



**Scouting
America™**

Longhouse Council

2026 Fall Membership Growth Playbook



Game Plan for Growth

Every youth deserves the opportunity to experience the adventure, friendship, leadership, and character-building that Scouting America provides. Fall recruitment is our greatest opportunity to introduce new families to Scouting and ensure that every unit begins the program year with momentum and growth. Both 2024 and 2025 were very successful recruiting seasons in the Longhouse Council, and we look forward to an even better year in 2026.

Successful recruitment does not happen by accident. It is the result of intentional planning, strong partnerships with schools and community organizations, effective communication with families, engaging recruitment events, and a welcoming program that quickly connects new youth and parents to the Scouting experience. This playbook outlines proven strategies, timelines, tools, and best practices that can help every unit reach more families and convert interest into active participation.

While recruiting new members is important, our ultimate goal is growth through retention. Every family that joins Scouting should feel welcomed, informed, and engaged from their very first interaction with your unit. The strongest recruitment efforts are those that showcase a vibrant program and provide new families with a clear path to becoming active members of the Scouting community.

We encourage every unit to approach fall recruitment as a team effort. Chartered organizations, unit committees, parents, Scouts, district and council volunteers, and council staff all play an important role in creating opportunities for youth to discover Scouting. By working together and sharing successful practices, we can expand Scouting's reach and serve more families throughout our communities.

Thank you for your commitment to growing Scouting. The investment you make in recruiting new members today will strengthen your unit, enhance the experience for current Scouts, and ensure that future generations have the opportunity to benefit from the values and adventures of Scouting America.

Together, let's make this our most successful recruitment season yet.

Yours in Scouting,
The Longhouse Council Membership Growth Team

Part I: Building the Team

The first key to success is building a great team! Several people have key roles in your unit's membership growth campaign:

New Member Coordinator

The New Member Coordinator is the primary volunteer leader responsible for a unit's membership growth campaign. As a member of the unit committee, the New Member Coordinator helps build awareness of Scouting in the community, coordinates effective recruitment events, and onboards families into the unit.

Unit Leader and Committee Chair

Your key unit leadership have important roles in supporting the membership growth campaign. They make sure that the unit's calendar and program are aligned with supporting the membership growth efforts, and enlist the help of other unit volunteers to support and assist the new member coordinator.

District and Council Growth Teams

In the Fall 2026 campaign, your district has established "Zones" of neighboring units. A Zone Coordinator is responsible for supporting your unit's recruitment efforts and encouraging cooperation with your neighbors. Each district also has a Membership Chair who supports year-round growth efforts. The Council Membership Committee, led by a volunteer Vice President of Membership supports all membership growth throughout the Council, and coordinates the Fall campaign through the Fall Membership Growth Campaign Chair. If you do not know who the volunteers supporting your unit are, ask your District Executive to make an introduction.

Your District Executive

Your District Executive is a professional staff member of the Council. They support your unit's membership growth by: assisting you in planning; providing resources such as yard signs, flyer printing, and promotional materials; coaching you on successful strategies; and processing registration paperwork.

Families

Every parent and Scout has a role to play as an ambassador for Scouting. Be sure to engage families in executing the strategies in this playbook!

Part II: Promotional Strategies

Now that the team is set, we are almost ready to run some plays! These promotional strategies build awareness of the Scouting program (and your unit in particular), connect with families, and invite them to take action and join. Before beginning these strategies, there are a few important actions to take:

- **Hold a planning meeting** - Your District Executive will be reaching out to you to schedule a membership growth planning meeting. This may be with your unit, or jointly with other units in your Zone. At this meeting, you will plan out your campaign including picking promotional strategies to employ. Your new member coordinator takes the lead with your district executive in conducting this meeting. Other participants may include your unit leader, committee chair, other members of the committee, and district team members such as your unit commissioner or zone coordinator.
- **Set goals** - Your unit should set individual goals for the number of new Scouts you want to recruit. Also consider what age levels you are targeting - Lions and Tigers are always recruitment targets, but your unit may have a gap in another den or age group you are looking to fill.
- **Schedule your Joining Event** - All promotional strategies build toward your unit's joining event, so it must be scheduled *before* you start promotion. All promotional material should be geared toward inviting families to this event. Read more about the Joining Event in Part III.
- **Update Your BeAScout Pin** - National and local Scouting America marketing campaigns primarily drive families toward BeAScout.org, a platform where families can discover their local units. It is essential that the information on this pin is accurate and up-to-date. It is updated in your unit's Organization Manager tool in My.Scouting.org.

