

# BUILDING COUNCIL VENTURING OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS

FOR TERRITORY VENTURING OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS



# Acknowledgments

Bringing this resource guide from a concept to what you are reading now took countless hours of work and thought on the behalf of the Venturing community. We would like to thank all of the individuals who made this resource guide a reality.

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# Before Reading

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## Note from the Authors

*Building Council Venturing Officers' Associations* is intended for use by Territory Venturing Officers' Associations (VOAs\*). While it may contain useful information for aspiring Council VOAs, its contents are directed toward assisting Territory VOAs with initiatives to kickstart Council VOAs.

Furthermore, the following guide serves as an action-oriented supplement to the *Venturing Officers' Association Administration Guide*. The contents of the administration guide will be presented as assumed knowledge with the exception of a few key items.



You can read the *Venturing Officers' Association Administration Guide* [here](#) or visit the "Looking to Start a VOA" page on [venting.org](http://venting.org)!



## Synopsis

In this resource guide, we will discuss the steps a Territory VOA can take to assist in the founding of Council VOAs. It will include tailored action items based on the status of Venturing in the council, as well as alternative Venturing structures for councils.

Additionally, each section will include detailed instructions and examples for creating promotional materials, correspondences, and activities to aid in the establishment of Council VOAs.



# The Basics

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## Desired Functions of a Council VOA

- Host Venturing events for Venturing crews within the council
- Provide training opportunities for Venturers in the council
- Regularly invite crew presidents to sit on Council VOA meetings
- Maintain and grow an online social presence through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or a website
- Develop positive relations with the council's program committee
- Support crew functions and inter-crew connections



Words and acronyms with an asterisk (\*) next to them are specific terminology with entries in the glossary at the end of this resource guide!



## How can Territory VOAs create Council VOAs?

Territory VOAs should facilitate the creation of Council VOAs by:

- Developing youth and adult interest for Venturing in a council
- Providing Venturing promotional materials for the council's use
- Hosting trainings for Venturers and aspiring VOA officers within the council
- Assisting with Venturing events and activities in the council
- Helping recruit VOA officers and Advisors
- Guiding incoming VOA officers in the CSVE\* process



Go [here](#) for more information on Council Standards of Venturing Excellence (CSVE\*) or see [venting.org > VOA > Council Standards of Venturing Excellence](#)



# The Basics

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**What's the difference between a council Scout executive and Venturing staff Advisor?**



## Council Scout Executive

A council Scout executive is the CEO of their respective council. They are a paid professional Scouter who oversees the council's administration, financing, marketing, motivation, recruiting, and staffing required for successful council operations. A council Scout executive can help with the founding and maintenance of a VOA if there is no designated Venturing professional or Venturing staff Advisor to do so.



## Venturing Staff Advisor

A Venturing staff Advisor is a professional Scouter, typically already on the council staff, appointed by the council Scout executive. For instance, they may primarily serve as a district executive or field director. They are specifically designated to provide resources and council approval for the Council VOA. They, along with the VOA President and volunteer VOA Advisor, form the Council Venturing Key Three.



## Preventing Burnout Before it Starts

Building Council VOAs is a strenuous and time-consuming goal. It will likely take effort from all the territory Venturing team. In order to prevent burnout, you should consider how many Council VOAs you can feasibly start in one term. In general, we recommend not building more than two VOAs at the same time. You want to be able to give each council the full attention it needs without overextending your Territory VOA.

Also, remember that your VOA can do more things than start Council VOAs! Vary your projects and goals to keep everyone engaged and having fun!

## Locating the Venturing Staff Advisor & Council Scout Executive

1

Always ask your Territory VOA Advisor about contacts first! They usually have the most up-to-date information on council professionals. You may also be able to locate their contact information from the previous term's contact sheet.

2

Use the council's website to find the contact information of the Venturing staff Advisor or council Scout executive. Most websites have a page titled "Staff Directory" or "Contact Us" where you can find this information. You can use the *find* feature in your browser to quickly locate their contacts using key words like "Scout executive", "CEO", "Venturing", or "staff Advisor".

3

If you cannot find a Venturing staff Advisor, reach out to the Scout executive and ask if they have a Venturing staff Advisor. Note that you may not receive a response from the Scout Executive, but rather their executive assistant. See "Email Best Practices" on page 26 and have your Territory VOA Advisor review your email before sending it!



## Compile the Information

Before starting a VOA, work with your territory Venturing team to create an itemized list of all known information about a council's Venturing program. While not comprehensive, you may include:

- Connections to current or former youth and adult volunteers within the council
- Previous experiences with professionals in the council
- Programs currently available to Venturing aged youth
- Number of Venturing crews and Venturers in the council



To find the number of Venturers, Venturing Advisors, and Venturing crews in a council, ask the National VOA for the most recent KPIs\*!



