



# Northern Star Council- Boy Scouts of America

*2012-2013 program outcome results*

O C T O B E R 2 0 1 3

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# Summary

The Northern Star Council-Boys Scouts of America worked with Wilder Research to assess the Scouts' progress during 2012-2013 in achieving their program outcomes. These outcomes are:

- Scouts will participate on a consistent and ongoing basis
- Scouts will improve or maintain a positive attitude toward school
- Scouts will improve or maintain positive behaviors and social skills within the program
- Scouts will demonstrate a sense of mastery in core Scouting areas of citizenship, fitness, and character
- Scouts will improve or maintain satisfactory school attendance

The Council is also interested in gathering information for future program planning and improvement, especially for improving training for leaders and leadership skills for leaders and youth and reaching out to more participants, including low-income youth participants and parent volunteers.

Wilder Research conducted an online survey with leaders and telephone interviews with youth and parents to obtain information about participants and assess the degree to which the program was having an impact on these outcomes. A total of 166 unit leaders completed the online survey and 102 parents and 62 youth participated in the telephone interviews.

Results from the leader survey and youth and parent interviews are positive. Overall, the findings in 2012-2013 show that:

- 70 percent of Scouts participated on a consistent and ongoing basis
- 60-73 percent of Scouts and 58-69 percent of parents reported that Scouts improved or maintained a positive attitude toward school
- 69-79 percent of Scouts and 62-77 percent of parents reported that Scouts improved or maintained positive behaviors and social skills within the program
- 64 percent of Scouts demonstrated a sense of mastery in core Scouting areas of citizenship, fitness, and character, and 77 percent of Scouts advanced at least one rank requirement
- 68 percent of Scouts and 57 percent of parents reported that Scouts improved or maintained satisfactory school attendance

Youth, parents, and leaders also described many positive aspects of the program. According to youth, the most positive aspects of being a scout are exposure to nature, often through camping and hiking; spending time with other children; playing games or sports; attending meetings; and working in teams during activities.

Similarly, parents described many benefits of Scouting for their children, which include developing responsibility; being more confident or outgoing; experiencing nature or going camping or hiking; developing social skills; spending time with other children; developing teamwork or cooperation; and experiencing new things or visiting new places.

Leaders reported that the most positive aspects of being a Scout leader were teaching youth and watching them mature, grow, and develop; spending time with youth; teaching youth outdoor or camping skills; helping youth build leadership skills and self-confidence; and teaching value and life skills.

Parents and leaders gave suggestions that can be taken into consideration in the future planning of the Northern Star Council-Boy Scouts of America programs. We also included recommendations for data collection methods in future evaluations.

### Better communication with parents and leaders

Leaders wished to have better ways on sharing available information and make descriptions of activities, time, and location better or clearer. A few parents specified that they want the Scouting program to inform them of or invite them to events via e-mail and phone calls.

### Better schedules for training and meeting

Leaders and parents wished to have better meeting and training schedules. Some wished to have the meetings on different days or on weekends; others would prefer a different location or length of time. Although it is difficult to accommodate all families and leaders, it could be helpful for the Council to seek input from leaders and the programs seek input from parents for the best times, length, and locations and provide alternatives or options to participate (e.g., through webinar that can be viewed during the meeting or training or at a later time).

### Share ideas across units

Several leaders wanted to do more sharing of ideas across units, both for meeting topics and activities for youth. Also, as suggested by some leaders, it may be beneficial for youth across different units to work together in more team building activities to develop youth leadership skills.

## More or better training for leaders

Some leaders wished to have more training to be an effective leader. Others wanted to expand their teaching skills, particularly with respect to helping youth improve their outdoor skills and achieve rank requirements. Some had an interest in expanding their teaching skills to work with special needs youth or English Language Learners. Others had an interest in practical skills, such as methods to recruit volunteers. A few parents also wished for more parent volunteers and better training for leaders, including on how to work with youth from various cultures and backgrounds.

## Reduce costs and provide supplies and transportation

The Council is commended on their efforts to reach out to low-income youth and their parents. During their interviews, some parents requested reduced cost Scouting activities and suggested that the Council provide supplies, uniforms, or badges at a free or reduced rate. Several parents suggested that the Council provide transportation for participants. Similarly, leaders in the survey reported that 18 percent of the youth in their pack, troop, or crew had difficulty affording program expenses (e.g., they received camp scholarships, assistance buying uniforms, or help with registration or activity fees). The Council may want to seek input from leaders for providing and expanding these supports to appropriate families.

## Offer meetings in Spanish

Many of the parents interviewed are of Hispanic descent. Several of them suggested holding activities or meetings in Spanish or recruiting Scout leaders with a Hispanic background.

## Data collection method

In addition to the leader survey, telephone interviews were used to collect information for this report, and the results reflect in-depth opinions from parents and youth. However, interviews are time-consuming and costly. Data cannot be compared to studies from previous years because of the different methodology and questions. Moving forward, the Council can determine the methods suitable for the purpose of the project and the available budget. A mixed method approach for collecting information from parents and youth can be considered. Wilder Research would be happy to work with the Council on this.

## Selected Verbatim Quotes from Interviews

### Youth

#### **What is the one thing about Scouting that you like the most?**

- *Working with other people and helping the leaders lead activities.*
- *They let you camp and you get to learn skills there that most people don't. While you're in the wilderness you can learn wilderness skills, while at the same time you learn about first aid and environmental science.*
- *That we got to go on trips to other places and we get to meet new people.*
- *The camping and the group meetings, because my scout leader was really cool. He could talk like we talked, so you could relate to him.*
- *The people and the changes they make in the community and the improvement to others that we get to be a part of.*

### Parents

#### **What is the single most important benefit your child has gotten out of Scouting so far? (What is the most positive good that has come out of Scouting for your child? How has it benefitted your child?)**

- *He's getting better at working in a team... He's gotten better at finishing projects the Boy Scout leader has given his team, and from that, better at finishing things on his own.*
- *My husband works a lot, and Boy Scouts is something they do together. It's their special thing, and it builds their relationship.*
- *Responsibility. I was impressed to see my son organize and lead things on his own and keep up with his own schedule.*
- *He is about to get his Eagle Scout rank. He has had a lot of motivation to achieve something—that's been the biggest benefit.*
- *Self-achievement—doing things on his own. He is making an effort to remember things on his own without prompting from his mother.*

## Leaders

*What aspect(s) of being a Scout Leader do you like the most?*

- *Working with the boys and seeing them grow and mature into young adults*
- *Time with my son, ability to shape and help deliver quality programs.*
- *Watching the boys grow in confidence and leadership.*
- *Mentoring, especially when helping them work through leadership and other responsibilities. I like to see them grow into young men.*
- *Seeing the boys work together on projects and form friendships with boys they otherwise may not just through school.*
- *Being a leader to the boys is the best thing that I have done. Seeing that little kid grow into an upstanding young man and then knowing he has what it takes to make those hard choices and the tools in doing the right thing.*
- *I do take a lot of pride in the boys, not just my own sons, but each and every one of the boys in the troop. It is a family and families do have problems at times, but in all each family has to work those problems out together by finding that golden key that can open a door of understanding of one's self and your brother's way of understanding in what it means to being a scout for life.*
- *The rewards of seeing the growth our program helps these guys achieve.*