Now we're ready to invite families into the program! Check out the strategies in the following pages, and see what might work best for your unit.

Community and School Events

The best way to promote your joining event is to connect with families directly. There is often opportunity to do so by hosting a table or booth at a community festival or school event (such as a school open house or back-to-school night). It is important to note that this is *not* your joining event, but an opportunity to promote your unit and your joining event. Some essential elements to consider:

- Have multiple adults and Scouts present in order to give interested families the proper attention.
- Be sure to have a sign-in sheet or other means to collect information from interested families.
- Have a flyer for your joining event to hand to families.
- Get stickers or other “gimmies” from your district executive to hand out.
- Utilize Council resources to have an impressive booth. These include branded 10x10 popups, table cloths, feather banners, and inflatable tomahawk and archery ranges. Contact your district executive to sign these out.



Gather a calendar of these events in your community. If your unit can't cover it alone, reach out to your district growth team for support.

Local News Media

Promote your unit in local publications. Local news may run good news stories provided by you. Provide the local publication a good photo, contact info/website, and promote any upcoming joining opportunities. This is a great year-round strategy for building awareness as your unit conducts service projects or does activities in the community.

Posters

Coordinate with local businesses, schools, and libraries to display a poster promoting your unit. Think about places where parents of Scout-aged youth are likely to go with their friends or family.

Flyers

Flyers with specific recruitment information are a good way to get your joining night information in front of parents. All flyers should include: Date, time, and location of your joining event, and contact information for your new member coordinator. Flyer templates are available from the Brand Center. Discuss with your District Executive the best strategies to get these distributed physically or digitally by schools, parent groups, or other venues.

Yard Signs

Yard signs are a great way to promote awareness of your Pack or a Joining Night. Yard signs should be prominently placed (such as at a church, school, or other public place) and contain basic contact information on how to join.

Social Media and Geofencing

Create a Facebook event to promote your joining event. You can use targeted geofenced ads to get your event on families' feeds - reach out to your District Executive for support his this. It is essential that members of the unit personally share the event on their own social media feeds. It is also important to share this event in community Facebook groups (eg. "XYZ Community Group"; "Parents of XYZ School", "XYZ Moms"). Families should also personally share joining information in their social feeds, including personal stories and photos.

Bring-a-Buddy Cards

Youth and families primarily join Scouting when someone personally invites them. Buddy card templates (available on the Brand Center) allow a quick way for Scouts to personally invite friends to a joining event. Ask your district executive about printing these cards with your information on it, and arm each Scout family with at least five cards. Scouts are our best salespeople!

Scout Shirt Day

Coordinate a day where your scouts will all wear a unit t-shirt or their Scout uniform to school, a few days in advance of your joining event. This can be paired with a Buddy card campaign for maximum impact. Parents can get in on the fun too by wearing Scouting apparel to work.

Church Bulletins and Announcements

Ask local churches or other places of worship to put a notice in their weekly bulletin or equivalent publication, or on their website. Many places of worship are looking to partner with youth-serving organizations in the community. They may also be willing to make an announcement during or after services to share your joining information.

Community Signage

Ask a local fire department, school, place of worship, government building, or a movie theatre to feature your pack on their signage or digital marquee.

Parent Group Meetings and Communications

Schools usually have a parent's group (PTO, PTG, PTA, etc.) that is a key communication channel for families. Reach out to them about sharing information at a meeting or through their publications and social media. One or more of the parents in your unit may be actively involved in this group and can make the ask.

Contact Leads

Throughout the fall season, families will be seeking out information on how to join your unit through BeAScout.org. These will appear as Leads in My.Scouting's invitation manager. Promptly contact and follow up on leads.

Insert Your Idea Here!

Do you have an innovative idea not listed above? Please let your district growth team know! You are the expert on your community, so be sure to take advantage of ideas not already listed.

National and Council Marketing

Both Scouting America and the Longhouse Council are engaging in comprehensive marketing campaigns through social media ads, streaming television advertising, influencer partnerships, earned media placements, and more to drive awareness of the Scouting program and encourage families to seek joining opportunities. Most of this promotion drives families toward BeAScout.org, so once again, it is essential to make sure that information is accurate and up-to-date. These marketing strategies serve to enhance your own specific promotional efforts at the local level.

