MEETING PLANS & IDEAS: SUSTAINABILITY

OBJECTIVES
This month’s activities should:

- Develop a vocabulary that allows Scouts to talk about and understand various aspects of sustainability.
- Teach Scouts about the triple bottom line of sustainability.
- Encourage Scouts to develop a personal sustainability mindset incorporating all aspects of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- Encourage Scouts to look at developing a lifetime commitment to sustainability in their personal activities and lifestyles.
- Help Scouts discover how sustainable the products they use every day are.
- Inspire Scouts to get involved in making a difference in their communities.

LEADERSHIP PLANNING
As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items when choosing sustainability as your program feature during your planning meetings.

- How sustainable are our unit activities? What can we do to minimize or eliminate waste or excess during our activities?
- How much do we want to incorporate the Sustainability merit badge into our activities and meeting events this month?
- What other topics and activities would fit well with this monthly feature?
- How can we involve outside subject matter experts in a meaningful manner this month?
- What outside organizations and agencies can help us learn about sustainability?
- To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

PREOPENING IDEAS

Preopening Ideas on Troop Program Resources

- Set out a recycling bin, a trash can, and a random assortment of items (cans, newspaper, batteries, pizza boxes, light bulbs, etc.). Challenge early arrivers to put items in the appropriate receptacles based on local recycling policies. Hand out information on local recycling programs.
- Set up a display with the requirements for sustainability-related badges and awards. Encourage early arrivers to make plans to begin working on one of the badges or awards this month.
- As Scouts arrive, give them sheets of used office paper and have them make paper airplanes. They should test their creations by flying them into trash cans or recycle bins. If time allows, they could compete against each other for points.
OPENING IDEAS

Opening Ideas on Troop Program Resources

GROUP INSTRUCTION IDEAS

The Three R’s (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)

- Introduce the concept of sustainability, and challenge the troop to come up with a working definition. Good examples are: “Sustainability means the ability to endure. Sustainability requires living within our world’s ability to regenerate the things we need to live. Sustainability begins with rethinking your individual lifestyle and becoming more aware of how you can conserve natural resources.”
- Introduce the concept of the three R’s: reduce, reuse, recycle.

Sustainable Energy

- Discuss the difference between energy conservation and energy efficiency: Energy conservation is changing behavior in order to save energy (and money). An example is turning off the lights. Energy efficiency means installing equipment, lighting, or appliances that use less energy. An example is replacing an incandescent light bulb with an energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamp (CFL). Conservation measures cost nothing, while efficiency measures can be low-cost or can require a significant investment. Both energy conservation and efficiency measures help reduce energy usage, energy bills, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.

The Triple Bottom Line

- Introduce the concept of the “triple bottom line”: people, planet, and prosperity. Discuss how each of these areas benefits from sustainable actions and how balancing the needs of all three is important.
- Call out a sustainability term or concept, and ask Scouts which “P” it relates to. Repeat with a series of additional terms or concepts. Note that some terms or concepts will relate to more than one part of the triple bottom line.

Stewardship of Our Natural Resources

- Discuss how there are three types of environmental stewards: doers, donors, and practitioners.
- Doers go out and help the cause by taking action. For example, the doers in an oil spill would be the volunteers who go along the beach and help clean up the oil.
- Donors help the cause financially. They can do anything from donating their money to having galas or other fundraisers. Donors include governmental agencies.
- Practitioners work on a day-to-day basis to steer governmental agencies, scientists, stakeholder groups, or any other group toward a stewardship outcome.

SKILLS INSTRUCTION IDEAS

The Three R’s (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)
Brainstorm ways people can reduce, reuse, and recycle at home, at school, and in religious and community organizations. Discuss how your Scout unit can reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Do the above activities. Discuss how the three R’s relate to philanthropy.

Do the above activities. Discuss why it is important for the community as a whole to work together to incorporate the three R’s into everyday activities.

**Sustainable Energy**

- Review various household utility bills (electric, gas, etc.). See what is contained in each, including taxes, fees, and credits.
- If possible, compare usage levels on a month-by-month basis and discuss the reasons for the differences.
- Discuss ways to realistically reduce usage levels for each utility. See Sustainability merit badge Energy requirement 2B.

- Discuss the term “miles per gallon” and how it affects energy consumption.
- Discuss the pros and cons of public transportation versus personal vehicles versus walking, biking, etc.
- Discuss the values of various fuels in use for transportation.
- If possible, compare the efficiency levels of several vehicles used by Scouts’ families and discuss ways to improve these levels. See Sustainability merit badge Energy requirement 2C.

- Introduce the term “carbon footprint.”
- Discuss the sustainability of various energy sources, such as fossil fuels, solar, wind, geothermal, nuclear, hydro, etc.
- Discuss the pros and cons of different energy sources and how their usage may affect the environment and your personal lifestyle.
- Come up with a list of five to 10 ways Scouts can realistically reduce their carbon footprints. See Sustainability merit badge Energy requirement 2A.