## Understanding & Using Lighthouse Council VOAs

As a part of the BSA's restructure, the VOA is adopting the practice of lighthouse councils\*. A lighthouse council is a council that excels in a specific area and has the ability to support other surrounding councils in their endeavors.

By identifying lighthouse council VOAs, your territory can harness the specific skill sets of each council in developing the territory overall. It's important to remember to be polite when requesting assistance from these VOAs and to not overburden them. Here are some ways lighthouse Council VOAs can help grow other councils' Venturing programs.

- Mentor an up-and-coming Council VOA
- Offer to form a joint Council VOA with a struggling VOA (see page 12)
- Host Venturing events or trainings for another council
- Contribute to Venturing recruitment efforts in other councils
- Market their own Venturing trainings or events to crews from other councils



## Using the Resources Around You

In Scouting, we share a collective vision of developing youth and their leadership skills. To assist in the process of forming and sustaining a Council VOA, try reaching out to other programs and groups in Scouting for support. While the programs and groups will vary from council to council, consider seeking out some of the following:

- Order of the Arrow (OA\*) lodge leadership
- Sea Scouting Quarterdeck (SSQD\*)
- National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT\*) staff
- Summer camp staff
- Lighthouse Council\* VOAs
- Various council committees (Camping, Shooting Sports, etc.)



These other programs and groups in Scouting can supply many resources. They may be able to assist with the following items:

- Website development
- Graphic design
- Social media or marketing support
- Material or fiscal donations
- Recruitment or networking opportunities
- Staff for events
- Access to locations for events
- Merchandising or banking assistance, if necessary

# Identify Your Council

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The following section will require you to answer questions about the status of Venturing within your council. This will allow us to give more specific feedback about how to approach building a Council VOA.

## ? Is your council compatible with a traditional VOA?

A VOA-compatible council typically has 3 to 4 functional Venturing crews. Be wary of inactive crews. If you do not have 3-4 stable Venturing crews in a council, founding a traditionally structured VOA can be incredibly difficult.



See [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) > Awards > Journey to Excellence > Unit > Crew for the most up-to-date Crew JTE\*, or click [here](#)



*If your council is compatible with a traditional VOA per these standards, continue.*

*If your council is not compatible with a traditional VOA, see page 12.*

## ? Is your council Scout executive and/or Venturing staff Advisor accepting of Venturing and VOAs?

Your council Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor **must be supportive of both Venturing AND VOAs**. They do not need a strong desire to participate in Venturing functions (though that's always welcomed!), but they should be supportive of Venturing. Some signs that they may not be accepting of Venturing and VOAs are: doubts about the value of Venturing, doubts in youth leadership ability, or specific past negative experiences with Venturers/VOAs. Ask your Territory VOA Advisor if you are not sure.

*If your Scout executive is accepting of Venturing and VOAs, see page 14.*

*If your Scout executive isn't accepting of Venturing and VOAs, continue.*

## ? Has your council Scout executive and/or Venturing staff Advisor had poor experiences with a VOA?

There are many reasons a Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor may not like VOAs. Some examples may include, but are not limited to: beliefs that VOAs are glorified social clubs, that they cause unnecessary drama, or do not follow through on their promises. This is more likely to be true for Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor if they previously had negative experiences with VOAs.

*If your Scout executive generally doesn't value Venturing, see page 15.*

*If your Scout executive specifically dislikes VOAs, see page 16.*

## For Councils with 1 or 2 Venturing Crews

While a traditional VOA may not be successful with a small Venturing presence, there are still other ways you and your Territory VOA can engage and build Venturing within these types of councils:

- Work with the Venturing crew(s) in the council to select a council Venturing representative. Typically, this Venturer will be a crew president. This representative should attend Territory VOA calls to provide updates on Venturing in their council.
- Encourage collaboration between crews! The best way to grow Venturing is to encourage crews to participate in fun adventures together. This can increase participation and strengthen the crews.
- If a crew is interested in recruitment, provide resources for them to use when approaching potential members. These resources may be pamphlets, presentations, social media assistance, etc.
- Consider having the Venturers from this council work with a lighthouse Council VOA or form a joint Council VOA with another struggling council.

## What is a joint Council VOA?

Sometimes there will be 2 or 3 councils in close proximity to each other that have little to no Venturing membership. It may be in their best interest to work together to create a joint Council VOA.

- Work with the Venturing crews to select VOA members from each council. Typically, these Venturers will be crew presidents within their council.
- Reach out to the Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor in each council to arrange a joint meeting between participating councils to discuss logistics and an actionable plan moving forward. This is incredibly important, as a professional must be aware of a joint Council VOA.
- Encourage collaboration between councils! The best way to stimulate collaboration between councils is to host a program event in a centralized location. Additionally, be sure to use long-distance communication tools such as Zoom or GroupMe.



