



Guide to Lodge Alumni Groups

The best practices and outline for forming an alumni group for lodges.



SCOUTING AMERICA™

ORDER OF THE ARROW



Scouts and their parents expect all Scouting America activities to be conducted safely. To ensure the safety of participants, Scouting America expects leaders to use the four points of **SAFE** when delivering the Scouting program.

SUPERVISION

Youth are supervised by qualified and trustworthy adults who set the example for safety.

- Accepting responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth under their care.
- Ensuring that adults are adequately trained, experienced, and skilled to lead the activity, including the ability to prevent and respond to likely problems and potential emergencies.
- Knowing and delivering the program of Scouting America with integrity.
- Using qualified instructors, guides, or safety personnel as needed to provide additional guidance.
- Maintaining engagement with participants during activities to ensure compliance with established rules and procedures.

ASSESSMENT

Activities are assessed for risks during planning. Leaders have reviewed applicable program guidance or standards and have verified the activity is not prohibited. Risk avoidance or mitigation is incorporated into the activity.

- Predetermining what guidance and standards are typically applied to the activity, including those specific to the Scouting America program.
- Planning for safe travel to and from the activity site.
- Validating the activity is age appropriate for the Scouting America program level.
- Determining whether the unit has sufficient training, resources, and experience to meet the identified standards, and if not, modifying the activity accordingly.
- Developing contingency plans for changes in weather and environment and arranging for communication with participants, parents, and emergency services.

FITNESS AND SKILL

Participants' Annual Health and Medical Records are reviewed, and leaders have confirmed that prerequisite fitness and skill levels exist for participants to take part safely.

- Confirming the activity is right for the age, maturity, and physical abilities of participants.
- Considering as risk factors temporary or chronic health conditions of participants.
- Validating minimum skill requirements identified during planning and ensuring participants stay within the limits of their abilities.
- Providing training to participants with limited skills and assessing their skills before they attempt more advanced skills.

EQUIPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

Safe and appropriately sized equipment, courses, camps, campsites, trails, or playing fields are used properly. Leaders periodically check gear use and the environment for changing conditions that could affect safety.

- Confirming participants' clothing is appropriate for expected temperatures, sun exposure, weather events, and terrain.
- Providing equipment that is appropriately sized for participants, is in good repair, and is used properly.
- Ensuring personal and group safety equipment is available, properly fitted, and used consistently and in accordance with training.
- Reviewing the activity area for suitability during planning and immediately before use, and monitoring the area during the activity through supervision.
- Adjusting the activity for changing conditions or ending it if safety cannot be maintained.

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Introduction

The Order of the Arrow (OA) has been and will continue to be an organization within Scouting that forms lasting connections between its members. These bonds are rooted deeply in each Scout's memories and values. The [OA Alliance](#) is the Order of the Arrow's alumni organization, seeking to re-engage and keep engaged all Arrowmen as active members of their local Scouting council and lodge.

We believe that Scouting can be for anyone at any point in their life. We understand that as youth age out as participants of Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouts, Explorers and the Order of the Arrow, there may be competing priorities in their lives. The OA Alliance seeks to stay connected with former members when they are ready to re-engage with the program at a level they are comfortable with, whether that be with a local unit, council or lodge. To maintain this connection, we serve as a communication path to keep them up to date with the program, highlight our member's achievements, and stay connected.

Facilitating a connection or reconnection to Scouting for former OA members is the priority for OA Alliance to maintain skilled and knowledgeable people in the Scouting program. Reconnecting OA alumni is an excellent way to bring members back into the program whose primary tie to Scouting is their OA experience. Through their lodge's training, section's conclaves and chapter's fellowships, we have a talented pool of leaders that are home-grown, so we want them back to mentor the next generation of leaders. These enthusiastic alumni can become the leaders of a lodge alumni group and advisers within our local lodges.

Many Scouting alumni do not re-engage with the program until they have children of their own active in the program years, if not decades later. The goal is to close this gap and empower these individuals to re-register in both the Scouting program and an OA lodge. The OA Alliance is positioned to help lodges create a local alumni group, that is, a local alumni association, and we can foster a place for these individuals to have a connection to the organization. This connection will serve as a vibrant, informative hub until they officially re-register with Scouting America.

