



Exploring your Community

DISCOVERING YOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Scouting - the commitment

When we become Scouts we make a commitment in the Scout Promise to help other people, to serve my community.

You have made a personal commitment to action - to do something for others and as a result of your actions change your community and how you interact within that community.

As a Scout you will be a member of a small team - a Patrol / Six/ Unit or crew who can work together to undertake various actions within your community.

What can you do?

Anything that will have an impact and create harmony in your community. There are many opportunities within your community some obvious and others that need to be uncovered. It might be a simple act of helping others or a bigger project that will transform a building or piece of ground to become a community resource.

Look around and explore. - this is the first and most important step. You will be enthusiastic to just do something but wait a minute, take a deep breath and look and observe. What is actually happening in your community, what are the things that you and your Patrol can do and do well and successfully. Your first ideas may be good but perhaps do not fulfil a real need for action in your community.

Scouters

Scouts should be directly involved in every step of the process. The project is decided, managed, completed and evaluated by young people themselves, with the support of adults. The more young people are involved in the process, the more they will develop awareness and acquire skills and capabilities. However, this does not mean that the Scouters should be inactive. On the contrary, they have to be very active in guiding and supporting the young people.

So, we present a course of action for you to follow

You need to do a community survey to identify opportunities and challenges.

You then need to identify those challenges you have discovered that appeal to you - something you would like to do.

There will be many such challenges and it will not be possible to do everything straight away so pick the challenges you can do and complete.

Be aware of how your community interacts with the weather. At different times of the year the seasons will change the weather and rain, wind and cold can affect the challenges and hardships that people face - flooding perhaps or high winds.

Whatever you discover within your community - will involve other people and the impact of your actions will make things better for these people. It is important then that you communicate and involve people from the beginning so that they know what you plan to do and perhaps can help also.



Here are some tips to developing your project:

- **Be clear of what you want to achieve**

what are the key elements that need to be included in your project?

- **Have a vision of how your community can be different?**

Creating and sharing a vision is a good way motivating others to be involved. The members of your Patrol or group as well as members of the community should be part of setting out a vision for the future.

- **Identify your current starting point**

It is important to be realistic in assessing what you can do – in Scouting and in the community - and use this as the starting point for your planning.

- **Set priorities**

It will not be possible to do everything. Decide what actions will have the greatest impact and focus on these.

- **Be realistic with your plans**

It is much better to do a few things well and achieve results than have half-finished ideas with no achievements. Review progress regularly and don't be afraid to change your plans to respond to changing circumstances.

- **Doing your Project**

Planning can be fun but you will only make a difference when your plans are completed. All Scouts should be involved in activities relevant to their age and experience.

- **Review your plans, actions, activities and successes**

- Everyone involved in the project should have the opportunity to be involved in the review process. Two aspects of the project should be evaluated – the impact on the community and the changes in the young people.

Participating in projects, on a small or large scale, does not require you to set aside your normal scouting activities; it is about using these as a means of achieving your dreams and challenges.

Scouting - through the actions of its members can make a difference and create a better world. Let's show others the difference that we can make and remember to tell others what you have done.



Direct observation

People are knowledgeable sources of information about the community in which they live. As such, they are a valuable resource to begin the community assessment process. Direct observation of community members, events and relationships can gather information about how people interact with each other and about daily activities.

Direct observation is a good starting activity for the community assessment. With direct observation, as with all of the community assessment tools, it is important to have a structured method for recording information. It may be

Transect walk

A transect walk is a walk through the community to observe people, the surroundings and community resources. During the walk, it is important to note different sites and the landscape of the area, and to consider the effect on the community of their environment.

Allied with direct observation, a transect walk can help to identify issues and capacities that exist in a community. It will give a good overview of the community, and can help identify aspects that need further research or more information to be gathered. It can also be used to verify information that is gathered by other methods.



helpful to take notes at the time and develop a format for recording information: who was observed, under which conditions, at what time, and why was it important.

Because direct observation can be subjective or influenced by the observer, it is always good to validate observations with other community assessment methods.

A transect walk is useful at the beginning of the community assessment process because it is highly visible, allowing you to explain why information is being collected about the community.

Information that can be gathered with a transect walk includes:

- _ danger zones, shelters and local resources
- _ land use and the effect of the environment on the community
- _ health issues
- _ commercial activity
- _ social environment, such as sports fields, markets, religious buildings, shopping areas, restaurants

_ physical environment, such as water resources, housing, roads, waste disposal

The route for the transect walk can be decided by drawing a line through a community map that transects or goes through all the different zones in the community. Alternatively, one could walk from the highest to the lowest point or from north to south. It is important to plan the walk and to agree on how to record the information that is collected.

Make sure to talk to community members and to ask their opinions about what is observed or recorded. After the transect walk, all important information must be recorded.



Seasonal Map

Produce a number of seasonal maps that show your community at periods of stress and danger. These maps will allow you to discover opportunities for actions as changes taking place in a community over one year. It can be used to show events such as flooding, windy or cold weather, and activities such as carnivals, holidays etc.



Action	Behaviours
Looking	Observe people. Are they happy, sad, frightened, anxious? Observe their environment. Is it safe, secure and comfortable?
Listening	Practice listening to individuals and groups. Listen to what is actually said Listen carefully to find the exact meaning of what has been said.
Feeling	Show understanding of people's situations and be respectful.
Learning	Learn to understand why others may find something is a priority or a problem, even if you do not agree. Learn to change ideas if the situation changes. Learn from mistakes. Learn from each other.
Knowing how to organize	Work with others to solve problems. Motivate and encourage them.
Checking whether people have understood	Pay attention to check whether people understand what you are saying. Take time to find out if people understand you.

Stage 1: Exploring - identifying the problems

The Scouts participate in exploring topics - identifying problems in their communities.

Stage 2: Responding - developing awareness and empathy

Scouts analyse the information that they have collected and develop a personal response to the problem that they have identified. They become aware of the human dimension to the topic and develop a sense of empathy, involvement and commitment.

Stage 3: Taking action - to make a difference

The Scouts seek practical ways to contribute to solving the problem that they have identified. Together they plan and implement a project, with the help of adults and possibly involving external experts.

Stage 4: Measuring change - in the community and in the Scouts

The project developed by the Scouts should not only be a vague intention. It should have an impact and produce a change in the young people themselves and in the community. Through the process, the Scouts will acquire new attitudes, knowledge and skills. These changes in the young people and the impact on the community need to be evaluated and measured. There will be a real outcome only if it is possible to explain and show how the situation has changed at the end of the project.

Stage 5. Telling your story

A key aspect of this project involves telling others what you have done. You should share your results with key leaders in your community, parents and other people who give you support locally, other Scouts and more importantly the press and other key partners. How you are going to tell your story and who you are going to tell it to should be built into your project at the very beginning and developed as you progress.