## Supporting Crew-less Councils

Supporting councils with no Venturing presence is very difficult. However, there are some ways you can still support Venturing in these councils:

- Approach troops in the council to discuss the benefits of pairing a Venturing crew with a troop. Make sure to point out how crews increase youth tenure and encourage them to take on other leadership positions in Scouting.
- Build Venturing crews that pair with Cub Scout packs. Pitch a paired crew as a source of dependable and experienced den chiefs for their pack. Additionally, note that Venturers make good instructors and program planners because they have direct experience.
- Talk to summer camp staff or NYLT staff about the benefits of starting a Venturing crew.
- Attend district roundtables, University of Scoutings, Commissioner Colleges, or similar events to promote Venturing.
- Market Venturing to other youth groups (like school clubs or church groups). Make sure to emphasize the opportunities for adventure and flexibility that Venturing provides.



For more ideas and resources on how to recruit youth into Venturing, see the recruitment page on [venturing.org](https://www.venturing.org)!

## If You Have an Accepting Scout Executive

Councils with accepting and supportive council Scout executives and/or Venturing staff Advisors have a much easier time getting a Council VOA off the ground. The Territory VOA officers and Advisors should readily communicate with the Scout executive. Open communication with them from the start makes the process quicker and easier. **Take special note of updates for professional Scouters.**

### Ideal Timeline

#### First Correspondence & Collecting Contacts

- Introduce yourself and your goals to the Scout executive with the assistance of your Territory VOA Advisor.
- Have your Territory VOA Advisor work with the Scout executive to begin the process of identifying a Council VOA Advisor. Make sure that they involve their NST Director\*, as a courtesy!
- Request a Venturing crew contact sheet from the Scout executive, if possible.
- Collect additional contacts from potential youth and adults to form a VOA.

#### Reaching Out

- Connect with those contacts and poll them on their interest.
- Update Scout executive about the number of youth interested in learning more about a VOA.
- **The Scout executive must have appointed a Council VOA Advisor before continuing.**

#### Hosting an Event

- Ask for permission from the Scout executive and the Council VOA Advisor to host a VOA informational session with assistance from your Territory VOA Advisor.
- Set a date for the VOA informational event with your Council VOA Advisors, and notify the Scout executive as well as the Territory VOA Advisor.
- Send formal invitations to the interested youth and adults.
- Host the event.

#### Following Up

- Send a follow-up email to all participants. Ask if they will apply for a VOA position.
- Complete the election & selection processes.
- **The selected Council VOA Advisor may choose to make invitations to Associate VOA Advisors at this time.**

#### Finalizing the VOA

- Host basic training regarding positions, setting SMART\* goals, and Council VOA functions.

## Doubtful Council Scout Executive

Working with a council Scout executive who doubts the value of Venturing can be difficult. It's important to make sure that every interaction with a doubtful Scout executive is positive and demonstrates how Venturing can help grow their council. For more information on how to emphasize the value of Venturing, see the MMMM\* document on page 28.

Remember to always be prepared when talking to a doubtful Scout executive! We suggest waiting until you have adequate interest for a VOA within a council before reaching out to them. Avoid making requests unless necessary. Instead, reinforce the idea that Venturing is self-sufficient by showing initiative and offering to support them in their council's endeavors. Additionally, be prepared for the Scout executive to need time to feel prepared for the VOA formation process. Don't rush them to get a VOA founded! As always, talk to your Territory VOA Advisor before making any decisions. **Take special note of updates for professional Scouters.**

### Ideal Timeline

#### First Correspondence & Collecting Contacts

- Collect additional contacts for potential youth and adults to form a VOA.
- Reach out to the Scout executive for the Venturing crew contact sheet only if absolutely necessary.

#### Reaching Out

- Connect with those contacts and poll them on their interest.
- Once you have enough interested youth and adults (at least 5), introduce yourself to the Scout executive with the help of your Territory VOA Advisor. Explain you would like to support Venturing in their council and eventually help them create a VOA.
- Have your Territory VOA Advisor work with the Scout executive to begin the process of identifying a Council VOA Advisor. Make sure that they involve their NST Director\*, as a courtesy!
- **The Scout executive must appoint a Council VOA Advisor before continuing.**

#### Hosting an Event

- Ask for permission from the Scout executive and the Council VOA Advisor to host a VOA informational session with assistance from your Territory VOA Advisor.
- Set a date for the VOA informational event with your Advisors, and notify the Scout executive.
- Send formal invitations to the interested youth and adults.
- Host the event.