How to Use This Guide

The OA Alliance has assembled some best practices for forming an alumni group. We are encouraging lodges to identify those alumni in your area who are looking to reconnect with Scouting and the OA through their shared experience being a member of the Order of the Arrow as a youth. The benefit to creating a lodge alumni group is that it creates a conduit to local alumni that your lodge can use to bring these talented individuals back to the circle and strengthen your membership.



Chapter 1: Creating a Lodge Alumni Group

The OA Alliance is the National Order of the Arrow's alumni group for those current and previously registered Arrowmen who are at least 21 years old. One of the OA Alliance's functions is to assist local lodges in forming an alumni group. The goals of a lodge alumni group should be connecting members back to the program through outreach and consistent communication to their alumni group and potential new members.

1. Identify

Determine the lodge alumni group focus (e.g., *Is there enough membership base if the alumni group is only focused on a former lodge that is no longer operating?*)

You want to ensure there are enough prospective members to sustain the group. For this reason, we suggest that a lodge alumni group should include all legacy merged lodges in its council's history. Create a space for members to feel welcomed back and included. Target legacy lodge members, alumni of the current lodge and chapters, camp staff, etc. This will provide a larger pool of potential members.

OA lodges have typically maintained more accurate records in [OA LodgeMaster](#) than Scouting America councils or camps. Starting outreach to potential members utilizing [OA LodgeMaster](#) as the baseline will be beneficial.

2. Engage

Reach out to potential members and bring them back to the circle.

Find ways to engage alumni with low barriers to entry both in and outside of Scouting. This could be an afternoon at a ballpark, a day-registration option at a lodge fellowship event or an informal social gathering such as a happy hour or picnic. Events should not be a fundraiser; the first exposure back should not be a financial solicitation or being recruited into a position of responsibility. Create an informative and welcoming event, subsequently allowing attendees a space to learn programmatic updates and how they can re-engage.

Moreover, utilize a pre-existing event such as the annual lodge banquet, service project or camp anniversary event. Coordinate with your lodge staff adviser and Scout executive on how your council handles attendance guidelines for those attendees that are not currently registered with Scouting America. This allows alumni to connect with current members and feel a part of the program.

If the council has an established alumni or National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) committee, ask to partner with their existing events or co-host them. Utilize their eNewsletter and social media content and incorporate it into lodge alumni communication.

3. Retain

Communication is the key to retention; providing consistent messaging through multiple contact touch-points is important to growing an audience. This provides a simple way to inform alumni, develop a network and curate opportunities for service to the organization.

- Send an eNewsletter on a regular basis. Rebrand and retool content from the [OA Alliance Spark eNewsletter](#) and chapter, lodge, council, section or national eNewsletters. Highlight achievements by the lodge and lodge leadership. Spotlight alumni with an interview about their Scouting story or their profession.
- Maintain a social media presence. This could be creating alumni-specific social media accounts, or posting alumni content on your lodge's main social media accounts. Highlighting the group's accomplishments can be an engaging way to showcase how the OA's impact can last.
- Provide leadership and organizational opportunities for members in the alumni group. People want to be brought onto the team and it is a great way for them to become re-registered in Scouting America and dues paying members of your lodge.



Chapter 2: Best Practices for Successful Alumni Groups

Organizational Structure

The alumni group should be structured to best fit how your local lodge and council operates. Working as a committee underneath the lodge executive committee may be the best fit so that you are directly connected to the lodge's operations to serve as a conduit to your alumni membership. Some councils have very strong alumni committees, including an active NESA committee, so it might make more sense to work as a sub-committee under that council committee. Either way, having connectivity to both groups will prove helpful for raising engagement.

Potential Roles & Responsibilities

The roles outlined here can be used as a framework as your lodge's alumni group begins to form. These roles are core to the alumni group structure and should be prioritized, but by no means are they absolutely essential before starting to lay the groundwork of your alumni efforts. These efforts may be led by someone who is passionate and wants to support the group's launch or may be significant committees with sub-teams. There may be teams and people already doing this work in your council; identify opportunities to cross-leverage existing volunteers, newsletter articles and social media posts in the communications function or your council or lodge's registrar for membership help.

Alumni Committee Chair

- Reports to the lodge adviser / council alumni chair for all aspects of the lodge alumni group.
- Serve as an advocate and spokesperson for the lodge alumni group and the OA Alliance.
- Recruit volunteers to fill roles on the lodge alumni subcommittees.

Communications Chair

- Establish a lodge alumni web presence through social media, lodge or council web pages and other channels.