Part III: The Joining Event

Now, it's time to score and win big! This is the main event, where interested families you have invited come to join your unit. Your unit should plan to hold your first joining event **between September 14th and October 2nd**. This is the best timeframe to recruit, and takes advantage of national marketing efforts.

Plan a Standalone Event

If possible, do not hold your joining event in conjunction with a pack or den meeting, but on its own night. This will free up adult leaders and Scouts to focus on welcoming and onboarding new families. It still should be held on your regular meeting night of the week, and can either be at your regular meeting location or (preferably) your local school.

Organize Your Event

There are several formats to choose from for your joining night. A recommended format is the Station Format, where families move through several information stations. This allows families to arrive any time and move efficiently through the event. A full guide to this format is found [here](#) on the Marketing & Membership Hub. Your unit may have developed a format that suits your needs. However you decide to conduct the event, make sure that adult leaders and Scouts have clearly defined roles ahead of time, and every part of the plan gets executed.

Welcome Families

Make sure that someone is assigned to be at the entrance of your event to welcome families and orient them on where they are supposed to go. This role is often filled by the new member coordinator. Also consider having signage and greeters outside to make sure families can find where to go (eg. if your event is in a cafeteria, have Scouts and/or adults at the school entrance to direct families).

Have a Sign-In Sheet

Near the start of your event, be sure to have a sign-in sheet and collect basic contact information from every family that visits. Some families will not join during the event, and it is **essential** that you can follow up with them.

Provide Your Unit Calendar

Have your unit calendar prepared and printed for families, so that they have up-front expectations of the program they will receive. Be sure to include information on the Council's Spooktacular event on October 3rd, which is *free* to new families and is an excellent way to introduce them to the adventure of Scouting.

Introduce Leadership

Give an opportunity for the family to be introduced to the key unit leader (Cubmaster/Scoutmaster) as well as, for packs, their den leader. Remember that many families joining packs will be Lion-aged. Be sure to have a Lion Den Leader in place *before* your joining event, so that families can see they are joining an organized program. This den leader may be temporary, with the goal of recruiting and training one of the new Lion parents to take over later in the year and as they move on to Tigers.

Provide an Activity for Youth

While parents gather important information, consider having a fun activity for prospective Scouts that come. Packs can invite their associated troop to help provide support and run activities while the pack provides joining information.

Ask Families to Join and Facilitate Registration

The primary purpose of the joining event is to give families the opportunity to register with your unit. While not every family will fully register that night, many will and it is important to make the process as easy as possible. Consider having your unit's application QR code ready for families to scan, as well as several laptops/tablets for families to use to fill out the online application. Online applications ensure prompt processing of registration, and will allow the family to receive a Welcome Kit in the mail from Scouting America. Be sure that the unit leader or their designee approves all applications so they will fully process.

Evaluate Results and Follow Up

At the end of the joining night, take a breath. Then, take some time to evaluate the results against your goals. The last section of this guide will outline the steps for follow-up actions after your joining event.

Part IV: Follow Up and Onboard

Now that your unit has conducted a joining event, it's time to do some more block and tackle to onboard new families and keep them engaged.

Welcome Communication

Within 48 hours of your joining event, send a welcome email to all families who attended to thank them. Send a copy of your calendar, and highlight the next unit or den meeting. Encourage families who did not complete registration to do so through your unit's direct application link. Before their first meeting, consider organizing personal welcome phone calls to all new members from the new member coordinator, unit leader, den leader, or other volunteer.

Follow Up With Leads

Throughout your promotional campaign, you gathered leads through several sources, including: BeAScout; community event sign-in sheets; referrals from unit parents; and more. Cross-check this list with the families who attended your joining event. Personally follow up with each lead you did not see, and invite them to continue to engage with the unit. A number of circumstances may have prevented them from attending your joining night, but they are still likely interested.

Engage New Families

Use the Family Talent Survey to gather information from new families and encourage them to help your unit. You should also encourage these new families to invite their friends - new families can be the best recruiters!

Recognize Recruiters

Scouting America produces a special Recruiter strip for scouts who invite a friend that registers in Scouting. Ask your District Executive about how to obtain this free patch for your Scouts.

Schedule a Second Chance Joining Event

While September is the best time to invite new families in, do not miss out on promotional opportunities later in the season. Many school or community events happen later in the fall. Consider scheduling a second joining event following these opportunities. This event could be Halloween themed.

