

New Narragansett Council Service Delivery Structure Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Why is the Council's structure changing?

The change is being made to increase the emphasis on Scouting at the community level and to focus attention on providing service and support to local units in those communities. It is a long overdue response to dramatic changes in the world around us and an almost forty year decline in participation in Scouting programs. Our current structure or "business model" is more than 50 years old and was designed around the need to communicate and provide information when about the only tools available were telephones and mail. It was also built at a time when people were much less busy than they are today. Today's volunteers are much more task oriented as opposed to serving on committees.

Is this a result of a directive from the National Council?

No. However, the National Council has made huge changes in its own structure and operations over the last few years to try and become more nimble and less bureaucratic. They have just completed a new five year plan that will continue this process as well as raise Scouting's profile in communities across America. The National Council is also encouraging local councils to innovate and experiment with new programs and business models.

Are other councils moving to a similar structure?

There is no formal system to collect this kind of information. However, from informal contacts across the country we do know that many councils are moving to alternative structures and delivery systems. These changes reflect unique characteristics and needs of those councils as well as a realization that the "one size fits all model" is no longer valid. The strong "community" identification in our area lends itself to this structure. Further, the Narragansett Council has always been recognized as a leader and innovator. *Boy's Life*, the CIT Corps, and "Tot'n Chip" began here. The Rhode Island Boy Scouts was formed here in 1910 and operated independently of the Boy Scouts of America until 1917. Camp Yawgoog, one of the most popular Scout camps in the country, has a 95 year history of program innovation.

How were Service Area boundaries and the communities in those service areas identified?

A group of volunteers handled this task. They started by using the county lines within the Council and then made a few adjustments based on their experience. Communities were identified in the same manner using governmental lines as a base. It is important to remember three key points: (1) The Service Area boundaries are not intended to be "walls", they are just administrative sub-divisions. For example, training teams will go where needed; units are free to choose to participate in activities in any part of the Council; or leaders can attend roundtable wherever it's most convenient – near work or home. (2) The communities lines are not set in stone, they are meant to be a starting point. If experience tells us we should make adjustments, we will do so. (3) Although the Service Area boundaries correspond to the former district lines, this happened by coincidence – the real focus here is on program in local communities not some arbitrary division of the Council territory.

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What about our “district” identity?

When families decide to participate in our programs they are joining “Scouting” in a local Pack, Troop, or Crew not a particular council or district. For instance, when parents use the “BeAScout” website to find a Scout unit, the units are identified by community. Scouting is a well recognized “brand” that people associate with things like values, leadership, service, and outdoor adventure – this is the identity that’s important to Scouting. While activities may vary from unit to unit, families expect – and should receive – a certain level of consistency and quality regardless of the unit they join.

What happens if my current district or council position no longer exists in the new structure?

Under this new structure, with around twenty communities, we will actually need more people rather than less so there will be opportunities to serve. Almost all of the positions will be directly related to unit support and service in local communities.

How will we recognize volunteers with awards such as the old District Award of Merit?

Saluting the efforts of our volunteers – and thanking them for their service to youth – is an important part of Scouting. We will continue to recognize volunteers with the Silver Beaver, Awards of Merit and other appropriate awards based on current criteria for those awards. The Service Area Vice Presidents will work with key volunteers in the service areas to make those selections. Recognition will be made at an appropriate event. The Silver Beaver selection will continue as it has in the past with the selection made by a committee composed of representatives from the Service Areas.

How will the “Community Commissioners” job differ from that of the former Assistant District Commissioner?

It will be much the same; however, the focus will be on a particular community. The Community Commissioner will be responsible for the overall health of Scouting in the community including the consistency and quality of the program delivered by units. This will include the recruitment and assignment of unit commissioners based on the needs of each unit. He will also coordinate delivery of services such as training, advancement, and camp promotion.

What will the meeting pattern look like in the new Service Areas?

The Commissioner Staff will continue to meet as before, however these meetings will now include the other members of the “service” team including training, advancement, camp promotion, etc. These meetings would be chaired by the Commissioner with the Service Area VP attending periodically. The agenda will revolve around the health of units in the various communities as well as action plans to address unit needs. The sales team will be more task oriented and meet as needed.

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Will there still be Roundtables that I can attend?

