

# Tools for Effective District Scout Leading

## B. District Communications

### Module Overview

This module aims to improve your communication skills within the District.

### Expected Outcomes

In this module, it is expected that you will:

- Design and implement an effective communication strategy for your District
- Explore different ways of communicating with members of your District
- Improve participation in your District activities by improving communication
- Gain confidence in communicating for different purposes

### Practical Outcomes

This module will guide you to create and distribute written communications to support District events or activities. There will also be support towards two face to face meetings. Both of these areas will support real events in the District.

### Amount of Work

This module could take between three and six months to complete. This would include preparation work resulting in a range of written communications being created and two face to face meetings.

### In This Pack

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

- Regional Commissioner (Scouts)'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:

- Running effective Mindaris
- Recruitment, retention and supporting adults
- District Events and Activities
- Scout Leadership Courses
- Actively Supporting Troops
- Accessing the award scheme
- Training others
- Cross Sectional Development



### 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](http://www.nsw.scouts.com/scouts/districtleaders.htm).

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## District Communications

### Region Commissioner (Scouts)'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. At the end of the module, the Region Commissioner (Scouts) must review the module's effectiveness and submit the review report to the State Commissioner (Scouts).

### 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 (Scouts)

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 a District is particularly successful in communicating with Sections, there may be a strategy in place already.

### 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):

- Design and implement an effective communication strategy for their District?
- Explore different ways of communicating with members of their District?
- Improve participation in their District activities by improving communication?
- Gain confidence in communicating for different purposes?



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## District Communications

### Participating District Leader's Briefing

Welcome to the District Communications 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 (Scouts) (RC (S)) to discuss the expected outcomes of this module and to set a plan. Part of that plan will involve you working alone and with others to develop a communications strategy for 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 communications. As communications is vital to the success of your District support role, the module is simply a tool to help you develop rather than

additional workload. If you feel that your communications strategy is already well developed then this module might not be for you. You should discuss this with your RC (S).

### Setting Up the Module

The first step is to meet with your RC (S). There may be other participants completing the same module, so it would be helpful to meet together and share ideas. In the meeting, you will 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 RC (S) 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 the Section Leaders you are supporting to seek their views and strategies on communication as well.

### Module Layout

There are five elements to this module:

- Our Communication Strategy
- Appropriate Communication Styles
- District Activity Communications
- Verbal Presentations

Module Review

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

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# Tools for Effective District Scout Leading

## District Communications

### Element A: Our Communication Strategy

Most of the time, we communicate as and when we have to. However, developing a communication strategy establishes the method and frequency of your communications to set an expectation. If your team are expecting communications in a set format at a set time, they are more likely to be prepared to deal with the contents. Sending ad hoc communications can sometimes over-burden already busy Section Leaders.

#### The Task

In consultation with your District Team (District Commissioner and other District Leaders) and your District Mindari, devise and implement your preferred communication strategy for the coming 12 months. This should be a single page, written document that is available at your module review meeting.



#### Contents of a Communications Strategy

This is largely up to you to decide, but the key elements would need to include:

- Who is the communication between? (Section Leaders and DSL or a wider audience?)
- What information will be communicated? (Note – there may be different types that each require a different strategy)
- What is the best / most efficient / most acceptable method? (Email, post, phone)
- How often should this information be communicated?
- When and how to we review this strategy?

#### Corporate Identity

Scouting is a past-time and you are part of a voluntary organisation. This is not a reason that we can't take pride and show professionalism in what we do and how we do it. Part of your overall communication strategy should consider a corporate identity – a consistent look to your communications. For written communications, this could be as simple as using a consistent headed paper. For electronic communications, layout, fonts, graphics and colours are all part of the final piece. A large amount of communication is handled electronically in Scouting, so why not have a go at setting up a template for your letters and mailings? An attractively presented document is appealing to the eye and more likely to be read. Scouts Australia and Scouts New South Wales already have a *Style Guide* which is available to help you on their websites.

#### Implementing the Strategy

There is no point spending time thinking and planning if you don't have the discipline to implement your decisions. Spend some time putting together your tools – design your corporate image and ensure you have word processing templates and email templates to support it. Stick to your style and strategy for at least 2 months before making changes – or you will spend all of your time designing and modifying the look instead of communicating the message. Offer opportunities for recipients to give you feedback on your style.