#### Following Up

- Send a follow-up email to all participants. Ask if they will apply for a VOA position.
- Complete the election & selection processes.
- **The selected Council VOA Advisor may choose to make invitations to Associate VOA Advisors at this time.**

#### Finalizing the VOA

- Host basic training for positions, setting SMART\* goals, and Council VOA functions.

## Council Scout Executive with Poor VOA Experiences

Working with a council Scout executive that had negative experiences with VOAs can be difficult. It is important that all of your interactions with a Scout executive are positive and demonstrate the value of VOAs. For more information on how to emphasize the value of Venturing, see MMMM on page 28.

It is in your best interest to be transparent, prepared, and professional when addressing the Scout executive. We suggest communicating early with the Scout executive to encourage their participation. You want to show that you are trustworthy and value their opinion. You also need to reinforce the idea that VOAs are self-sufficient, professional, and drama-free. Go out of your way to make them happy. Offer to help them by having Venturers assist in other council endeavors. Additionally, be prepared for them to need time to feel prepared for the VOA formation process. Don't rush them to get a VOA founded! As always, discuss with your Territory VOA Advisor before making a decision. **Take special note of updates for professional Scouters.**

### Ideal Timeline

#### Set-Up

- Introduce yourself and your goals to the Scout executive with the assistance of your Territory VOA Advisor.
- Have your Territory VOA Advisor work with the Scout executive to begin the process of identifying a Council VOA Advisor. Make sure that they involve their NST Director, as a courtesy!

#### First Correspondence & Collecting Contacts

- Request a Venturing crew contact sheet from the Scout executive, if possible.
- Collect additional contacts for potential youth and adults to form a VOA.

#### Reaching Out

- Connect with those contacts and poll them on their interest.
- Update the Scout executive about the youth interested in learning more about a VOA.
- **The Scout executive must have appointed a Council VOA Advisor before continuing.**

#### Hosting an Event

- Ask for permission from the Scout executive and the Council VOA Advisor to host a VOA informational session with assistance from your Territory VOA Advisor.
- Set a date for the VOA informational with your Advisors, and notify the Scout executive.
- Send formal invitations to the interested youth and adults.
- Host the event.

#### Following Up

- Send a follow-up email to all participants. Ask if they will apply for a VOA position.
- Complete the election & selection processes.
- **The selected Council VOA Advisor may choose to make invitations to Associate VOA Advisors at this time.**

#### Finalizing the VOA

- Host basic training regarding positions, setting SMART\* goals, and Council VOA functions.



# The Council VOA Advisor

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## How to identify Council VOA Advisor candidates?

The process of identifying Council VOA Advisor candidates can be difficult, especially if the council Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor is resistant. The following page outlines some processes that may occur when identifying a Council VOA Advisor. As always, be flexible and regularly confer with your Territory VOA Advisor to ensure the best outcome.

## When do I start looking for a VOA Advisor?

Start looking as soon as you can! The timeline for finding a Council VOA Advisor will be determined by your Territory VOA Advisor, because they will be the person working with a Scout executive to identify a Council VOA Advisor. You should typically start looking for a Council VOA Advisor as soon as you know that a Council VOA will be feasible. At the latest, you must have a Council VOA Advisor before recruiting youth or hosting a recruitment event. However, you may poll youth before finding an advisor to see who is interested in starting a Council VOA.



## General Timeline

Ask your Territory VOA Advisor to reach out to the Scout executive or reach out with the assistance of your Territory VOA Advisor. You can reach out by email, but a phone call or in-person conversation is more impactful.

Use this opportunity to ask if the council is considering anyone.

2

If they don't have someone in mind for the position, you and your Advisor may offer to find applicants on their behalf. If the council professionals agree, work with your Territory VOA Advisor to find candidates.

Present the potential candidates with the assistance of your Advisor. Do not push for any candidate. The Scout executive should decide without pressure.

NEVER promise or announce the position to a candidate.

The Scout executive should do so unless they say otherwise.

3

## Handling & Minimizing Conflicts

To prevent confusion and minimize conflicts, avoid spreading information to candidates and other council professionals or volunteers unless directed by the Scout executive. When disagreements arise in the process of selecting a Council VOA Advisor, it is imperative that you work closely with your Territory VOA Advisor and defer to the council Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor. This establishes trust, which will be critical as you work to develop Venturing later on within the council.

# First Correspondence & Collecting Contacts

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Remember that first contact is not always the first step! Depending on the status you determined on pages 10 & 11, your approach may differ!



See "Email Best Practices" on page 27 before emailing a council Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor.

The first email you send to a council Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor is one of the most important. It sets the tone for the rest of your interactions with them and can even determine if you'll have success developing Venturing within their council during the term.

