



Scouting Ireland – Venture Scout Team

Getting a Venture Group Up and Running – Rev 1

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Introduction

This guide will approach starting a Venture section from the point of view of a Group Council which has decided to restart, or to start from scratch, Venture Scouting. The Venture Scout section is the most dynamic of our sections as the needs, demands and expectations of young people of the Venture age range change so much in order to reflect what society expects of, and needs from them.¹

Adult Leadership

1.1 Where does it come from?

Traditionally Scouters come from one of three main categories -

- * People who have come through the association
- * Parents
- * Interested people within the community

So depending on the needs of your Scout Group you may choose to target people from one or all of these categories.

1.2 What qualities do you need to consider when looking for an adult leader?

Young people want

- * Challenging physical activities with their peers
- * Recognition of their maturity & the opportunity to accept responsibility
- * The opportunity to socialise
- * Independence
- * To explore and experience their world
- * To help their community
- * A sense of belonging and identity

Young people need

- * Consistent adults that understand them and their needs
- * Character and ethical education far removed from the classroom
- * Positive & encouraging adult role models, male and female
- * Opportunities to develop their personal skills & to experience realistic challenge
- * Leadership opportunities & experience

1.3 What are the challenges an adult leader will face?

- * Keeping Venture Scouts engaged and motivated
- * Competing with other interests - part time jobs, cars, school & college, boyfriends/girlfriends etc
- * Trying to get funding for the kind of activities that challenge the Venture Scout age range

¹ Some Venture Scout sections are called Venture Scout Groups; some are called Venture Scout Units. For ease of reading, this document uses Venture Groups throughout.



1.4 What role does the adult leader need to take within the Venture Group?

The skill set required of a Venture section Scouter is very different to that of any other section. A new or developing Venture Scout section should start as it means to go on, with the leader making sure that the group has an organizational structure and can identify the resources it needs. Put very simply the role of the adult is to ensure that

- * Activities are ethical and safe
- * The members remain motivated and focused

1.5 What does the Group Council need to do to support the Venture Scout leader?

- * Provide a welcome to the Scout Group
- * Provide initial financial support (if a Venture Group needs to concentrate on fundraising in its first few months, it may detract from programme)
- * Inform him/her about the training opportunities provided by Scouting Ireland
- * Provide ongoing practical and moral support
- * The Group Treasurer will need to discuss the Venture Group's needs and its budget with the Venture Scout Leader and with members of the Venture Group
- * Assist the Venture Group with equipment until it builds up its own supply of gear.

Your Group

2.1 Membership

It is only natural that a Scout Troop which is running an active and successful programme will have a number of members reach the 15/16 age bracket at the same time, necessitating a Venture Group of one form or another. And so the membership is already within a Scout Group. However, you may wish to recruit members to boost the numbers in your section.

You may consider

- * Approaching young people who may have left Scouting previously and who may be attracted by the nature of Venturing
- * Having Venture Scouts bring down friends and introduce them to Venturing
- * Presenting Venture Scouting to transition year classes in local secondary schools who may have completed adventure & service activities as part of the TY curriculum

2.2 Structure

Crews, councils & executives

There are many ways in which a Venture Group can organize itself and they are covered in another fact sheet however we'll have a brief look at some of them now.

2.2.1 The Executive Committee

The Venture Scouts elect a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Ordinary Committee Members at the beginning of the year. This committee assumes the responsibility for the running of the Group. It is particularly suited to a large group, which can then rotate all the positions each year.



2.2.2 The Venture Council

Everyone in the Group accepts equal responsibility for the actions & activities of the Group. For each activity, different people take on the roles (admin, treasurer, safety etc) and become “project leaders.” For example, if your Venture Group is planning a canoeing expedition, one member of your group may be training to be a canoe instructor, another to be a lifesaver etc. So those Venture Scouts would become the “project leaders” for that specific project. It is up to the Venture Council, which includes all members to ensure that every person is assuming an equal amount of responsibility. *note on terminology* The Venture Council is name given to the formal decision making & organizational structure of the Group. The Venture Group is the name given to the people involved in the section.

2.2.3 Venture Crews

If you have a particularly large Venture Group you may decide to split the Group into a number of crews. A Venture Crew functions like a Beaver lodge, a Cub six and a Scout patrol. The crew system is particularly appropriate if you have members in an established Venture Group and then receive new members freshly from the Scout section. Each crew can then function as a small community within the larger framework of the Venture Group. It is a lot less daunting for new Venture Scouts to enter a system like this and may help prevent a membership leakage.

