth Program and District Commissioner. They can provide additional support in spotting patterns such as providing formulas for calculating the number of major awards that’s should be presented for each Section.

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Review and Feedback

Now you have completed this module, it is time to review your experiences. The review has three purposes:

- To ensure you have developed in your role as a District Leader in this area
- To ensure the contents of the module are relevant, appropriate and support the outcomes
- To identify the next steps for your development

You will complete this review in consultation with your RCYP. The RCYP will submit a copy of the review to the State Commissioner within 4 weeks of your meeting. If you would like to attach examples of your work, the State Team would be grateful to receive them.

DL's Name: _____ Date of review: _____
 District: _____ Region: _____
 Reviewer: _____

About Your Experiences

Did the module lead you to:

Achieved	Close to	Started	Did not
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Notes:

About the Module and Resources provided

Please rate the resources in this module:

Excellent	Suitable	Weak	Poor
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Notes:

The Next Steps

There are more Modules available in the scheme. You should now discuss with your RCYP which would be the most appropriate for you.

- I will be taking a break from Effective Tool Modules for a while
- I would like to do another one, but I am still choosing which
- I am going to try _____ next

Instructions to RCYP on completion of this form

The completed form should be forwarded to the State Commissioner for your Section within four weeks of the review meeting. You may wish to take a copy of the form for your own records and/or share the information with your Region Commissioner or the participants District Commissioner. The contents of the form will be used to monitor overall region progress on developing District Leaders and for ongoing review of the resources and support materials available.