## In your introductory email, you will:

1. Introduce yourself! Include your home council, full name, and full position title.
2. Politely explain your long-term goal: to grow Venturing in their council, grow membership, and assist them with any of their Venturing needs. **Do not say that your goal is to start a VOA.** You want to always sound as if you are looking for ways to serve their council. Saying that you want to start a VOA makes it seem as if you are interested solely in your own endeavors.
3. Briefly list some of the support the Territory VOA can offer to their council. This may include assisting in the staffing of events, providing promotional materials, running Venturing trainings, and more.
4. If applicable, request any preliminary items that you may need from them. For first outreach, this is typically their contact sheet of crew Advisors and presidents.
5. Remember to CC your TVOA Advisor and NST Director on this email!

## Sample First Contact Email with Scout Executive

Mr. Doe,

My name is Sally Jane from 123 Council. This year I have the pleasure to serve as the Venturing Officers' Association President for NST X. I am currently in the process of strengthening Venturing in the councils across our territory by reaching out to different Venturing crews.

I was wondering if you could possibly help me achieve this by sending me a copy of the contact sheet for your Venturing crews within ABC Council. We will be using the information to reach out to your Venturing crews and offer our assistance!

Please feel free to let me know if there is anything I can do to support Venturing in ABC Council. I would be more than happy to answer questions or work with you!

Thank you for your time,

Sally Jane | NST X VOA President

***If you can't reach out to the Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor, or there is no contact sheet, see "No contact sheet? No problem!" on the next page.***

# First Correspondence & Collecting Contacts

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## No contact sheet? No problem!

While not having access to the contact sheet for all of the Venturing crews in a council is inconvenient, it doesn't mean that you can't still build a VOA! Here are some other options:

1. Reach out to friends in the council! They might have contact information for some of the council's Venturing crews.
2. Do a quick Google search! Try search terms such as "Venturing crew in ABC Council" or "Venturing crew in XYZ city". Look for the websites of Venturing crews. Most of the time they have contact information for the Advisor or charter organization.
3. If neither of those yield results, use the unit finder at [beascout.scouting.org](https://beascout.scouting.org). Search using a few ZIP codes in the most populated cities within the council. If you are over 18 years old, you can request more information about a Venturing crew. If you are not, ask your Territory VOA Advisor to complete the request on your behalf.



## Council Venturing Contact Sheet

As you accumulate Venturing contacts for your council, you may consider making your own spreadsheet to streamline the process. Include name, interest, contact information, and any other information you find relevant.

You can find an example [here](#).

Full Name	Interested in VOA?	Youth or Adult?	18+?	Email	Phone	Unit Type & Number
Susy Jane	Yes	Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	susyjane@email.com	111-222-3333	Crew 1111
			<input type="checkbox"/>			
			<input type="checkbox"/>			
			<input type="checkbox"/>			
			<input type="checkbox"/>			
			<input type="checkbox"/>			

## Why do we reach out to crew Advisors?

To find interested youth and adults, you must reach out to Venturing crews and show them the benefits of a VOA. We suggest emailing or calling crew Advisors to talk about a VOA in their council. It is important to reach out to Advisors **first**, not youth. Contacting youth first (especially without CC'ing their adult Advisor) can be alarming.



## First Contact with a Crew Advisor

Not sure how to sell crew Advisors on promoting the VOA to their crew? Include these items in your first correspondence with each crew Advisor you reach out to! Make sure to include your Territory VOA Advisor!

- Introduce yourself! Include your position and home council. Briefly explain what a VOA is. Note that all crew presidents are a part of the Council VOA by design.
- Start out with your goal: creating Venturing opportunities for their unit.
- Explain how VOAs do this. Specifically mention youth leadership opportunities, the creation of council-wide Venturing events, and new trainings.
- Tell the Advisor what you would like from them. In this case, you want their support in forming a VOA and a chance to poll their youth on interest in forming a Council VOA.
- Outline how you want to reach out to their youth (usually by email). Additionally, offer them an opportunity to learn more about the VOA at a later event or on their own time.

Mrs. Mann,

My name is Sally Jane from ABC Council. This year I have the pleasure to serve as the Venturing Officers' Association President for NST X. In case you aren't familiar, a Venturing Officers' Association (VOA) is a youth-led organization dedicated to growing Venturing within a council. In a VOA, there are usually 4 youth VOA officers and additional representatives from each Venturing crew within the council. Typically, the crew president serves as the crew's representative.

Currently, the NST X VOA wants to grow Venturing in ABC Council. Our hope is to create an ABC Council VOA that will support individual Venturing crews. The VOA will offer new program and training opportunities that will help Venturers progress in their advancement and meet other Venturers across the council.