#### Resources to Support This Element

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

- Example Communication Strategy
- Scouts Australia New South Wales Style Guide – see websites

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## District Communications

### Element B: Appropriate Communication Styles

How you communicate your message directly affects how the recipient will react to it. In this element, we consider the creation of appropriate communications for different purposes. Many times, the message we are communicating is not ours, but has come from other people and we are simply the messenger. This is a crucial role as we have been trusted to deliver a message that somebody else considered important enough to ask us. How do we handle these communications when we don't necessarily agree or support the content? The language we use is also very important to avoid misunderstanding and inaccuracy.

#### The Task

Produce three samples of communications to your District Section Leaders that handle:

- Passing on information you received at your Region Meeting
- Seeking a view or opinion from leaders and/or youth members on a current issue
- Outlining a project or scheme you are working on in the near future (note – activity communications are covered in the next element, choose something strategic!)

This communications can be in any format that you consider most appropriate and you should present samples at your module review meeting. Of course, your communication strategy will be used to determine the format and style of the communications.

#### How to communicate somebody else's message

There are some great ideas developed in Scouting at all levels. Often these are shared through the support structures and can become part of a bigger scheme or policy. Many of these ideas are controversial and may not be fully supported by all. As a District Leader, you are central to the ideas sharing and communication structure of the whole organisation. You are the first point of contact for a leader who wants to express an idea for your Section and you have an obligation to listen, discuss and pass the idea on. Even more importantly, you are the last person in the chain of getting new ideas and information to the Leaders on the line. How you present this message to its final destination will determine how it is taken and implemented. Just because you may not see the value, doesn't mean the message doesn't have any. You should always pass messages on with at least as much (if not more) enthusiasm as you received it. If you disagree with the message, you should take this up in the appropriate forum (i.e. with the person who gave it to you) and not decide to change it or dismiss it.



#### Types of communication

There are many ways to communicate, how many do you use?

Telephone call	Email	Newsletter	Call a meeting	Website
Conference call	Pop round	Monthly Meeting	Personal Letter	Noticeboard
Fax	At a Section Meeting	Instant Message	Picture postcard	smoke signals ...!

#### Resources to Support This Element

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

- <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.htm> for a guide on Plain English

# Tools for Effective District Scout Leading

## District Communications

### Element C: District Activity Communications

One of the roles of a District Leader is to enhance the youth program by providing opportunities to meet other youth members in different contexts. District activities are an ideal way to achieve this, be it a camp, a hike, a leadership course or social event. In this element, we create the necessary communications for a major event of your choice using our Communication Strategy.

#### The Task

Produce the set of communications to the participants of a forthcoming District activity, including:

- The initial advertising / marketing / notification of the event.
- Planning documents, programs, menus and planning team resources.
- Final information and instructions to participants.

The activity can be anything that is open to youth members. These communications might be your own or created by another planning team member, but will show how the communication strategy has influenced the design and style. These documents will be presented at your module review meeting.

#### Getting Started

Begin with a simple set of questions:

- Do I know everything I need to know about the activity? (Cost, location, date, transport)
- Who am I sending the communication to? (Section Leaders, parents, youth members)
- When do I need to send each communication? (When are my planning cut off dates?)
- What do I need to tell them at each stage?
- How can I make it attractive?
- How do I want to receive information back?

#### Making it attractive

Yes, we have a style strategy and we are using appropriate communication methods and great language – is that enough? Well, initially, no! Your first communication is mostly marketing for the activity, so it needs to be engaging, attractive and whet the appetite. A page of text, however simple and well written, will not fulfil this if you are writing direct to youth members. Can you rely on your Section Leaders to create something attractive if you supply them the base information or should you try to give them something they can use? Pictures of previous activities often help. Use sub-headings and bullet points to make it easy to find information. Spice it up! Remember what we learnt about corporate image. Does the activity deserve its own image – a logo and style that can be used throughout the activity?



#### Workload expectations

How much do you need to run the activity successfully. Just because you have done it 50 times before doesn't mean you can get by without communicating. What if you can't do it next year? How will your successor pick up from your good work? Discuss with your RC (S) what the expectations will be for this element of the module.