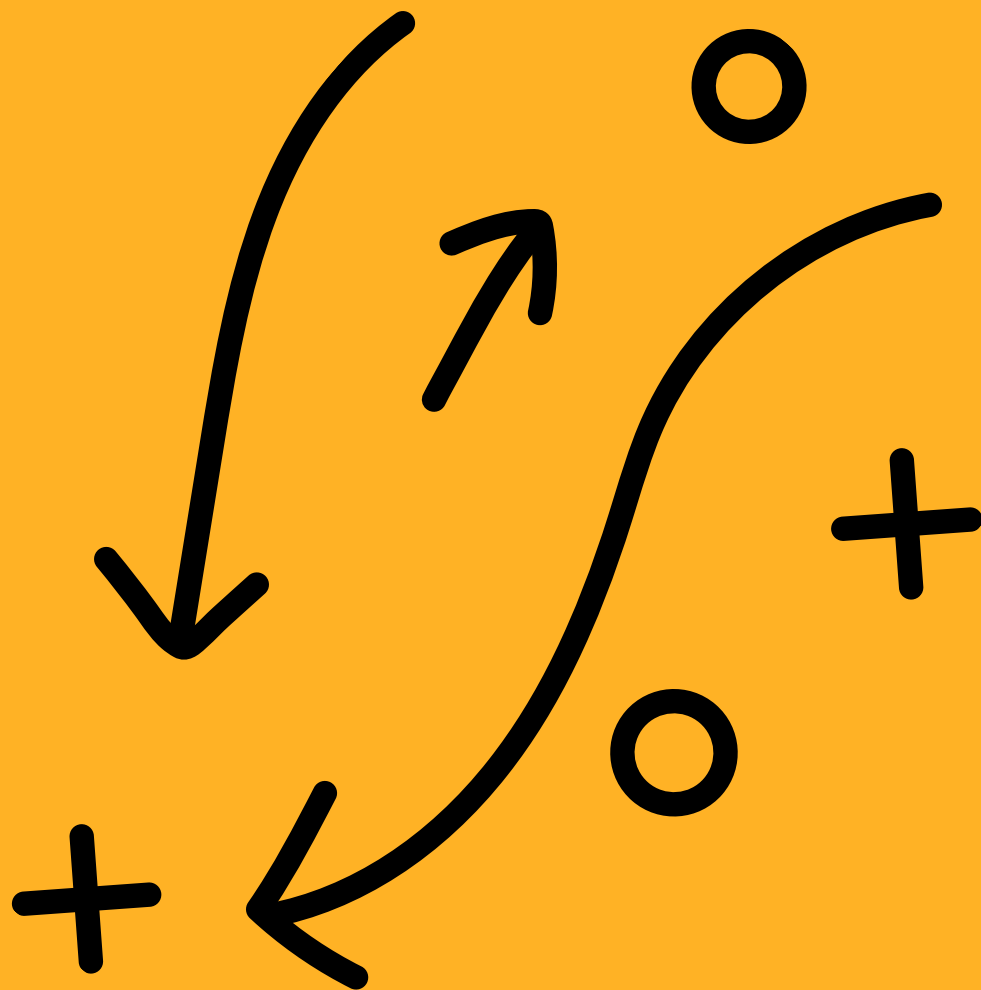
Further Resources and Links

To get directed to further resources, obtain the electronic version of this guide with clickable links (if viewing in print), or get in contact with your district/zone growth team, your first step is to contact your district executive:

- **Crossroads District:** Brendan Flaherty, brendan.flaherty@scouting.org
- **Seaway Trails District:** Ron Hill, ronald.hill@scouting.org
- **Towpath District:** John Romero, john.romero@scouting.org

More information and further information is available at the following links:

- [Council Recruitment Headquarters](#) contains local resources and links.
- [Membership and Marketing Hub](#) has campaign resources and toolkits from Scouting America.
- [Scouting America Brand Center](#) features high-quality images, flyer templates, social media assets, and more to construct promotional materials.
- [New Member Coordinator Position Description](#) and [Resources](#)
- [Online Registration Information](#) has guidance for units to manage leads and registration through Invitation Manager and Application Manager.
- [Guide to Update Your Unit's BeAScout Pin](#)
- [Cub Scout Family Talent Survey](#)



**Scouting
America**

Longhouse Council

6712 Brooklawn Parkway

Suite 108

Syracuse, NY 13211

(315) 463-0201

cnyscouts.org