Because you are the Crew 555 Advisor, I wanted to reach out to you to poll for interest and ask for your assistance. We are looking for both adults and youth who are interested in starting a VOA. Would you please refer me to both adults and outstanding youth who might be interested in serving as a VOA officer and would be good role models for Venturers across ABC Council? We would like to poll for interest and share the benefits of a VOA with them.

If you have any questions about VOAs, please feel free to let me know! Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sally Jane | NST X VOA President



## How do I reach out to youth?

Once you have worked with crew Advisors, you can begin the process of promoting the VOA and gauging youth interest. By email, phone, or attending a group meeting, talk personally with all crew members about their experiences in Venturing and the functions of the VOA. Remember, your primary focus is determining whether they are interested in a VOA. Follow up in a timely manner to ensure retention.

## First Contact with Venturers

Here are some items to include in your first contact to crews (phone call, email, or meeting):

- Introduce yourself! Include your position and home council. Connect with them by including personal stories about your Venturing or VOA experiences.
- Briefly explain the VOA. Focus on items that appeal to youth, such as leadership opportunities for résumés or socialization opportunities.
- Praise them! Let them know that they were recommended to serve because of their passion, leadership, or work ethic. Remember to be sincere!
- Cut to the chase. Ask them if they would like to learn more or even serve as an officer. Also ask them if they'd like to receive more updates about the VOA in the future.

Jane Doe,

My name is Sally Jane from 123 Council. This year I have the pleasure to serve as the Venturing Officers' Association President for NST X. I am personally reaching out to you because you were recommended to me by your crew Advisor for your excellent speaking skills and work ethic! We believe you have the potential to take on further leadership opportunities for Venturing in your council.

In case you aren't familiar, a Venturing Officers' Association (VOA) is a youth-led organization dedicated to growing Venturing within a council. In a VOA, there are usually 4 youth VOA officers and additional representatives from Venturing crews within the council.

In addition to serving the Venturing program within the council, VOAs are a great opportunity to make new Venturing friends across your council. On a Council VOA, you can take on new leadership roles and build your personal résumé. Plus, it allows you to directly influence the Venturing program and activities available in your council!

With that in mind, would you be interested in serving on a VOA for ABC Council? If you're unsure, would you be interested in learning more about VOAs at a small event later on? Several other Venturers from across your council and the area will be there to socialize, have fun, and learn. If you're interested in either of those, please let me know and attach any additional contact information so that we can update you more later!

I hope to hear back from you soon! If you have any questions about VOAs, please feel free to let me know. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sally Jane | NST X VOA President

In order to engage potential VOA officers, you may want to host a recruitment event. While events are not always necessary, they can greatly increase the likelihood that interested parties commit by letting them network and see the fun aspects of joining a VOA.

## Recruitment Event: Virtual or In-Person?

### Virtual events work well when:

- The target council is distant from the majority of Territory VOA officers.
- The council is too geographically large to easily invite Venturers.
- There are few interested Venturing youth and adults.
- Finding or financing a location to host the event is not plausible.
- An in-person event wouldn't be flexible enough for the needs of the group.

### In-person events work well when:

- The target council is local to the majority of Territory VOA officers.
- There are a considerable amount of interested Venturing youth and adults.
- A local council event is occurring in the near future and the Scout executive or Venturing staff advisor thinks a VOA presence would be beneficial there.
- The interested Venturing youth and adults are all attending another Scouting event in the future like a Council Venturing event or OA Conclave.

## Save the Date!

For virtual events, you should have a date selected 3 weeks in advance. For in-person events, it should be selected 6 weeks in advance.

If you have a large group of interested youth and adults, we suggest sending out Doodle poll or similar polls to determine a date and time that would result in the highest attendance. If you're meeting virtually, don't be afraid to divide these informational events into different sessions to accommodate different groups of people.



Before finalizing a date, get permission from your Scout executive to host an event AND a Council VOA Advisor selected.



## Sending Invitations

For virtual events, you should send invitations out at least 3 weeks beforehand. For in-person events, these invitations should go out at least 6 weeks in advance. In your invitation email, you should include a schedule and a packing list (if applicable). **Remember to invite your council Scout executive and Venturing staff Advisor!**

## Making a Schedule: What to Include?

One of the most difficult parts of hosting a VOA informational is deciding what to include. The following list contains presentations and activities we recommend for your event.

- Presentations:
  - Why a VOA?
    - Discuss the benefits of VOAs for youth, adults, Venturing, and the council.
  - VOA Structure & SOPs
    - Discuss VOA positions, structure, elections, Advisors, and bylaws.
- Activities:
  - Open Q&A Session
    - Allow anonymous questions through [Google Forms](#) or [Poll Everywhere](#).
  - Discussion Segment
    - Prepare discussion questions about their council's Venturing needs. Have groups break to brainstorm and present their answers.
- Ice-Breakers & Fun-tivities
  - Swedish Twister - Instructions [here](#).
  - Just Dance - Play a YouTube video from [Just Dance](#) & get moving! (Virtually, too!)
  - Online Games - Some friendly competition using [Kahoot](#) or [JackBox Games](#)!
  - For in-person events, consider mixing this informational with a training like ILSC\*. It can encourage people to attend that may not have otherwise.
- Closing
  - Poll and record the interest of each participant in serving on the VOA!
  - Collect contact information for all in attendance!