The key to operating a good Venture Group involves making sure that everyone

- * Knows his/her responsibilities
- * Is listened to and respected
- * Honours his/her commitments
- * Keeps to the Scout Method & works by the Promise and Law

2.3 Identity

It is extremely important that new or developing Venture Groups establish a sense of identity. This helps to break the link with the Scout Troop and helps the members of the Venture Group to feel part of something unique.

2.3.1 A name and a symbolic framework

You may want to examine a symbolic framework which unites all the members of your Group. So, for example, do all the Venture Scouts share a common interest in Vikings or sailing or another similar pursuit? Then your Venture Group could become the 99th Waterford Viking Venture Group and use that symbolism in designing activities and so on.

2.3.2 A place to store equipment

If your Scout Group has the facility to do so, a Venture Scout room is a great way of giving a Venture Group its own space of which they can then take ownership and do with it what they want, put up photos and store gear. Painting and decorating the Venture room is a great first activity and its upkeep extends responsibility to the Venture Scouts. If it isn't kept clean, its purpose is defeated completely.

If your Scout Group does not have the facility to allot a room to your new Venture Group then they should have at the very least a large box in which to store equipment and anything else that the



Venture Group needs to store. All Venture Groups should have a box like this to own. If your Group has a number of Venture Crews each should have its own box.

2.3.3 Logs & everything else

Keeping a log of all your activities with photos, drawings, anecdotes and memories is key to keeping up the morale and spirit in your Venture Group. The experiences that unite the members of the Venture Group are great fun to look back on and each person can contribute based on his or her own skill, in writing, drawing, photography etc

What else? Making flags, neckerchiefs, signs and banners for your group is a brilliant way to create a unique identity above and beyond that of the Scout Troop from which most of your members will have come.

2.4 Support structures

There are many supports available to you in helping you to design your programme.

2.4.1 Living on the Edge

Living on the Edge is a book for the Venture Scout section written by Colm Kavanagh. It is full of hints and tips to keep any Venture Group occupied.

2.4.2 National Events

The events run by the Programme Commissioner (National Events) and his team complement an active Venture Scout programme. For example if your Venture Group intends to try a Sluaíocht na Sléibhte event then your Venture Scout programme in the weeks and months leading up to the event will need to be structured around navigation, packing, organising transport, fitness training etc.

2.4.3 County Programme

Your Scout County also provides events, activities and initiatives that can help you to frame your programme. Interaction with other Venture Scout Groups within the Scout County can lead to great opportunities.

2.4.4 Rogha

Rogha is the progressive scheme that is in place until the outcome of Scouting Ireland's programme review is known. The Rogha badges are available in the Scout Shop and details of the programme and its contents are to be found on the Venture Scout section of www.scouts.ie.

2.4.5 Gaisce

Gaisce, or the President's Award, is Ireland's national challenge award for people aged between 15 and 25. Information is available from www.gaisce.ie.

2.4.6 The internet

The internet is invaluable for programme ideas. www.scouts.ie should be your first port of call. All of the world's major National Scout Organisations have helpful websites too, for example the Boy Scouts of America, Scouts Australia and the Scout Association UK have good quality websites which may inspire you. There are also lots of independent sites which contain sample projects. The internet can also make booking your activities and researching your Venture Expedition easier



2.5 A code of expectations

Your Group should consider writing a code of expectations or a code of conduct. It is very important that this document involves everybody. It helps to outline every Venture Scout's expectations. It might include guidelines for issues like:

- * Discipline and measures to be taken if rules are broken
- * Venture Scouts' expectations the adult Scouters
- * The adult Scouters' expectations of the Venture Scouts
- * A policy on the consumption of alcohol by those over the age of 18 (for those under 18 it is illegal and no policy is needed)
- * A smoking policy

Your First Expedition

3.1 Introduction

Where Cubs have Pack Holidays and Scouts have Summer Camps, Venture Scouts have Venture Expeditions. It is very important that your new group goes on an expedition in its first year. It gives momentum to a new Group and also provides structure leading up to the summer (or whenever you choose to hold it) and a definite aim. It gives new opportunities to seek out adventure either in Ireland or abroad which you would not be able to ordinarily find.

