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Venturing Camping Guide for Councils

A camping experience for Venturers can be fun and exciting, and we all know that teenagers like fun and excitement. If your council's Venturing camping experience is done correctly, it can be the highlight of a young person's year. **However, when planning a Venturing camping experience, you must not think in terms of Boy Scout camping.**

"...you must not think in terms of Boy Scout camping."

Venturing camping can include high-adventure activities such as scuba diving, water skiing, rock climbing/rappelling, caving, horseback riding, and more, but can also include many avocation/hobby interests such as photography, computer science, forestry, first aid, line dancing, beach volleyball, or even just lying around a beach listening to music. Some councils even build a camping experience around the Bronze, Ranger, and Quest awards. The Blue Ridge Mountains Council in Roanoke, Virginia, calls one of its teenage camping opportunities *Venturing Ranger Quest*.

"Venturing camping should not be just an extension of a Boy Scout resident camp."

Venturing camping should not be just an extension of a Boy Scout resident camp. Venturers need a more teenage-oriented experience. Your activities and/or camping committees should determine the best type of camp experience or experiences for your council's Venturers. Having Venturers involved in this planning process is a must.

Important differences in outdoor programs for Venturers include:

- Venturing outdoor activities must include experiences beyond those available to younger boys.
- Consideration of coed involvement.
- Venturers should have a voice in choosing and planning activities.
- Venturing outdoor programs should be patterned after types of activities that adults and teenagers would do.
- The camp experience should not be over-structured. Let Venturers choose what they wish to participate in.

Another approach: Since some Boy Scout troops have Venture patrols and Varsity teams for older Boy Scouts who are teenagers, why not invite them to participate in your Venturing camp? This is also logical since many Venturing crews work in conjunction with a Boy Scout troop.

There are two basic types of Venturing camping experiences:

1. Expeditions such as backpacking treks, canoe trips, scuba diving trips, bicycle tours, sea cruises, snowmobile treks, and even national and international tours.

2. Encampments that are stationary camps such as the council camp, military installations, parks, or even a special Venturing base.

Expeditions or encampments may be long-term or short-term and can be done anytime during the year. They can even be done as a theme connected with a holiday such as Halloween. They can be done close to home or at great distances such as a trip to the Caribbean. Only imagination, leadership, facilities, and finances limit what you choose to do.

Why Do a Venturing Camp?

Venturing continues to be the fastest growing program of the BSA. Retention of Venturers combined with growth means greater growth. Good program causes retention. This gives us reason 1 to do Venturing camping.

Reason 1: A good camping experience causes Venturers to stay in a crew longer, resulting in a longer opportunity to accomplish our mission.

For many councils, their camp is their largest asset, yet it goes unused or lightly used for much of the year. Providing a camping experience for Venturers more effectively utilizes our assets.

Reason 2: We use our council assets more effectively by providing a Venturing camping experience.

