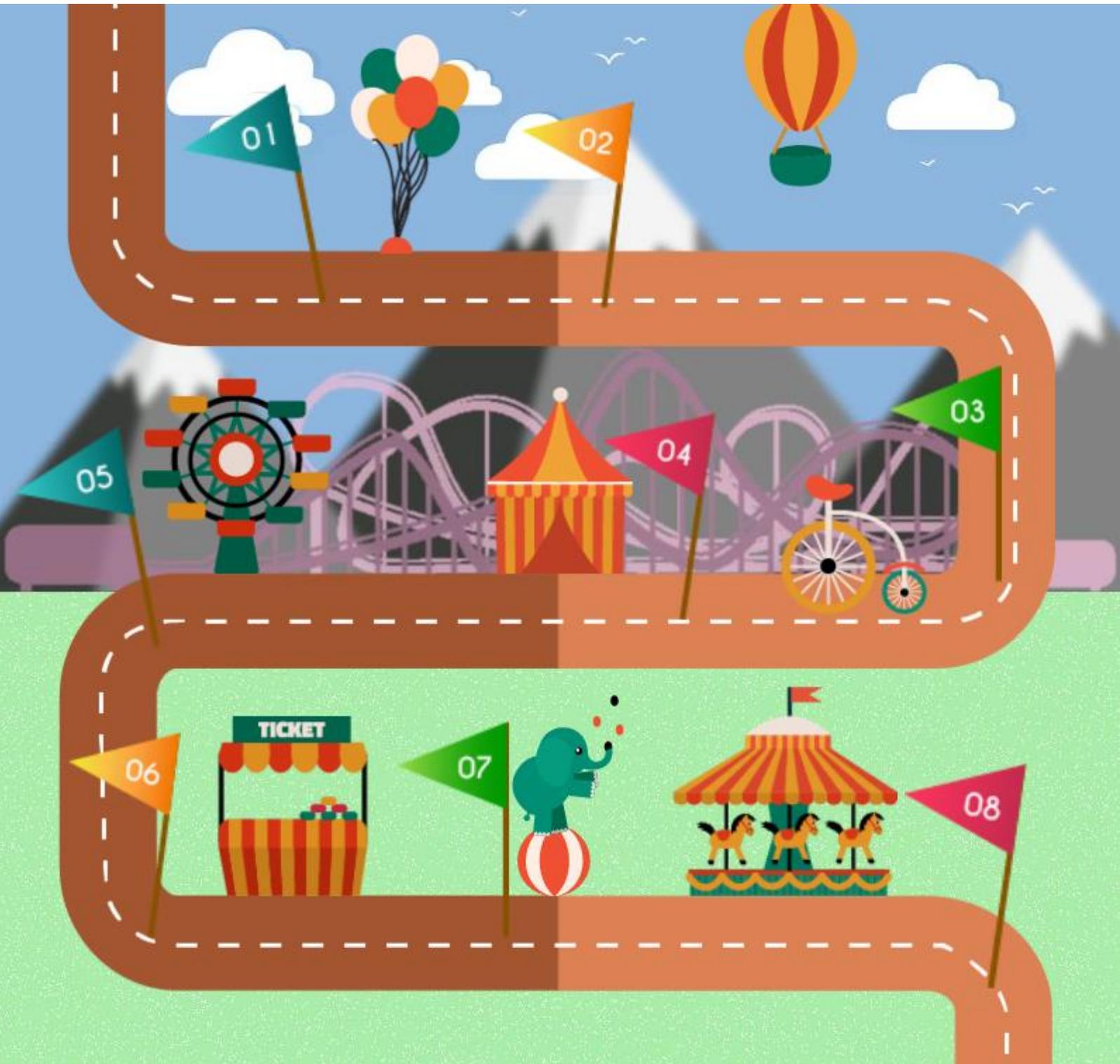


How to Plan for your Group



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What is a Group plan?

A Group Plan is a tool that assists a Group in organising all of its resources in order to progress from its current state to its desired future state.

Offering attractive programs to youth, preparing qualified leaders, managing efficiently, increasing financial resources, strengthening the Group's place in the community, and increasing membership are things that do not happen by accident.

Therefore, a plan must be made. To make a plan is to confront a situation and improve it through organised action. We must know exactly where we want to go, how to get there, when we want to get there, and who will do things that must be done in order to get there.

What are the steps for effective planning?

