

Annual Program Planning for Crews

Let's talk about one of the key factors that can lead to a successful year for your crew: the crew's annual program plan! It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what keeps Venturers in the program. They like to have fun, do really cool, challenging activities, travel places, and meet others. However, in order to make all of these things happen, a crew must plan and prepare! Research conducted by Eli Lilly in Indianapolis, Indiana, showed that a common element of strong units is that they all have a good annual program plan. This plan, which is created a year in advance, is then shared with all families in the form of a calendar. A shared annual program calendar will attract more families and keep Venturers involved in the crew.

Here's an example of how a crew program planning process works; keep in mind that each crew is unique and may find another method works better for them. This is simply a guide that can serve as a resource.

Before Making Your Plan

1. Make sure your plan is following your crew operating procedures or bylaws. Once the crew holds their officer elections, the new officers should gather together and hold a Crew Officer Orientation. During the orientation, each officer will learn their role and collectively start planning for the upcoming year.
2. Gather information that will be useful when planning for crew events, such as:
 - Dates of key school and community events (holidays, exams, proms, homecomings, graduations, field trips, etc.)
 - Dates of any events by your chartered organization
 - Dates of any district or council events
 - Data from completed Program Capability Inventory Information sheets (PCI) from parents and others who might offer resources
 - Data from Activity Interest Surveys from each member
 - Information about events your crew has hosted in the past (prior annual program calendars)
 - An idea of the crew's goals
 - Presence of interest in working towards Venturing awards
3. Once all of the information is gathered, plan to hold a crew officers' seminar, where officers plan the coming year's program. This can be done in a variety of fashions; some larger crews choose to just involve their officers, while others have their whole crew participate in the planning process. Some crews even hold weekend retreats, so they have plenty of uninterrupted time to plan!

The Crew Annual Program Planning Conference

When planning your crew's program calendar, there are a few things that may help lead to a more productive meeting. It may help to meet in a setting where you can write down ideas and allow everyone to see what is going on. You want to ensure that everyone has a say, so that there are events that represent everyone's interests.

1. The Crew President should lead a discussion on your crew's goals for the coming year. Write the goals on a flip chart or eraser board and narrow them down to a final list of goals for the year.
2. Brainstorm ideas of what the crew might do based on your Activity Interest Surveys. Write them on a flip chart. Remember, don't critique the ideas while brainstorming.
3. Evaluate the ideas you have developed to see if they match your Program Capability Inventory. Do you have the resources needed for each idea?
4. Vote to select which programs to participate in.
5. Expand your basic program by adding support programs and activities leading toward your big activities or activity.
6. Once you know what events you want to hold, figure out when they will occur. Draft your plan and calendar, including big activities, meetings, support activities, and key dates that apply.
7. Officers will then approve the final calendar.
8. Assign activity chairs for larger events.
9. Distribute the annual plan and calendar to the Venturers, their families, and the chartered organization representative.
10. Throughout the year, reevaluate your plan, and make modifications to the calendar as needed.
11. After you hold each activity, conduct a reflection to identify what went well, what didn't go well, and what you can do differently next time. Make sure to put these notes in your crew history file; these updates will help during your next planning cycle, even if you have a new group of youth involved.

Additional Planning materials can be found at: <http://www.venturing.org/annual-program-planning.html>.