

Annual Program Planning for Packs

See many additional materials at: <https://www.scouting.org/programs/cub-scouts/leaders/pack-committee-resources/unit-program-planning-tools/>

Your Pack's Annual Program Plan = Satisfied Cub Scouts and Families = A Lifelong Love of Scouting!

Dear Committee Chair and Cubmaster:

Let's talk about one of the key elements of all successful packs and an indicator of a potentially successful year. Of course that would be the pack's annual program plan and planning conference. A research project done by Eli Lilly in Indianapolis, Indiana, showed that a common element of strong packs is they all have a good annual pack program planned a year in advance that is then shared with all families in the form of a calendar. The important result of a shared annual program calendar is that your pack will attract more families, and Cub Scouts will stay for a long time. (Just as an aside, the other two key elements of successful packs identified in that study were training and just having the right leader to start with.)

Here is how a pack program planning conference works. A month or two before the scheduled face-to-face conference, the committee chair and Cubmaster gather the following information:

1. Key school dates
2. Community event dates
3. Your chartered organization's dates
4. Personal dates that may affect your pack's activities such as the Cubmaster's anniversary cruise
5. District and council dates
6. Collected Family Talent Survey sheets from all parents
7. Last year's pack annual plan if you have one

To maximize the efficiency of your planning, the following people should attend the conference:

1. All pack committee members
2. All den leaders
3. All pack/den aids and den chiefs (optional)
4. Chartered organization representative
5. Your unit commissioner (optional)
6. Anyone else you think might be helpful, such as other parents

Here's a quick rundown of the steps.

Before you start the planning process: Explain to the group the importance of annual program planning, why you are doing it, and the rules for the process during this meeting.

Step 1: This part is easy. Just take the dates you collected and put them into your pack's master calendar—including den meeting dates—either on a hard copy or by plugging the information into an electronic calendar on a computer.

Step 2: Before you begin rounding out the master calendar with things you want to do, review what the pack did last year. You might even want to write what you come up with on a flip chart or dry erase board. Ask yourself questions like, what events went well, what events didn't go so well? Did we earn the National Summertime Pack Award? The Journey to Excellence Award? How did we do with den and pack attendance? Did we participate in Cub Scout day camp or family camp? Did we sell popcorn?

Feel free to ask as many questions as you want, but don't spend too much time on this, as the key issue is planning the upcoming year. Just use this research to help guide what you might want to keep, replace, or improve.

Step 3: Do some brainstorming on activities your pack might want to do in addition to den and pack meetings. This could be things such as a blue and gold banquet, pinewood derby, family picnic, first-aid training, pet show, and so on. Remember the brainstorming rule, which is anybody can suggest anything without critique or criticism. Feedback and analysis come later, after all the ideas have been captured. Once you have a list of things your dens and pack might want to do, start prioritizing the list. Is a particular activity something for dens or the pack as a whole? Could the activity be incorporated into a den or pack meeting? And so on.

Take a vote on which activities to include on the den and pack meeting schedule, then add the activities to your calendar.

Step 4: By now, the calendar should be taking shape. It should include school and community dates, holidays, some personal conflict dates, den and pack meetings, additional den and pack activities, and district and council dates. The next step is to assign the person who will be responsible for each event, as well as den responsibilities at pack meetings. This would include names, like "Bob Smith" will be the chair for the blue and gold banquet.

If you are really ambitious, you can even put in event details such as, "Bob will send invitation and assignments to each family by January 1," and, "By November 1, we will get confirmation from the school we can use the cafeteria." Remember that good planning and preparation will lead to family satisfaction. Some of this might have to come after your program planning conference if you choose activities now and have to recruit chairs later. However, if you know you will be doing some activities again such as your blue and gold banquet, you might already have a commitment from "Bob" by the time the program planning conference happens.

Step 5: You're almost finished. The final step is to review your annual plan to ensure you have captured everything you and your families want to do in the upcoming year. Once you feel comfortable, publish or email your annual plan to each family. A reminder that not everyone has an email account, so be sure your distribution reaches all families. They will feel much more a part of your pack and be able to plan their own family calendar with the pack's calendar in hand. Sharing the annual plan with your families could be the most important step in retaining your Scouts and building tenure, so don't shortcut this one.

Step 6: Annual program planning is an ongoing process. Review the plan each month at your pack leaders' meeting to make sure you are still on track, to recruit chairs and other help, you participate in important meetings, or to make assignments or changes as needed.

A great pack program plan leads to a great pack and den program, which leads to Cub Scouts and their families staying and growing in Scouting.