



OPERATIONS UPDATE

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The Order of the Arrow has updated its mission and purpose for the 21st century. The following provides the interpretation and explanation.

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.

A mission statement is a brief sentence that defines an organization's core objective, its essence. It answers the question, "Why do we exist?" using clear, concise words.

The OA's mission statement is a declaration of our key beliefs and intentions as a Brotherhood. It affirms: a commitment to achieve our purpose, our position within the BSA, and the youth led – adult supported partnership that is the hallmark of the Order's success.

Every member should become familiar with the Order of the Arrow's mission statement.

...mission...

The dictionary defines *mission* as "a sending out or being sent out with authority to perform a special service; an errand." As Arrowmen, we are familiar with this concept. The legend, described by Meteu in the Ordeal ceremony, explains how Chingachgook and Uncas traveled to neighboring villages to warn their nation of an impending "dire and dreadful danger." Their trip was a *mission*.

Note that the definition of mission includes the word "authority." A mission is sanctioned and approved. The Order of the Arrow's authority comes from the organization we serve, the Boy Scouts of America.

...an integral part of the Boy Scouts of America...

Integral (pronounced in-'tə-grəl) means "necessary for completeness, essential, whole, complete, made up of parts forming a whole." The word is used to point out that the Order is an essential, integrated program within the broader Scouting program, not a separate entity.

...through positive youth leadership...

The word *positive* is an adjective which means "making a definite contribution; constructive" to further describe the leadership qualities expected of Arrowmen. Leadership is about action, about directing, guiding and supporting others. As a result, *positive youth leadership* implies "constructive action" by young people.

Like Scouting itself, the Order is designed to benefit youth. Through *youth leadership*, members under the age of 21 learn by doing, planning and conducting OA program at the chapter, lodge, section, region and national levels. The officers and youth committee chairmen lead meetings, run activities and manage OA finances. Only those members under age 21 may hold office or vote.

...under the guidance of selected capable adults.

Adults in the Order serve in advisory capacities. Typically, adults serve as advisers to each youth position. An adviser's role often includes training, counseling, coaching and mentoring youth. Not every adult can be chosen to be an OA adviser. Those appointed usually have noteworthy competencies and an ability to relate well with people, especially young people.

The concept of youth led – adult supported partnerships took root during the very first days of the Order. Working with their advisers, young members inducted into the Brotherhood in the first ceremonies, in the summer of 1915, began accepting leadership roles that fall: forming committees to maintain membership records, drafting lodge rules and reworking ceremonies.

With each passing decade, the Order's commitment to youth led – adult supported partnerships has grown and evolved. Today, that partnership is more prominent and stronger than ever.

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 Order of the Arrow's four-part purpose explains our intentions and goals. Each member is expected to understand and be able to explain what the OA is all about. The following paragraphs amplify and expand on the above purpose statement.

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

As Scouting's National Honor Society, the Order of the Arrow is in some ways similar to high school national honor societies that recognize outstanding students based on scholarship, leadership, service and character. Selection to membership in the OA is unique, however, because it is controlled by non-member peers rather than members.

...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...

This first component of the Order of the Arrow's purpose has been an important concept from the beginning of the Order. It relates directly to the BSA's mission 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." By recognizing those Scouts who strive to live their lives according to the Scout Oath and Law with membership (and an OA sash, distinctive pocket flap, membership card and handbook), the OA hopes to motivate other Scouts to act in ways that cause them to be selected for OA membership as well.

...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...

Camping is one of the primary methods used in Scouting to help young men grow to maturity; to build self-confidence and a sense of responsibility; and develop qualities of trustworthiness and teamwork. It is in the outdoors that young men learn most about the natural world and the responsibility to care for it; stretch themselves mentally and physically against outdoor challenges; and learn to lead, work cooperatively and care for others in a setting that is both healthy and demanding. Confidence in one's skills and abilities comes through testing, and Scouting provides ample opportunities for that testing – from unit camps to summer camps, from camporees to Jamborees, and from local outings to nationally sponsored high adventure programs. An Arrowman understands that his first responsibility is to his unit, and to helping ensure that the outdoor components of his unit's program are strong.

Synonyms for *promote* include “improve” and “develop,” so the OA's involvement is more than the promotion of weekend and summer camp to units – much more. The OA is involved in Scouting's camping and high adventure programming at many levels.

The word *responsible* conveys our commitment to health and safety, and safe practices in all aspects of our outdoor programs and activities.

Environmental has to do with one's surroundings, conditions and circumstances, including all those that influence life on earth. *Stewardship* relates to one's moral responsibility for the care or administration of a group's resources. *Environmental stewardship* then, is about one's moral responsibility to care for one's surroundings. The OA's love of nature is well documented in our ceremonies and traditions. Our Order's responsibility as stewards of the earth's resources is a logical extension of that love, whether local or national in scope.

...Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our Brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation...

A direct benefit of OA membership is its ability to impart leadership skills to members and provide opportunities to apply and practice those skills. This is accomplished in a myriad of ways, including formal training at many levels and through the example of experienced leaders themselves. The most important methodology is through the careful and focused coaching and mentoring of youth leaders by talented and committed adult advisers. From the chapter to the lodge, section, region and national levels, the OA places young men in leadership roles and allows them to lead and to learn from their mistakes. Successful advisers mentor young OA leaders to succeed, improving their leadership abilities while carrying out assignments for the OA, Scouting or their community.

Inclusion of the word *willing*, along with the words *character*, *spirit* and *ability* as descriptors of leadership, is a direct, though subtle, reference to the line in *The Legend*: “And in every village some were found who were quite willing to spend themselves in others' service.” One's spirit has a great deal to do with one's will. Taken together, commitment (*willingness/spirit*), *character* (moral constitution), and competence (*skill/ability*) represent the essence of leadership.

To *advance* means “move forward” or “improve.” This section of the purpose refers to an Arrowman's first responsibility – his unit – as well as to the Order of the Arrow itself, The Brotherhood of Cheerful Service, Wimachtendienk, Wingolaukik, Witahemui, and the Boy Scouts of America to whom an Arrowman's service is directed.

...Crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.

This statement has been a part of the OA's purpose from the beginning. Learning and living Scouting's values are of little worth unless those values become a part of the personality and fiber of our members. When Arrowmen strive to live lives of Brotherhood, Cheerfulness and Service, every day in every way, they are more likely to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives and more likely to contribute to the betterment of our society.

Charity, helpfulness and principled living are significant, timeless traits – identified and nurtured by our country's Founding Fathers, sustained during our nation's expansion westward, tempered by great national and world conflicts, invigorated by industrial and technological revolutions, honed by social movements - and remain a significant and important part of our national fabric and the American people to this day.

The Order of the Arrow, as a component of the BSA, recognizes all of this and strives to help ensure its members set the example of citizenship at its finest.