Click here for a sample virtual schedule and [here](#) for a sample in-person agenda.



Consider inviting National VOA Officers to your recruitment event! Visit [the NVOA page](#) on [venting.org](#) to request a National VOA officer. Advertise their presence! It's a great way to grow interest in the event and have a great Q&A!

## Immediately Following the Event

After your event, take a few minutes to debrief and discuss the event while it is still fresh in your minds. During your discussion, make sure to discuss and record:

- The quality of each presentation
- The effectiveness of the activities, discussion periods, Q&A, etc. using a method like *Start, Stop, and Continue*.
- Any interesting points or feedback on Venturing/VOA functions
- Specific information that may prove useful about the status of Venturing in their council
- **The Venturing youth and adults who stood out as good candidates to lead the Council VOA**

You may consider presenting this information to the council Scout executive. Do so at the discretion of your Territory VOA Advisor.



## Thanking Attendees

In the 1-2 days immediately following the event, you should email each of the participants a brief, but sincere, "thanks" for their attendance. Unless they indicated they were no longer interested in the VOA, mention in this email that you will be in contact with them soon about the status of the VOA. **Remember to thank the Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor if they attended.**



James,

I would like to personally thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to attend our VOA Informational Event! I'd also like to commend you on the amazing comments you made about Venturing in ABC Council! You really led the discussion and encouraged others to do the same. Within the next week you should receive another email from me containing updates about the status of the VOA and any other relevant updates. That email should contain details about the selection process.

Again, thank you for your support. I cannot wait to work with you in the future!

Sally Jane || NST X VOA President



## Encouraging Potential Officers

It's not uncommon for youth to worry that they are incapable of performing well in a VOA position. They may cite lack of experience or poor social skills. As a Territory VOA officer, it's critical you can calm fears and encourage them. Here are some tips to encourage candidates that are hesitant:

1. Find the cause. Ask what specifically they are worried about.
2. Never dismiss their fear. Saying things like "It doesn't matter" or "You're actually fine" do not address the issue.
3. Point out where they excel! Hearing things they do well may make them realize they are more qualified than they originally thought.
4. If they are focused on one shortcoming, explain that a VOA position is more than a leadership role. It's also a growth opportunity. They will be surrounded by adult and youth mentors who will guide them and help them improve.
5. Concede when necessary. Not everyone can serve the VOA. If possible, find another way to engage them. For instance, if they are too busy to serve as an officer, ask them if they would like serving as a committee member or event chair.

## Preparing for the Council VOA Selection

From this point on, the Council VOA Advisor should be in control. If, for some reason, the Council VOA Advisor has not been selected or is still awaiting approval, the territory VOA CANNOT host the Council VOA selection. The selection process must be hosted internally.

Share all information from "Immediately Following the Event" on page 24 with the Council VOA Advisor. Inform the Council VOA Advisor of the options the council has for the VOA President selection process:

- Conduct the standard election with Venturing crew presidents as outlined in the *VOA Administration Guide*.
- Conduct a modified election where other interested youth vote instead of crew presidents.
- Conduct an adult selection where the VOA Advisors and/or Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor select the VOA President.

***For information on the Vice President selection process, see the VOA Administration Guide.***

## After the Selection

Make sure to personally congratulate the selected Council VOA on behalf of the Territory VOA! Following this, issue a personal thank-you to the council Scout executive or Venturing staff Advisor and Council VOA Advisor for their support in this process.



## The Road to Success

A new Council VOA will need help getting up to speed on VOA operations. Provide the following resources and information so they can succeed as a new VOA:

- Access to different resources they may not be aware of:
  - Namely the *VOA Administration Guide* and the *CSVE Scorecard*.
- Summary of Territory VOA functions:
  - Discuss what your TVOA can provide them, such as promotional materials, additional marketing, Venturing trainings, or program assistance.
- Review information from your Territory Venturing Officers' Orientation:
  - Review how to act like an officer. Use the **MAPS** acronym.
    - **Manners** - Responsibilities, code of conduct, event attendance, etc.
    - **Accessibility** - Response policy, being knowledgeable about Venturing.
    - **Presentation** - Uniforming, social media, representing Venturing, etc.
    - **Service** - Your position is more than a status symbol.
  - CSVE
    - What it is, how it's collected, and how it helps you plan your term
- Start building goals
  - Help the Council VOA President and Vice Presidents build SMART goals based off of their own personal interests and the CSVE

## Email Safety & Accountability

As a VOA officer, you will send many emails! This makes it important that you protect yourself and others online. To act safely in your emails, ALWAYS adhere to these rules:

1. Use your position specific emails! This ensures accountability and proper documentation.
2. Carbon Copy (CC) your Advisor on all emails that you send about Venturing. Even if it's just emails between VOA Vice Presidents, it's better to be cautious.
3. Avoid including personal information in your emails like your email, phone number, or address.



