

## LA110 - Lodge Organization and Structure

### National OA Adviser Training

#### Session Length: 25 Minutes

#### Overview:

- This module covers lodge organization and structure and program expectations of a lodge working within the council and how it fits into the council plan.
- It includes information about the mission, vision and purpose of the Boy Scouts of America and the Order of the Arrow.
- It details the basic structure of a lodge.

#### Learning Objectives:

- Understand the Mission, Vision & Purpose of the Order of the Arrow
- Detail the purpose and roles of advising
- Get a basic overview of the BSA organization and how the lodge fits in
- Understand a basic organization of the OA and some resources available to the lodge
- Get a basic view of a typical lodge structure, use of chapters and the leadership team within each

#### Detailed Outline of the Session:

This session will cover the Mission, Vision and Purpose the Order of the Arrow and how the lodge fits in to the BSA and OA organizations. It also covers the organizational structure of the BSA, OA and a typical lodge. This is intended to be an overview only.

A mission statement defines the fundamental reason that an organization exists. Most organizations have one. Some organizations refer to their mission statement as their purpose.

A vision statement defines the way an organization will look in the future. It is a long-term view that often accompanies a mission statement. Typically, a vision statement is connected to the organization's strategic plan, a document that defines the current direction and strategies used to achieve its mission and purpose.

The Order of the Arrow (OA) has all three: a mission statement, a purpose statement, and a vision statement. Taken together, these statements define the reason our organization exists and what we intend to be in the future.

## **THE MISSION OF THE ORDER OF THE ARROW**

*The mission of the Order of the Arrow is to fulfill its purpose as an integral part of the Boy Scouts of America through positive youth leadership under the guidance of selected capable adults.*

To accomplish this mission, the relationship between youth and adult members in the Order of the Arrow is critical. The foundation of any successful chapter or lodge is a strong relationship between youth officers and adult advisers. Without a strong relationship, an officer and adviser will not be able to build a strong leadership team.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE ORDER OF THE ARROW**

As Scouting's National Honor Society, our purpose is to:

- *Recognize those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives and through that recognition cause others to conduct themselves in a way that warrants similar recognition.*
- *Promote camping, responsible outdoor adventure, and environmental stewardship as essential components of every Scout's experience, in the unit, year-round, and in summer camp.*
- *Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation.*
- *Crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.*

## **THE VISION OF THE ORDER OF THE ARROW**

*As Scouting's National Honor Society and as an integral part of every council, our service, activities, adventures and training for youth and adults will be models of quality leadership development and programming that enrich the lives of our members and help extend Scouting to America's youth.*

Because the Order of the Arrow is so closely aligned and connected to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and its councils nationwide, it is important that you as lodge adviser and your lodge leadership understand the mission and vision of the BSA and how those relate to the responsibilities of the local council.

## **BSA MISSION STATEMENT**

*The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.*

## **BSA VISION STATEMENT**

*The Boy Scouts of America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law.*

## **THE LODGE ADVISER PURPOSE**

What are you *really* here to do? Or, stated a little differently, why do you do what you do? There are many possible answers to this question. But, at the end of the day, the underlying reason why you do what you do is to provide the young men in your organization with opportunities to develop into leaders of character.

As an adviser you will have many roles. Some of these are as follows:

- Serve as a positive role model.
- Set the example of core values.
- Teach effective communication.
- Mentor through example.
- Help set expectations.
- Provide perspective.

For a further exploration of these roles, please refer to [LA120 – “Lodge Positions and their Roles and Responsibilities”](#).

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

### **BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA: AN ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW**

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the nation’s largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of citizenship, and develops personal fitness. For over a century, the BSA has helped build our nation’s future leaders by combining educational activities and lifelong values with fun.

The BSA was incorporated in 1910 and was granted a Congressional Charter (from the U. S. Congress) in 1916. The National Executive Board, in consultation with national officers and national staff which carry out the work of the national organization, provides the leadership involved in presenting a common set of program standards across the nation.