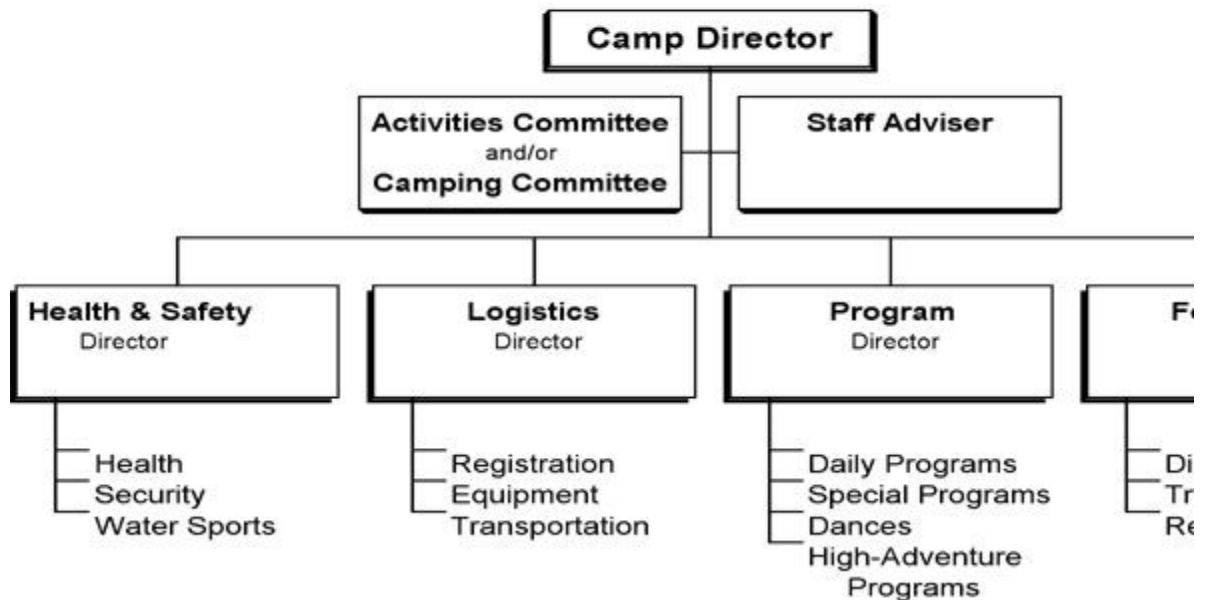
Considerations in Planning

1. **Physical Facilities.** Of course the main consideration in choosing the right facility for your Venturing camp is what the program is going to be. As an example, you could do a high-adventure experience in a national park where you do a variety of activities such as horseback riding, cave exploring, backpacking, rock climbing, and canoeing. Or you could go to a large indoor sports arena where you could do sports competitions, dances, clinics, scavenger hunts, and crafts. However, council camps offer many opportunities to provide a quality Venturing camp too. Here are a few questions you might ask when considering facilities:
 - o Are there adequate sleeping facilities to be able to separate male and female Venturers?
 - o Are there adequate bathroom and shower facilities for male and female Venturers and male and female adults?
 - o Would the schedule of the Venturing camp conflict with or coincide with the Boy Scout resident camp? Venturers don't want to go do Boy Scout program or be there when Boy Scout resident camp is in session. If you are doing the Venturing camp at a different time than Boy Scout resident camp such as during spring break or at a different location such as at a military installation or other camp property, this won't be a problem.
 - o Does the schedule you choose match all school district and/or college schedules?
 - o Does the facility have adequate resources to do a variety of activities?
 - o Are additional releases, permits, or parental permission slips needed for the facility?
 - o How far is the facility from the crews? Will we require each crew to arrange for its own transportation or will the council provide the transportation?
 - o Will the facility meet the special needs required for a specialty camp such as open areas or athletic fields to do a sports camp or good enough water for diving for a scuba or high-adventure camp?

- Is there room for dances?
2. **Leadership.** One of the nice things about a Venturing camp is that it doesn't require as much staff as a resident Boy Scout camp; however, you need the right kind of staff. As an example, if you are doing a sports-oriented (Quest) Venturing camp, you probably will need staff who know about and have expertise in different sports or facets of the Quest Award. Again, don't think in terms of Boy Scout resident camp staffs. For a Venturing camp, your staff might even be unpaid. You might even consider having the staff pay a discounted staff fee like at the jamboree. You could have a youth staff as well as an adult staff. You could have youth chairmen matched with adult chairmen. Your Teen Leaders' Council could provide leadership. Here are a few questions you might ask considering leadership:
- Do you have strong enough activities and camping committees and TLC to provide quality leadership?
 - Do you have enough consultants to do special programs such as scuba diving, water skiing, horseback riding, or other exciting programs?
 - If done at a council camp, do you have adequate staff to run the dining hall, waterfront, and other areas of camp you might choose to open?
 - Are you going to require crews to provide their own adult leadership or are you going to provide a provisional camp? If provisional, do you have enough male and female adults?
3. **Administration and Procedures.** It has already been mentioned that the planning and running of a Venturing camp should be the responsibility of the activities and/or camping committees. However, there are still some questions you might ask related to how you will plan and run the camp:
- What will be your staff structure? Committee?
 - Will you assign a professional staff member as director to work with an adult and/or youth chairman? Or, will the camp be entirely volunteer run?
 - Will you have to hire any staff such as a lifeguard?
 - Will there be a dress code?
 - Will there be a code of conduct?
 - Health forms? Parental permission forms? Tour permits?
 - Certificate of insurance of non-owned facility?
 - Contract, permission, or coordination with non-owned facility?
 - Do you know where all functions will be located? Registration? Headquarters? Trading post? Dining? Recreation? Dances? Equipment?
 - Activity insurance?
 - Accounting procedures set up?

Venturing Camp

Draft Organizational Chart



4. **Promotion (Marketing).** Earlier in this publication, it was mentioned that the program you provide for Venturing camping should be different than the program that you would provide for Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts. The promotion and marketing of your Venturing camp or camping experience is the same way. Why? Because Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturers are different markets. Each group has many differences and desires. Your Venturing marketing efforts should be planned and implemented with teenagers and their Advisors in mind. Some considerations are as follows:

- One of the strengths of Venturing is that it is coed. Promote this aspect.
- Your camping activities should not look Boy Scout-level, they need to be teenage-level.
- Variety is another strength of Venturing. If you provide a variety or selection of activities, promote this aspect.
- Friends are a very important element of teenage development. Have your pictures and text reflect how Venturers can enjoy the camping experience with their friends.
- Independence demonstrated by teenagers has always been notable. Highlight the fact that participants in your program may personally choose what they plan to participate in.
- In your pictures and text, highlight the social activities you plan such as dances.
- Promote the fact that you have different levels or degrees of participation. You might have some Venturers who have never rappelled and would like to learn some basics while you might have some Venturers who have a high level of expertise in rappelling and would like a more ambitious experience.
- Give your camp an exciting or unique name.
- Make your promotional flyers colorful if your budget allows. At least put pictures in it.
- Do a personalized direct mailing to all registered Venturers if your budget allows.
- Design and use crew promotion kits. Remember that the crew has Venturing officers that you should target.
- Use your council TLC as a promotional instrument. Youth-to-youth promotion is much better than adult-to-youth promotion. Also, teenagers are skeptical of any hard sell,

especially one made by an adult.

Last Updated: 31 DEC 2004

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