- The website presence should be utilized to promote and offer registration for your events, give valuable news and information and provide a link to the oa-scouting.org/alliance website.
- Keep members informed of and interested in lodge activities. Gather information about Scouting and OA news, both locally and nationally and share it with alumni.
- Survey lodge alumni periodically to determine needs and desires as they relate to alumni programming.

Membership Chair

- Promote that Scouting and the OA are looking for its alumni by developing a grassroots outreach strategy that could include things such as profiling alumni in digital media, networking through local organizations, talking to friends, sharing content on social media and paid advertising.
- Engage organizations that are likely to have Scouting alumni in their ranks in your search. This could involve approaching civic organizations, local companies and professional associations, especially those that are Scouting chartering organizations.
- Stay in close contact with the council and lodge to ensure that opportunities to participate in activities (often an incentive to sign up) are effectively communicated and synchronized with the overall strategy.

Program Chair

- In coordination with the council committee and lodge executive committee, be involved in developing a lodge alumni component for all activities where alumni programming would be relevant.
- Develop alumni events at local camps and attractions. Partner with council-sponsored sporting teams' Scout nights or family focused events.
- Plan a calendar of low-commitment events for lodge alumni members to attend and network with one another.



Chapter 3: Alumni Group Best Practices

The following ideas are some of the recommended best practices for alumni groups to consider. When taking these ideas into account, it is important to consider which would be effective and impactful to your lodge's unique situation. While these best practices provide a solid foundation, the true success of your engagement and support initiatives lie in your ability to customize them to suit your lodge's alumni.

- Host informational sessions to recruit alumni at your council events. Council merit badge academies/colleges, Scouting universities, council dinners, or community membership events are ideal opportunities to promote your alumni group.
- Provide opportunities for alumni to give back to the program once they are ready. While this should never be the first point of exposure for new alumni, fundraising can be a key component to alumni groups.
 - Fund-raise for scholarships for youth to attend camp, OA High Adventure programs, section conclaves, NOACs, or jamborees.
 - Special issue patch sales.
 - Recognize a long-standing OA member with a [Legacy Fellowship](#).
- Recap events through your eNewsletter and social media with pictures and quotes from those in attendance. Highlight the fun, energy and camaraderie that the group experienced so that it attracts potential members. Some people simply want exposure to the experience before they join.
- Assist interested members in rejoining Scouting. Utilize Scouting America and OA Alliance resources to guide members through the process.
 - [BeAScout.org](#) unit finder helps an individual find a local unit to join in their area.
 - [Lodge Locator](#) provides the website and contact information for each lodge and its leaders across the country.
 - [Registration Roadmap](#) outlines how to navigate through the process of re-registering with Scouting America. This resource is available in both English and Spanish.
- Recognize those who recruit members back into the program as alumni or re-register in the Scouting America program. This could be done by recognizing recruiters at either an annual alumni event or lodge banquet with a recruiter lodge flap or patch, lodge specific recognition item or a thank you certificate.

- Incorporate an alumni program into an existing chapter, lodge or section event. This will create a lower barrier to entry. This event could be an annual lodge banquet, section conclave or chapter fellowship (i.e., an event which alumni may have attended and/or are familiar with). Inviting alumni to return will involve them into the conversation and find ways they can and want to be involved.
- It is important to be mindful of what groups are asking of alumni. Groups should encourage alumni to re-engage with the program first and later (once engaged) ask about volunteering or donating on their own terms.
- Groups can make alumni-specific merchandise available in their trading post, but this should not be a primary way of fundraising from alumni members.
- When alumni are ready to volunteer with the chapter, lodge, section or other group, it does not need to be a primary adviser-type role. Recent alumni can take on a young adviser role as more of a mentor to assist the primary adviser for the youth. Additionally, they can take auxiliary positions that may not have a young person counterpart, like in the kitchen, registration or medical.

The goal is to reconnect with lodge alumni and engage them locally. The best practices and examples in this guide can assist the lodge in creating a strong alumni group that consistently communicates, provides a welcoming environment that keeps members involved, and eventually re-registers more individuals back into the program.

We look forward to your lodge utilizing this guide to help re-engage alumni. For assistance with creating an alumni group or additional questions or to share a successful experience engaging and reactivating lodge alumni please reach out to the OA Alliance at alliance@oa-scouting.org or visit our webpage at oa-scouting.org/alliance.



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