### Grammar!

Grammar can make or break an email! Make sure that yours is impeccable by using these tools:

- Read your email backwards to catch misspellings easily.
- Use Hemingway Editor for brevity.
- Use the Boy Scouts of America Language of Scouting to ensure usage of proper nomenclature.



## Email Formatting

Having a clear format to your emails makes them more persuasive (especially for busy professionals!). Use a clear format like this to achieve professionalism and clarity:

1. Have a concise (<5 words) email subject line.
2. Introduce yourself with your name, official position, and home council.
3. Introduce the general topic of your email. Avoid making any requests in this section.
4. Flesh out details and, if possible, highlight something positive like offering assistance or a compliment.
5. Make the request or state your true goal of the email. Explain exactly what is needed.
6. Thank them for their time. You may also choose to offer assistance or state you're excited to work with them
7. Sign off using a formal email signature.

**Have your Territory VOA Advisor proofread, especially emails that go to Scouting professionals!**



Click [here](#) for a formal BSA email signature. Click [here](#) for copies of all of the example emails within this document!

# What is Venturing's Return on Investment?

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## Membership

Venturing and other older youth programs contribute directly to the retention rates of Scouts within the Boy Scouts of America. 50% of Scouts leave Scouting between the ages of 13 and 15. If they join Venturing, they average an additional 16.5 months in Scouting!

## Manpower

Venturers power important council programs that would otherwise struggle to find capable and qualified staff members. summer camps, National Youth Leadership Training courses, university of Scouting events, Wood Badge courses, Cub Scout day camps, and other council programs all benefit significantly from the presence of Venturers.

## Money

Venturing brings in revenue for the council through council fundraisers and "in-kind" donations. Crews can charter with local businesses according to their program focus. Strong charter-unit relationships lead to charitable donations to the council. Also, funding for Venturing activities is all independently sourced.

## Marketing

Venturers serve as ambassadors of the Boy Scouts of America. To their family, friends, and co-workers, they embody a model citizen showcasing the values and character that the Scouting movement has inspired. Venturers share stories about their experience through conversations and social media.



## Glossary

- **council Scout executive**- "The chief executive officer of the local council responsible for the administration, financing, marketing, motivation, recruiting, and staffing required for successful council operations."
- **CSVE** - Council Standards of Venturing Excellence - "An award designed to measure a council's Venturing program through analyzing various aspects of their growth in categories such as membership, trainings, events, and awards."
- **CVOA** - council Venturing Officers' Association
- **ILSC** - Introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews - "Provides an active, fun, and positive learning experience for both new and experienced Venturers."
- **KPI** - key performance indicators - A monthly report by the Boy Scouts of America that reports membership and unit numbers for the different programs the BSA offers.
- **lighthouse council** - The strongest councils in a territory that can help to support other, struggling councils.
- **MAPS** - Manners, Accessibility, Presentation, Service - Acronym for proper officer conduct.
- **MMMM** - Membership, Manpower, Money, Marketing - Acronym for the Return on Investment opportunities for councils through Venturing.
- **NST** - National Service Territory
- **NST Director** - "Professional position that serves as professional director of operations in specified territory within the nation. Responsible for membership/relationships and finance as well as quality control of the Scouting program in territory-serving designated councils.
- **NVOA** - National Venturing Officers' Association
- **NYLT** - National Youth Leadership Training
- **OA** - Order of the Arrow - Scouting's national honor society
- **ROI** - return on investment - The profit or benefit a council gains from Venturing.
- **SMART** - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely - Acronym for the creation of "smart" goals.
- **SSQD** - Sea Scouting Quarterdeck
- **VOA** - Venturing Officers' Association - "A team of youth officers who are supported by Advisors. It provides leadership opportunities that prepare young people for their respective futures and gives them a voice to help strengthen the Venturing program."
- **Venturing staff Advisor** - "A professional (or career) Scouter. They serve in a supportive role, offering experience, council resources, and approval when necessary."

## Other Resources

- [Venturing Officers' Association Administration Guide](#)
- ["Venturing Terminology" Page](#)
- [Venturing Officers' Association Standard Operating Procedures](#)



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# Prepared. For Life.®

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