3.2 Why an expedition?

Your expedition gives a number of different learning opportunities to Venture Scouts including:

- * Exposure to the culture, society and values of a foreign country or a different part of Ireland
- * The planning of a trip and all the fine details that go with it
- * The ability to accept responsibility in a new environment
- * The opportunity to meet Scouts from another country/area
- * Experience in independent national and international travel

3.3 Where to start?

First things first, you need to decide the type of expedition for which you want to aim. Chances are that a Venture Group will be keen to avoid a standing camp, of which they would have had experience in the Scout section. Examples of expedition types include:

- * Canoeing down the Shannon
- * Trekking the Wicklow Way
- * A winter skiing week in Kandersteg
- * A camp inside the Arctic Circle
- * Route 66
- * Interailing across Europe
- * Walking the Camino de Santiago de Compostela
- * Adventure Sports in the Isle of Man

Many of these expeditions seem very adventurous for your first trip but you may choose to take elements from each in combining your own Group's voyage.



3.4 What next?

Venture Scouts need to accept responsibility for all the different areas involved in the planning process, just like any other project. Each person should get some experience in each area – budgeting, booking, health and safety, quarter-mastering, administration, developing and designing the programme etc. The process leading up to the event is just as important as the event itself.

The rest is up to you to learn as you go...



Appendices

A1 - An example of the programme cycle – to get you started

The following programme is simplified, in order to demonstrate how the programme cycle works – young people initiate the project, plan it, do it and then finally review it. See also the fact sheet on “The Project Method.” Your project could be anything from cleaning up a local park, to learning about your body and fitness and then completing a triathlon, to organising a charity concert, to going on an adventurous expedition, to planning a giant picnic for your Beaver colony. The only limit, as the cliché goes, is imagination and your own skills at the time of planning.

Remember that the Venture Section is the section of our association in which the most of Scouting’s aims can be attained, so aim high.

Meeting 1

Planning meeting

At this meeting use brainstorming techniques to come up with a project or a particular educational objective you wish to reach. Take everyone’s views into account and try to come to a consensus. You will need to have answered the following questions before you have finished this meeting:

- * How long will the project take?
- * Why this aim? How does it fit into the Venture programme?
- * Does it use the Scout Method?
- * Does it allow an opportunity for every member to show leadership?
- * What tasks will need to be distributed?
- * What is the timescale of the project?
- * Will you need any kind of external help? (ie money, equipment, expertise, permission from local Council/Gardaí etc)

Everyone should leave the meeting having been assigned a role with which they are happy. This role may be an individual one, but should, in order to be most productive, be as part of a small group. This is the planning part of the programme.

The Next Few Meetings

The nature of next few meetings depends on the type of project you have chosen to take on. It may involve progress reports, a guest speaker or a visit from an expert in a particular field. This is the doing part of the programme.

The project is done. What now?

Once the active part of your project is done it is then time to review and to celebrate. The review should be short and honest and ask basic questions like:

- * Did we achieve our goal?
- * Did we all try our best?
- * What can we learn from the project?
- * If we were to do it again, what would we change?

You may also use evaluation games, two of which are included in a separate appendix. Celebration is intended to recognize the achievements of everyone involved for their effort in learning new skills.



A2 - Evaluation Games

Evaluation Game 1 - The Goldfish Bowl

Make a rope circle on the ground. Divide the group in two. One half sits inside the circle and may talk. One half sits outside the circle and may only observe and listen. People in the inner circle evaluate the activity/project. After a few minutes the half groups change places and the new inner group continue with the evaluation or comment on the evaluation process they have just been observing.

Variation: Anyone in the inner circle can leave at any time, but the discussion does not continue until they have been replaced by someone from the outer circle.

Variation: Everyone starts in the inner circle and sits out when they have nothing they want to say. Anyone can move back into the inner circle at any time they want to speak. The evaluation finishes when no-one is sitting inside the circle.

Evaluation Game 2 – Knots

Tie a knot in a rope to make a rope circle. Everyone in the Group holds on to the rope while standing or sitting in a circle. The circle should be a suitable size for group discussion. There is just one knot in the rope. The person with the knot in front of them may either make a comment or ask a question. When that person has finished speaking they start moving the rope in a clockwise direction. The knot keeps moving round until someone with the knot in front of them wants to say something, answer a question or ask another. That person calls 'stop' and holds the rope either side of the knot.



A3 - Two programme samples

A3.1 A physical challenge

Duration: 4 months

Project Name: Healthy Living & Fitness

Project Aim: Learn about our bodies with the aim of completing a triathlon at the end of the 4 month period

note The word “meeting” is used to describe any gathering of the Venture Scouts involved in this sample project. Here it is assumed that the group meets formally every second week for 4 months. In between smaller groups may meet to do specific things related to the overall project. Remember this is just a sample activity.

Meeting 1

Planning meeting

Discuss your group’s particular needs, wants and aims. It’s important with a project like this that everyone is in it together. Note that this project is one for which Venture Scouts will need to apply themselves in their own lives rather than just during meetings.