### **THE LOCAL BOY SCOUT COUNCIL**

A council is a local organization chartered by the Boy Scouts of America designed to promote, lead and supervise all Scouting activities within an assigned geographic

territory and should do so in accordance with the rules, regulations and bylaws of the BSA. The local council is the administrative organization charged with fulfilling the mission and vision of the movement. Scouting is a volunteer organization that operates with professional guidance.

A council has four major functions through which it delivers the Scouting program: membership/relationships, finance, program and unit service. How each council organizes to accomplish these functions may vary based on local conditions, geography, resources and other local factors. Most councils further subdivide their territory into districts.

Councils are led by volunteer Scouters elected to serve on the council executive board which meets periodically throughout the year. Officers of the board include: president, council commissioner (who leads the unit service function), vice presidents, treasurer, committee chairs, etc. Each council employs a professional Scouter, the Scout executive, to serve as its chief executive officer, the highest ranking and salaried executive in the council. The Scout executive works for and reports to the council executive board.

## **THE DISTRICT**

To help carry out its mission and work, most councils are subdivided geographically into smaller areas, called districts, as determined by the council executive board. District leaders mobilize resources to ensure the growth and success of units within the district's territory. All districts are responsible for carrying out the four standard functions: membership, finance, program, and unit service. The membership, finance, and program functions are carried out by members of the district committee. The unit service function is carried out by the district commissioner staff. The council Scout executive, or his or her designee, typically hires other professional Scouters, district executives, to support, oversee and help extend the Scouting program to youth within each district's geographic territory.

The district chairman is a member of the council executive board. The district commissioner meets with the council commissioner and other district commissioners on a regular basis. The chairman of each district operating committee may be a member of the corresponding council committee. The district chairman, one or more vice chairmen, and district members at large are elected by the district committee from a slate agreed upon and presented by the district's nominating committee. Newly elected officers and members at large take office immediately upon election.

Each council varies somewhat in the specifics of its organization and at the district and council levels, although most are fairly well-aligned to this general description.

## **THE ORDER OF THE ARROW: AN ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW**

For nearly 100 years, the Order of the Arrow (OA) has recognized Scouts and Scouters who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives. This recognition provides

encouragement for others to live these ideals as well. Arrowmen are known for maintaining camping traditions and spirit, promoting year-round and long term resident camping, and providing cheerful service to others. OA service, activities, adventures, and training for youth and adults are models of quality leadership development and programming that enrich and help to extend Scouting to America's youth. There is an Order of the Arrow lodge in every council in the nation with more than 163,000 members nationwide.

## **NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

The national chief and vice chief are Arrowmen under the age of 21 who are elected to one-year terms by the section chiefs during the annual National Planning Meeting. They serve as members of the National Order of the Arrow Committee, providing the opinion of youth Arrowmen on national OA policy. They also serve as the presiding officers for the national OA event. They are advised in their responsibilities by the National OA Committee Chairman and the Director and Associate Director of the Order of the Arrow. The National OA Committee Chairman is appointed annually by the vice president/chairman of the National Outdoor Adventures Group. The professional advisers are the Director and Associate Director of the Order of the Arrow, both national professional Scouters.

## **REGION LEADERSHIP**

The Boy Scouts of America is organized into four geographical regions: Southern Region, Northeast Region, Central Region, and Western Region.

The region chief is the youth leader of the region elected by the section chiefs from that region at the National Planning Meeting. He must be younger than 21 during the entire year of his term; he will serve until a successor is elected. The election is held following the election of the national chief and national vice chief.

The volunteer leader in the region is the Region Order of the Arrow Chairman. Appointed annually by the Chairman of the National Order of the Arrow Committee in coordination with the region director, this person is responsible for administering and managing the program regionally, with a special emphasis placed on the role of adviser to the region chief.

The region staff adviser is appointed by the National Outdoor Adventures Group director. Duties of the region staff adviser include regular communication and counsel with the region chairman and region chief.