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### Element D: Verbal Presentations

Sometimes, there is just no better way to deliver a message than to stand up and talk about it. This element supports verbal presentations of information to different audiences.

#### The Task

Deliver a verbal presentation to a specific audience on one of your current projects. Some suggested presentations are:

- Present the planning for an activity to your District Mindari.
- Visit a Section meeting and talk to youth members about an issue or event.
- Speak to a Group of parents about an aspect of Scouting.

You will need to talk about your experiences at your module review meeting but you will not be expected to provide written evidence.

#### Getting Started

Begin with a simple set of questions:

- What is the purpose of my presentation?
- Do I know everything I need to know about the topic? If not, I need to research.
- Who am I communicating with? (Section Leaders, parents, youth members)
- Will I support my presentation with any visual aids? (Powerpoint, posters, props)
- How long will I have?
- How can I make it attractive?

#### Making it attractive

Put yourself in the shoes of the audience – what will they be thinking about your presentation? Even a groovy powerpoint presentation can be boring to a young person. How can you do something different in your presentation to gain and maintain their attention? Perhaps it is something you wear or a great prop you have with you? Involve the audience in your topic. Ask questions to ensure there is interest and understanding throughout.

#### Know your topic

It is really important that you can speak with confidence and knowledge of your chosen subject. If you don't know the full picture or don't have the authority to make on the spot decisions, make sure you have the confidence to say so. Research is important, but perhaps you might need to have a subject specialist on hand at the presentation to handle harder questions?

#### Resources to Support This Element

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

<http://www.jcu.edu.au/studying/services/studyskills/oral/> for some hints.



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## District Communications

### 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 RC (S). The RC (S) 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
Develop a communication strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use appropriate communication styles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devise communications for a District activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertake a verbal presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve confidence in communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### About the Module and Resources provided

Please rate the resources in this module:	Excellent	Suitable	Weak	Poor
B1. Sample District Communication Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plain Speaking English Guide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral Presentations Guide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Next Steps

There are more Modules available in the scheme. You should now discuss with your RC (S) 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 RC (S) 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.



### Resource B.1: Sample District Communications Strategy

#### Anywhere District: Scout Section Communications Strategy

Designed by the District Scout Leader to support effective and consistent communications.

#### Used in communications between:

District Leaders and Section Leaders

District Leaders and Group Leaders

District Leaders and the wider Scouting world (Region, State, Other Districts, etc.)

District Leaders and other members of the District team

District Leaders and the community (Schools, Local Government, Community Groups, etc.)

#### Purposes of communication:

Passing on information received from District and Region Meetings

Seeking a view or opinion from leaders and/or youth members on a current issue

Advertising forthcoming events, activities and projects

Sharing good ideas and resources or offering advice, support and information

Agendas and minutes from District Training Meetings

#### Style of communication:

We follow the Scouts Australia New South Wales style guide for written communications. Where email is used, a standard template that carries contact information about the sender in the footer. We make full use of a District website to communicate and store larger documents. The website address is included on all written, print and email communications.

#### Methods of communication (internal):

Our strategy is email based where practical. We aim to keep email communications to a minimum by consolidating information into a monthly broadcast sent directly to the main Section Leader or their delegate. Where large attachments are required, we provide a link to the document on our website rather than attach it to the email. This is the responsibility of the DLs.

Once a quarter, we produce a mail-out to Group Leaders of all printed information received which includes articles for their Section Leaders. This is the responsibility of the District Commissioner.

We hold a bi-monthly meeting as a District team to share ideas and resources face-to-face. We hold a monthly (10 of 12 months per year) District Training Meeting with our own Section Leaders which is brief, includes an element of training and is open to all.

District Seeonee	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month	Region Wandarrah	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month
District Mindari	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month	Zone Venurer Council	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month
District Team	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each even month	Region Seeonee	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month
District Council	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each odd month	Region Mindari	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday of each month

#### Methods of communication (external):

Where practical, we communicate with external people via email.

#### Review and implementation of this strategy:

This strategy was created in January 2007 and was last reviewed in February 2008.

It is reviewed annually by the District Council.

Circulation: District Team Members, Group Leaders, Section Leaders