The plan begins by reviewing the current condition of the Group with the objective of identifying the principal challenges it faces. It is important to reflect upon why the Group is where it is at and what are the key learning's from the past that need to be kept in mind for the future.

Next goals must be set. A goal is a clear description of the improvement that the Group wants to make and must be clearly measurable.

Setting goals is not enough. Also, it is necessary to design the specific actions which must be carried out in order to reach the goal and set deadlines for completing the actions.

The actions require people who are responsible for making them happen. Therefore, particular people must be assigned the responsibility for making certain that each action is completed by its deadline. This is the only way the plan can be put into action.

Finally, it is necessary to evaluate whether the desired results are being or have been achieved. Evaluations should occur periodically during each year, and especially at the end of each Scout year.



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What do we need to plan for?

All Groups will find themselves at different stages of the planning lifecycle. Some will find that in certain areas they are strong and in others not so strong. In this paper, the common focus areas for consideration centre around:

- Youth Programming
- Membership – Youth, Leader & Parents
- Asset Management
- Sustainable Funding

This is not to say there may not be other specific areas that a Group should be considering.

How do we get started?

A great place to start is with a SWOT Analysis. This is an open forum (a combined Group Council / Group Committee meeting would be a great place to start) identifying, what the Group is strong in, where it has weaknesses, what the threats might be to it achieving its goals and what might be the opportunities to take it forward is a way to get thinking started.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

It is important to set priorities. Trying to complete everything at once often leads to nothing getting done. The best way to do this is to list each of the actions you have identified and their completion dates in order of date. As a combined team reflect on what is to be achieved and by when. Where actions have common dates discuss your ability to achieve all of these concurrently. In some cases you will need to change some dates. Remember, planning is just a much of a journey as it is arriving at the end. Setting realistic timelines is just as important as setting the action itself.

So, let's get started.

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Tips to planning

The Three Year Goal - having completed the SWOT analysis and reflected upon why the Group is where it is, next comes the task of setting a three year goal. Why so far out, you may ask? The reality is that creating and making change takes time. The old adage “Rome wasn’t built in a day” is just as true in Scouting. Setting a three year goal allows for incremental improvement. Also, it means that regular check points along the way (at least annually) may be undertaken and in need corrections made as the Group changes. Sometimes, a goal that was set for three years is completed sooner or may take longer. Therefore, not only may the actions need to change but the timelines to deliver on them too.

Actions to be taken – is probably the most difficult part of the planning exercise. Working out what needs to be done and being specific about requires careful thought. Each goal may give rise to more than one action too. A good start is to brainstorm (writing up on a whiteboard other people’s ideas) all the things that could be done to achieve the Goal. Next break them down further into smaller steps and then look to those that can be done sooner than later. Every Goal should have at least 1-2 actions to be achieved in the first year. Most important is to make sure that the action (and the Goal for that matter) is realistic. There is no point setting an action plan that is so onerous that the other members of the Group lose interest.

Setting a due date – is as much a discipline as anything else. By committing to a date to achieve something and regularly following up progress ensures people are working towards a conclusion. Goals and action plans without a target date rarely happen. Also, having a target date and achieving the goal allows for a celebration of achievement. Like the action plans make sure the date is realistic. Set too soon and it is unlikely people can achieve it. Set too far out, people will lose interest.

Assigning responsibilities – “a burden shared is a burden halved” or more simply sharing the work to be done means everyone achieves the outcome as a Team and no one person is carrying all of the workload on themselves. In any Group there is a wealth of knowledge and skills and tapping into these so that people’s talents are best used to help in achieving the goals is critical. People like to be a part of something successful and they will want to contribute where they feel the workload is being shared around. Often the role of the Group Leader is to act as the Project Manager to make sure all that is planned is on track.



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Conclusion

For the planning process to best succeed it is important that whatever goals are set they are SMART:

Specific – clarity as to what needs to be done.

Measurable – identifiable as to what success will look like.

Attainable – within the reach of the Group, based on where it is at.

Relevant – meet the needs to the Group.

Timely – a due date for completion.

and committed to by the Group team.

The Group Plan Template can be found at:

Scout Group Plan (Short) – Template

<http://www.greaterwestscouts.com.au/region/resources/promotions>

Acknowledgement

In developing this resource book we wish to acknowledge the primary source document being “Let’s make a Group Plan” – Copyright © The Scout Association of Australia 1993.