Each of the regions is divided into geographical areas composed of a number of councils. The number of areas varies according to region. The region director establishes the area boundaries and appoints an area director to provide leadership to the programs within the area. The councils in each area are grouped into sections by the area director, based on recommendations made by the Region Order of the Arrow Chairman and region staff adviser.

Communication is a very important role for the region. Some regions use a newsletter and other media to keep their sections up-to-date.

## SECTIONS

An Order of the Arrow section consists of lodges within a geographic area of the region. Once every year, representatives of lodges in the section come together for a conclave to share in fellowship, skills, and training. In addition, the section creates a monitoring/mentoring relationship with its lodges, provides leadership development opportunities, fosters understanding and adherence to national OA policies and procedures, and coordinates OA administrative and program functions.

The section officers are the chief, vice chief, and secretary. They are elected at the annual business meeting held during the conclave. The section adviser is the volunteer leader, and a professional Scouter serves as staff adviser. These Arrowmen are appointed annually by the area director with the concurrence of the region Order of the Arrow chairman and region staff adviser. The advisers work closely with the section officers in planning and conducting the conclave and other section activities.

The section adviser is the important link between lodges within the section. This person provides advice and guidance to the section officers and is an important resource of program ideas and help for lodge advisers.

Each year approximately fifty elected section chiefs are invited to a national planning meeting in Dallas, TX. The section chiefs form the conference committee for a national Order of the Arrow event, such as the National Order of the Arrow Conference®, which is held under the guidance of the national Order of the Arrow committee.

## LODGES

An OA lodge helps the local Boy Scout council provide a quality Scouting program through recognition of Scouting spirit and performance, development of youth leadership and service, promotion of Scout camping and outdoor programs, and enhancement of membership tenure. Every Boy Scout council is encouraged to have an Order of the Arrow lodge. Each lodge operates under a charter granted by the Boy Scouts of America and must apply annually for its renewal. The Boy Scouts of America will grant a charter to only one lodge per council. In addition to operating in accordance with national OA policies and procedures, the local lodge must also operate under the auspices and guidance of the local council and local Scout executive. The Scout executive is the Supreme Chief of the Fire, the final authority within the council for the Order of the Arrow.

## CHAPTERS

The Scout executive and/or the lodge may decide to operate by using chapters. Typically, when this decision is made, there is one chapter in each district of the council. Depending on geography and other considerations, there may be more districts per

chapter. Each chapter would then have its own officers and advisers with the officers being elected by the youth OA members within that chapter and the advisers being appointed by the Scout executive often with the consultation of the lodge adviser and district executive(s). Some advantages to operating by chapters are:

- There are more leadership opportunities for youth members in a council where the lodge is subdivided into chapters, and more opportunities for adults as well.
- Meetings can be scheduled in locations closer to home for the majority of members, decreasing travel time and (hopefully) increasing meeting attendance.
- Meetings and events can be scheduled to coincide with district roundtables and other district events as a way to increase and encourage attendance. Unit leaders can help provide transportation for the youth membership.
- Unit visits for camping promotion, unit elections and other purposes are more convenient and easier to schedule, manage and complete.

The opportunities to serve, and to be seen by others when setting the example of service, are often greater in a lodge that operates with chapters.

## **LODGE ORGANIZATION & STRUCTURE**

### **USE OF CHAPTERS**

Next to the membership itself, the lodge is the most important element in the Order of the Arrow because that is where the program is carried out. But before it can carry out the program, the lodge must be properly organized.

The Scout executive is the final authority of the Order within the council and, because of this, holds the title of Supreme Chief of the Fire. It is the Scout executive's job to see that the lodge adheres to national policy. Each year the Scout executive appoints a volunteer to serve as lodge adviser. As Deputy Supreme Chief of the Fire, the lodge adviser assists the Scout executive in guiding the operation of the lodge program. This person also serves as a member of the council camping or Boy Scout committee and may be elected to the council executive board. In some councils, the Scout executive serves as lodge staff adviser but in most cases appoints a member of the professional staff to that position. The staff adviser, as Chief of the Fire, acts on behalf of the Scout executive in giving guidance to the lodge. The title of Camp Chief of the Fire is used to designate the Boy Scout resident camp director.