Meeting 2

Invite a local triathlete to come and speak to your group and talk about his/her training, diet and motivation. Discuss among yourselves how you will approach training based on the knowledge you have gained from the expert. Keep in touch with him/her to ensure that you are on the right track and not doing anything too strenuous and which could cause injuries.

Meeting 3

In building up your Venture Group’s fitness, choose a small crew of Venturers to organise a physical activity for everyone. For example:

- * A timed point-to-point Scavenger Hunt
- * A jog followed by a game of soccer, tag rugby or Australian soccer (like regular soccer except with 2 balls)

At this stage assess how your training regime will be organised based on how the past 3 weeks have gone. For example: will everyone go to the swimming pool together to practice or is it better to go in small groups? Will all the strong swimmers go together or is it best to mix abilities so that those who are stronger can assist those who need a little more help?

These are the kind of ongoing evaluations that you need to do to ensure a successful project.

Meeting 4

Examine healthy eating and what exactly that means. Record what you eat for a week and compare everyone’s eating habits. Invite a nutritionist or a doctor to come and run through some of the basics with you. If you have invited a doctor, ask him/her about eating disorders, allergies and any other food-related issues with which he/she can assist you in understanding.

Your command of the issues of your project should be increasing week by week.

Meeting 5

Choose a small crew of Venturers to organise a long distance cycle for the entire group with tasks to be completed along the way. This is to supplement each person’s own personal exercise regime. This kind of activity allows each Venture Scout to share his/her experiences of the project so far and reflect upon the difficulties faced so far and assess what he/she will need to do for the remainder of the time.

Meeting 6

This is the last chance to prepare for your challenge, the triathlon. Your group might choose to do a final training session together in the gym and the pool or might choose to have a relaxing evening having a meal together at someone’s house or a combination of the two...



Meeting 7

D-Day – the day of the big event

Meeting 8

This is your final meeting of this project. It is your chance to reflect and to evaluate how you did. For this particular aim you will need to ask questions like the following:

- * Did you achieve your aim?
- * Will what you've learned shape the way you think about your health and fitness in future?
- * How do you think you did?
- * Was your project just about completing the triathlon or was it about more than that?
- * Was it just a physical challenge?
- * Were your expectations realistic?

And others depending on your particular experiences. This is also a chance to celebrate your achievements, maybe having some of those treats that you avoided during the past 2 months...

A3.2 A social challenge

Duration: 1 month

Project Aim: Clean up of the local park

note The word “meeting” is used to describe any gathering of the Venture Scouts involved in this sample project. Here it is assumed that the group meets formally every week for a month.

Meeting 1

Planning meeting

Discuss your group's particular needs, wants and aims with your partner in this project. This activity will need your Venture Group to form a partnership with an external organisation like the local council, community association, resident's association, tidy town's committee etc. You and your partner should meet and discuss

- * What work needs to be done to the park?
- * How will it be done and what equipment will be needed?
- * What are your expectations of your partner organisation?
- * What is your partner's expectation of you?
- * Will you need to develop any particular skills to reach you aim?
- * Are any health and safety concerns?

Meeting 2

Go to the park and examine exactly what needs to be done and begin to make a plan. For example would your group be better off to pick one corner of the park to tidy, plant flowers etc or can your group do the whole area? This is your opportunity to plan how best you can effect change in your local community. Once you've had a look at the park you can do the planning at someone's house or over some food.

Meeting 3

D- Day – the big clean up. This is where all the plans become a reality.

Meeting 4

This is your evaluation and celebration session. A small group of Venture Scouts could organise a slideshow of photos of the cleanup for the community association.



A4 - Sample easy projects & meeting activities to get you started

<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Make a family tree, and a friend tree, showing where you fit in * Discuss an issue affecting your community * Volunteer to help a local charity for a period of time 	<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Hold a debate – with each person having to argue the opposite to what they really think * Discuss what bullying is with the Cubs or the Scouts 	<p>Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Watch sunrise on a hill walking weekend * Visit a service of a religion different to yours and speak to the minister * ‘Religion does more harm than good’ Discuss in your group
<p>Intellectual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Learn a new skill which will challenge your mind (example -learn a language) * Write a letter to a national newspaper about an issue affecting modern Ireland which concerns you 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Complete an ambitious physical project (example - a 10k run, a 35k road walk, a 100 k cycle...) * Organise an orienteering event for a local youth club from start to finish, demonstrating to them the importance of physical fitness 	<p>Character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Baden Powell in “Rovering to Success” identified 5 main stumbling blocks for young people - horses, women, wine, cockiness and irreligion. What are the 5 main stumbling blocks to young people today?