Yes. There will be monthly roundtable programs held throughout the Council. The number of roundtables and locations will be determined based on the needs and wishes of unit leaders. These will be coordinated by the Council Roundtable Commissioner so that an individual can attend any roundtable and receive consistent information. The information presented at Roundtables will also be available through the web-site for the convenience of adult leaders.

What sort of interaction will there be between the “Sales” and “Service” groups in the new organization?

The Service Area Vice President, Service Area Commissioner and Staff Team will be in regular contact with one another and will be primarily responsible for any coordination that is necessary between the sales and service functions.

There most likely will not be too much overlap since these are very different functions. And within the sales group itself there are large differences in functions. As noted above the sales group will not need to meet regularly. Clearly there will be some need for coordination – for example we’ll need to manage the transition of new units from sales to service as well as take advantage of unit leader contacts to assist in school relationships. There will naturally be some coordination since many unit leaders and other volunteers are in leadership positions with other community organizations.

How will activities such as Camporees and Klondike Derbies be handled under this new structure?

A new Council Activities Committee, composed of many of the individuals who are currently running Camporees, Klondikes, and other events will be responsible for planning an annual calendar of events based on needs and interests of our units. They will continue to be held at our camps and other appropriate facilities throughout the Council. Many of the same people running activities now will continue to do so under the auspices of the Activities Committee. The committee will coordinate these events to avoid duplication and provide a consistent level of quality. As noted above, this group will present a year round calendar of activities open to all. Members of the Activities Committee will be available to provide basic information about these events at Service Area meetings with complete details provided on the web-site.

Units will be able to choose which activities best fit their schedule and the interest of the youth. The Activities Committee will work to provide a variety of choices in different geographic locations throughout the Council. The initial calendar will be based on the current level of participation in various activities – just because there are three service areas it doesn’t necessarily mean there will be three of each activity – there may be more or less again depending on the needs and interests of our units.

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In reviewing the new organization chart I noticed that there is a Cub Scout Outdoor Program Coordinator but not one for Boy Scouts? I also see that Advancement and Eagle Board of Review are now separate functions? I also see that the OA is now part of the service team? Finally, what about Venturing?

Good questions! You may recall that we separated Cub Scout outdoor program and Boy Scout outdoor program promotion a few years ago. The Council Vice President for Cub Scout Outdoor Program will continue to coordinate Cub Scout Day Camp as well as promotion for all Cub Scout outdoor programs through those two committees which are composed of volunteers from across the Council.

While the Order of the Arrow is not technically part of the Service Team, they are charged with promoting camping. From a practical standpoint, we do not really need to broadly promote Yawgoog & Cachalot since we have an extremely good participation rate. We will continue to focus on those units who do not attend either Yawgoog or Cachalot through the commissioner staff. The commissioners will also promote year round outdoor program.

The Order of the Arrow will be available to make summer camp promotion presentations. An OA representative will periodically be involved in the Service Area meetings to improve communication.

Venturing sales and service is currently handled directly at the Council level since we do not have the critical mass to justify separate organizations in the service areas at this point. However, Venture Crews directly associated with Scout Troops will be served by commissioners in the service areas.

Finally, the current Advancement Committee is heavily occupied managing the Eagle Board of Review process which is a big job. Going forward, we think it would be helpful to split the Eagle Board and general unit advancement support functions to provide more resources to local units who are struggling with overall advancement.

Will there be less staff support? It seems with that the large service areas it will be more difficult for the staff to maintain relationships.

The new structure is not intended to reduce the number of staff members although the size of the staff may temporarily fluctuate based on vacancies and economic conditions. The reorganization will allow our field staff teams in the Service Areas to “specialize” based on their particular strengths in either “sales” or “unit service” which allow them to work more efficiently. In addition, eliminating the administrative functions that went with the seven district committees will free up time as well reducing the number of activities that have to be supported. It is also important to remember that even though they will be primarily focused on either sales or service; both staff members will still be available to unit leaders in the service area.

Further, continuing the trend of the past several years, some support functions – such as on-line services, outdoor program, and activities – will be handled on a council wide basis resulting in greater efficiencies. This will allow field staff and volunteers in the Service Areas to concentrate on the strength of the Scouting program in local communities. Finally, with the new focus on direct volunteer support for units across the organization, we’ll actually have more individuals available to assist unit leaders.