Order of the Arrow lodges vary in size from about 50 to more than 4,000 members. In many lodges a chapter plan is necessary if the objectives of the Order are to be realized. In other lodges there are few members, and chapters would be of little value. For these reasons, the national Order of the Arrow committee has purposely left the decision as to the need for chapters in the hands of the Scout executive in consultation with lodge leaders. You may be part of a lodge that utilizes chapters.

Lodge and chapter advisers need to work closely with district and council volunteers and professional Scouters. It is the adviser's responsibility to see that the Order is working in close support of and in harmony with the council and district program. *It must at all times be remembered that the Order is an extension of Scouting, an integral part of it, rather than a separate program.* The lodge adviser and lodge chief serve as members of the council camping or Boy Scout committee, while the chapter adviser and chapter chief serve on the district camping or Boy Scout committee.

The chapter officers are nominated and elected by the youth who are members of the chapter in the same way that lodge officers are elected. Their duties are the same on the chapter level as those of lodge officers on the lodge level. The chapter chief and the chapter adviser become members of the lodge executive committee. Each chapter typically has many of the same operating committees as the lodge. The chairmen of these committees become members of the corresponding lodge operating committees.

When a chapter plan of operation is firmly established, most Order of the Arrow projects, ceremonies, and activities can be carried out on a chapter basis. It should be possible for each chapter to train ceremony teams to conduct Ordeals and Ordeal ceremonies as well as the Brotherhood membership ceremony. Vigil Honor ceremonies should be left for the lodge to conduct. Service projects should be cleared with the district camping committee. The year-round program of the chapter must be coordinated with that of the district and lodge.

When larger lodges operate on an effective chapter basis, each chapter becomes much like a small lodge. In this way, more youths are given an opportunity to develop and demonstrate leadership and to share in the responsibility of giving cheerful service to their units and districts. Under a well-established chapter plan, the entire lodge seldom gets together. Each chapter plans its program to carry out the objectives of the lodge. Such events as calling-out ceremonies, Ordeals, Ordeal ceremonies, and Brotherhood ceremonies can be conducted easily by chapter personnel. Service projects and social events lend themselves better to smaller groups than to the entire lodge. Some chapters develop dance teams and hold banquets, campouts, and other Order of the Arrow activities. When the entire lodge gets together for a fall reunion, an annual meeting, or a weekend conclave, the event takes on the atmosphere of a fellowship conference. This event should feature fun, fellowship, inspiration, and training.

## **THE LODGE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The leadership team consists of the following: lodge adviser, lodge chief, lodge officers including vice chiefs, lodge staff adviser, lodge officers and council Scout executive. In addition, and as an adjunct to the leadership team are the following: committee chairmen and advisers.

The lodge leadership team sets the course for the lodge and manages big picture items. Committee chairmen are appointed annually by the lodge chief with approval from the lodge adviser. The lodge adviser appoints the advisers with approval of the council Scout



executive. The entire lodge leadership team should be involved in the process. Committee chairmen and adviser positions provide valuable skill training for newer leaders. The youth and adults in these roles should not just be “warm bodies.” They should be matched to the position. A Scout who is involved in the drama program at school probably wouldn’t be interested in serving as the website chairman, but may be interested in working on ceremonies. An adult who is a carpenter may be more interested in serving as the service adviser than kitchen adviser. While managing teams they enjoy, Arrowmen will begin to develop their leadership skills, and their latent talents will be easier to recognize by possible mentors.

Members of the lodge leadership team, on the other hand, usually already have some of the skills necessary. They may just need some honing. They have the desire to make a difference in the lodge; otherwise they would not have run for office. They are willing to put in the time commitment and serve as a bigger part of the whole. Members need to be team decision makers and interact with others well. Most importantly, they must set the example. And what is meant by “set the example” is to be a servant.

