

Q&A: Simon Kenton Council's District Alignment Study

Background:

The BSA's Simon Kenton Council (SKC) is one of the largest councils in the nation, serving Scouts across 18 counties in central and southern Ohio and Greenup County in northern Kentucky.

SKC is organized into [11 districts](#), or geographical areas, led by volunteers who focus on membership, programming, training, fund development and unit service. Each district maintains a volunteer district committee that receives support from a designated SKC staff member. The chair of each district committee also serves on the SKC executive board.

Volunteers representing each of the SKC districts came together in December to study the district layout within our council. The purpose of the study was to ensure we are providing optimal support for Scouting volunteers and units in light of changes that have occurred since the council's last district study over 10 years ago. Units include Packs, Troops, Ships, Crews and Posts. Our goal is to provide the best service and support possible to our units through a structure that optimizes resources across our districts.

The following questions and answers provide more information.

Questions & Answers:

Q. What is the purpose of the study group?

- A. The study group was asked to review the current district structure, examine opportunities to ensure districts operate at maximum efficiency and recommend any enhancements to the council executive board.

The group is working to deliver a recommendation and confirm a new district alignment/framework by April 1, 2021 (with the understanding that district leadership rosters will need to be determined after April 1). The Council and district charter year begins April 1.

It's important to note that districts will continue to operate under their current alignment and volunteer leadership during a multi-month transition period after April 1.

Q. Why is the council assessing district structure now?

- A. The current alignment of our 11 districts within SKC is based on a study completed in 2008-2009. Since that time, Scouting has experienced significant change. Population centers are shifting, membership has significantly decreased, volunteer numbers are down and fundraising is challenging within our current environment.

We owe it to our Scouts and volunteers to make the best use of resources by delivering our programs as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Q. How was the study conducted?

- A. A team of volunteers representing districts and volunteer functions across the council has come together as the "Units First – District Alignment Study Group." The group is led by volunteer Chris Sherman, our Council Commissioner. "Units First" reinforces our goal of providing the best service and support possible to our units.

The group committed to challenging the norms and assumptions that we currently operate under, understanding that the next 10 years in Scouting is not going to look like the last 10 years. Members reviewed factors such as youth population, distance and travel time within the council, leadership potential among volunteers, civic boundaries (for example, school districts) and traditions and operations within current districts. Group members also invited input from families, volunteers and staff members across the council.

The study group held its first meeting in mid-December and continues to meet weekly as a team, with additional sub-team meetings as needed to conduct research and analysis.

Q. Has the study group arrived at a recommendation?

- A. Yes. The study group is recommending that the council transition to a four-district model that balances metrics to the extent possible across districts and helps ensure each district has opportunities for success and improved performance. These metrics include total available youth (TAY), current Scout population, total units and the volunteer base. The study team is in the process of finalizing a recommended four-district map based on school district boundaries and will share the map as soon as it's ready.

A four-district model would enable all districts to be supported by two district executives (DEs.) Most districts are currently supported by one DE. Aligning two DEs with each district enables greater collaboration and teamwork, and continuity of operations during times that a DE may be unavailable (time off, job transition, etc.)

Q. Did the study group consider that some districts will be very large, particularly in the southern area of our council where the population is more dispersed?

- A. Yes. In weighing the pros and cons of potential district layouts, district size and driving distance were heavily discussed. With a four-district model, all of our districts will be larger, especially in the southern portion of our council.

Driving distances certainly would be a challenge if we were to continue "business as usual." Now is the time to re-think the way we've done things and develop new solutions for staying connected. For example, this could include geographically based or rotating roundtables, multiple summer day camp opportunities within a district, and increased use of technology and digital tools (with council support for implementation.)

Q. Can you tell me more about the factors that were considered as a recommendation was developed?

- A. Study group members formed working subgroups focused on the following areas:
- **Geography / Infrastructure:** Factors such as geographical boundaries, roads, road conditions, road directions, travel attitudes, habits and preferences, phone access, high-speed internet access, and urban and rural needs and expectations (Carla Mings, Jim Bratton, Ron Lime)
 - **Current Unit Mapping:** Council map with all current units located on the map (Ron Lime)
 - **Volunteer and Professional Staff Leadership Performance and Potential:** Volunteer and professional leadership strengths, weaknesses, challenges, resources and distribution. As a subset, this group will also look at program performance and potential. (Chip Herr, Dale Simpson)
 - **Existing Membership / Potential Membership - by School Districts:** Existing membership and potential membership by Scouting program level, school-age and

grade levels, gender, ethnic diversity and social-economic diversity (Lois Griffin, David Stowe, Phil Freeman)

- **Fundraising History and Potential - by Units and Communities:** An evaluation of historical and potential district, family and community fundraising, including untapped business and community support and what we would need to do to realize it (Ken Heintz, Jeff Gill, Lisa Murray)
- **Unit Needs and Expectations:** A look at what our units expect and need from our districts (Ron Lime, Scott Sampson, Roger Hottinger)
- **Communications:** Ongoing communications and feedback via e-mail, social media, Scouting Family Forum, District Committee Meetings, District Commissioner Team Meetings, Key 8 Meeting and study group feedback and postings (Deanna Biros)

Study group members discussed these topics during the weekly group meetings. The information was used to develop district layout scenarios for consideration.

Q. What is being planned to facilitate a transition to a new district model across the council?

- A. Realigning our districts will take some time, and we want to be thoughtful about continuing current operations while easing into a new structure with minimal disruption to current plans, including camporees, roundtables and summer day camps. Transition planning is underway, and we will be operating with some ambiguity as the transition occurs over the next few months.

In February, unit leaders were asked to share feedback through two council surveys – one that asked for input on district and council support of units and another that explored current unit engagement and areas where more support is desired from the district and local commissioners. The feedback collected is helping to inform transition planning and go-forward support provided by district and council leadership. The study group is also preparing a district operations guidebook to help new districts establish consistent operations.

Once the realignment is approved, we'll meet with current district volunteers to begin transition planning. At the same time, district nominating committees will begin the work of identifying potential district leadership for the newly aligned districts. One of the benefits of consolidating districts is that it creates a larger pool of volunteers to fill district committee and sub-committee positions. We value our volunteers and believe there is a place for all who wish to serve.

Q. How can I learn more?

- A. The study group is committed to communicating transparently with families and volunteers through email, district roundtables, district Key 8 and Key 3 meetings, the [SKC redistricting website](#) and the Scouting Family Forum town hall meetings, which are open to everyone in our council.

You can view a replay of the redistricting update shared during the Jan. 12 meeting on the Forum website: <https://skcscouts.org/SFF/> (note the redistricting presentation starts at 53:35.)

The next Scouting Family Forum is scheduled for March 15 at 7 p.m.; Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86030134796>.

Q. Who are the study group members?

A. Please see below for a group roster. Feel free to contact any of the members for more information or to provide feedback for consideration by the group.

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SIMON KENTON COUNCIL, BSA
TERRITORY MAP