**The Triple Bottom Line**

- Discuss the people aspect of the triple bottom line and how sustainable solutions must take into account opportunities in education, community development, and quality of life for the world’s people.
- Discuss how sustainable practices can both benefit and harm people. Examine how that harm could be minimized.

- Discuss the prosperity aspect of the triple bottom line and how sustainable solutions must be economically feasible to implement and have a positive financial effect on all communities that they impact.
- Discuss how Scouts and their families can increase their own prosperity while living sustainably. Examine barriers to being prosperous and sustainable at the same time.

- Discuss the planet aspect of the triple bottom line and how sustainable solutions must promote stewardship of the earth’s limited natural resources.
Discuss how the BSA or your chartered organization can improve the management of the earth's natural resources. Explore how individual Scouts can take part in these efforts.

**Stewardship of Our Natural Resources**

- Discuss being a doer.
- Have each Scout write a personal definition of sustainability.
- Discuss ways each Scout can become a doer.
- Develop a list of 10 realistic ways to be a doer of sustainability as a young person.
- Plan a future activity where Scouts can truly do a multitude of good deeds.

- Discuss being a donor and how young people who have limited financial resources can be donors.
- Develop lists of ways individuals, Scout families, and businesses/governmental agencies can be donors.
- Discuss how each Scout can assist with a local sustainability fundraising event.

- Discuss being a practitioner.
- Discuss an ethical dilemma related to sustainability. Have the Scouts select one or two situations from the news and work through these steps: learn, present, discuss, reverse, and consensus. (See Ethics in Action Instructions for Ethical Controversies.)

**BREAKOUT GROUP IDEAS**

**Getting Ready for the Main Event**

- Menu Planning (if applicable)
- Duty Roster Planning (if applicable)
- Patrols discuss what special items they will need for the main event.

**Preparation for the meeting's game or challenge**

**GAME AND CHALLENGE IDEAS**

- **Recycle Bin Bonanza**
  - **Materials:** One full recycling bin per team (Ideally, one member from each patrol will bring his family’s filled recycling bin from home, but don’t explain ahead of time what the purpose is.)
  - **Method:** Each patrol has 15 minutes to build the tallest tower possible using only the items in its recycling bin.
  - **Scoring:** When time is called, measure the towers. The tallest tower is the winner. However, you can deduct points for non-recyclable items (perhaps a half-inch per item).
  - **Notes:** After the game, point out how seemingly worthless items still have value.

- **Sustain-a-Bingo**
  - **Materials:** Bingo cards (one per player, made or downloaded from the Internet) that list personal/family sustainable actions, such as “buys organic produce,” “has weekly meatless meals,” “drives a hybrid car,” “uses public transportation,” “buys green power credits,” “has volunteered in the community,” “has read a book about sustainability,” “uses refillable
water bottles," etc.; pens

- **Method:** On the leader’s signal, Scouts move around the room and get signatures in the blocks on their bingo card of other people who take the listed actions. Each troop member can sign a given card only once. When a Scout has filled the card (or has completed a row, column, or diagonal), he or she shouts, “Bingo!”

- **Scoring:** The winner is the first Scout to complete the task. You can continue playing until time expires.

  **Notes:** For prizes, give out fair-trade chocolates or similar tokens that demonstrate sustainability.

- **Sustainability Matching Game**

  - **Materials:** For each patrol, a set of 20 or so cards with sustainability terms on them and a set of 20 or so cards with the definitions of those terms; masking tape

  - **Method:** Tape each patrol’s set of cards in random order on a wall. Teams line up across the room from the wall where the cards are taped. Scouts take turns (relay style) running to the wall and pairing the cards showing a term and its definition. (These can be cards that have been previously matched incorrectly.)

  - **Scoring:** At the end of play, the patrol with the most correct matches wins. You could also deduct points for incorrect matches.

  **Notes:** The **Sustainability** merit badge pamphlet contains a glossary that could be used as the source of information for the cards.

- **Water Challenge**

  - **Materials:** For each team, a bucket of water, an empty bucket, and an assortment of serving spoons and ladles, small cups and containers with holes in them

  - **Method:** Patrols line up relay style. Place the empty buckets at the far end of the room and the full buckets in front of the teams. Scouts take turns choosing a container (spoon, cup, etc.), filling it with water, and carrying it to the empty buckets, where they dump the water. Continue rotating players until time is called.

  - **Scoring:** At the end of the game, the team that has transported the most water wins.

  **Notes:** The challenge is to determine which container wastes the least water. For example, a spoon carried slowly and carefully might be more effective than a holey cup carried quickly. After the game, talk about how we waste water and other natural resources.

**CLOSING IDEAS**

- **Leader’s Minutes**
- **Ceremony**

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TROOP LEADER RESOURCE LINKS

Advancement Resources
Awards Central
Boy Scouts
Guide to Safe Scouting
SCOUTBOOK
Scouting Forms from the National Council
ScoutCast
Scouting Magazine
ScoutStuff.org (Retail Site)
ScoutingWire
Sign in to MyScouting.org
Take Youth Protection Training
The Outdoor Adventure Planning Guide
Troop Leader Guidebook Appendix
Uniforms