Granted, this is the ideal state of the lodge leadership team. Members will be at various stages of leadership development, which is why setting expectations, offering training opportunities, and forming mentor relationships is so important. Sometimes, however, lodge leaders will make mistakes and set a bad example. If you have time, take a few minutes to do some brainstorming with the participants. We all make errors in judgment. How does your lodge manage situations where officers or advisers do not set the proper example? What can you do to better manage these situations?

The leadership team:

- Attends all meetings and functions of the lodge
- Always wears the Scout uniform properly
- Sets the example
- Is prepared for meetings and presentations
- Gains consensus of the leadership team on all lodge decisions and goals
- Follows the responsibilities of the job

Lodge officers serve a one-year term. Suggested terms of office are a calendar year, January 1 through December 31, or a school year, September 1 through August 31. Officers may be re-elected. It is recommended that lodge officers hold no other office in the Order of the Arrow. This practice will allow the officer to devote his entire effort to the successful performance of the duties and responsibilities of his office. Lodge chiefs who are elected to be chief of a section, while in office, must resign the lodge chief position within 30 days after election as section chief. All members of the lodge younger than 21 are eligible to vote.

## LODGE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive committee of the lodge—a key group—consists of the youths serving as lodge officers (including the past lodge chief), lodge operating committee chairmen and their advisers, the staff adviser, the lodge adviser, and the Scout executive. If the lodge membership feels that this group is not representative, a lodge may select two or three members at large—American Indian lore or public relations experts, for instance—to serve on the committee. If there are chapters in the lodge, the chapter chiefs and chapter advisers are members of the lodge executive committee. Any lodge member is welcome to attend executive committee meetings as an observer.

The executive committee is the steering committee of the lodge. It faces the problems, studies possible solutions, and then, through the lodge or chapter committee organization, acts. It carries on the business of the lodge, coordinating the work being done by officers and operating committees. Regardless of any executive committee decision or undertaking, the lodge must operate within the policies established by the national Order of the Arrow committee. The lodge chief is chairman and presides over meetings. He is expected to prepare agendas and share them with the lodge and staff adviser before sending them to committee members with the meeting announcement. A definite schedule for executive committee meetings should be established before the start of the lodge year. Meetings held monthly or every two months are the customary pattern. Each committee member should have a schedule of the meetings. It is understood that the lodge chief or Scout executive is privileged to call a special meeting of the committee if the need arises.

The executive committee is a relatively small group and thus is able to handle the business of the lodge in a quick and efficient manner. The entire membership of the lodge should, however, hear a report of all major decisions and projects being planned.

Members of the executive committee who are staff members at Boy Scout resident camp may serve on the Order of the Arrow camp council to handle the Order's business during camp. When not in camp, the lodge chief appoints an Arrowman to serve as camp chief.

## KEY 3 LEADERSHIP

The working relationship of the chief, volunteer adviser, and professional staff adviser is commonly referred to as the "Key 3." Key 3 leadership is common to all levels of the Order: chapter, lodge, section, region, and national. The Key 3 should meet regularly at each level to establish goals, to evaluate progress toward those goals, and to ensure that the lodge is effectively meeting the needs of the council and the units therein.

## OPERATING COMMITTEES

Some of the basic lodge operating committees can include any or all of the following depending on the size of the lodge:



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- Activities committee.
- Camping promotion committee.
- Ceremonial committee.
- Communications committee.
- Finance committee.
- Inductions committee.
- Leadership development committee.
- Membership committee.
- Service committee.
- Unit elections committee.
- Ad hoc committees.

Further discussion of these and other potential committees can again be explored in [LA-120 "Lodge Positions and their Roles and Responsibilities"](#).

### CONCLUSION

This session covered the Mission, Vision and Purpose the Order of the Arrow and how the lodge fits in to the BSA and OA organizations. It also covered the organizational structure of the BSA, OA and a typical lodge. The Order of the Arrow is an important organization, Nationally, Regionally and within the council to help carry out the Mission and Vision of the BSA, advising young men to become leaders who are guided by the Scout Oath and Law.