Journey to Excellence
Performance Recognition Program
Frequently Asked Questions for Councils

1. How do we enter the JTE website or is the website the service hour site? The Journey to Excellence website can be accessed by going to www.scouting.org/jte. The website will include a link to a separate website, where service hours can be added by units, individuals, or anyone with a username and password to the website.

2. Is there a Learning for Life component to this program? Explorers are included in membership numbers, and there is a separate scorecard for Explorer posts/clubs and Exploring Districts.

3. Will the dashboard be searchable down to the unit levels? And will it be accessible by volunteers? There is no unit dashboard at this time, but some of the information is available through My.Scouting Tools.

4. Under finance, there was a criterion for generating more income to the operating budget. Was there ever any thought to creating criteria for lowering expenses compared to the previous year? The task force was concerned with moving performance in a positive direction over the long haul, and even though reducing expenses may be positive movement, it is short-term.

5. Where can I download all of the JTE forms? Go to www.scouting.org/jte.

6. Will everyone see every council's data, or just our own? No, if you're a council level or district-level volunteer, you'll only be able to see your own council. On the dashboard, there will be a list of the top performing councils for each criterion. This way, you'll know who to contact for their best practices on any particular requirement where you might need help.

7. What constitutes a service project? Any service provided by a unit or members of a unit to help someone else.

8. Shouldn't silver be higher than gold to match other hierarchy in the Boy Scout program? This was discussed by the task force, and it was decided that Journey to Excellence would be better understood by the majority of volunteers—especially new volunteers—if the program followed the bronze, silver, gold sequence.

9. In fiscal management criterion, why increase by 2 percent? The goal of this criterion was to move the emphasis away from single-year surplus or deficits and to "does the council have the unrestricted net assets to make the best long term decisions?" Two percent was used because subject matter experts considered it prudent and within the reasonable range for most funders, including United Way. We realize every council has a unique situation and has to make the best decision based on their situation; however, even small increases over time will reach the gold standard with continuous improvement.

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10. How are the breakpoints set? Going into this process, we were able to query ScoutNET data for most metrics. We did that and tested all councils for a five year period to see if there were any anomalies. We used the prior year-end data to set the actual benchmarks. The gold standard is the actual performance of the top 10 percent of councils; the silver standard is the 50th percentile to the 89th, and the bronze standard is from the 20th percentile to the 49th percentile. The break points were not arbitrary or what we thought was achievable, but based on actual performance. The task force felt it was important to recognize councils based on our true current performance, and encourage and recognize continuous improvement over time.

11. Why compare endowment growth to the operating statement? Endowment compares to the operating expenses, because the purpose of the endowment is to support operational expenses within the spending policy of the council's trust agreement. The task force did not want councils to be disadvantaged or advantaged because of things they have no control over, like market performance, but rather recognize councils due to achievement in which something they do have influence. Certainly, councils have great influence over James E. West Fellowship and other gifts.

12. Why are youth-serving executives a criterion? Youth-serving executives to total available youth (TAY) is a criterion, because when we ran correlation tables on more than 30 different performance indicators, it was the single most predictive indicator related to recruitment. Councils that scored in the high range on YSE to TAY also scored high in most quality, growth, and sustainability indicators. The converse was also true for councils that scored low. This also is a leading indicator that a local council can directly influence and improve new member recruiting.

13. Why is community service a criteria item? Community service has long been a major part of Scouting; it is something that the community expects of us and we expect of ourselves. This is a criterion because the task force wanted to address this expectation, along with image and marketing—key strategies for the BSA—in a way that could be measured and remain consistent with other requirements. It was determined that encouraging and recognizing community service would accomplish that from both having a positive impact on the community and positive PR for the local council and the BSA.

14. What is the basis behind Journey to Excellence from a performance measurement standard, and how does it vary from our prior system? The Journey to Excellence program is designed to encourage councils, districts, and units to function in a mode of continuous improvement. Most requirements can be met in two ways: by showing improvement and by meeting a determined standard. Also, many of the Journey to Excellence requirements are based upon the key performance indicators and the National Strategic Plan.

15. How do we expect Journey to Excellence to evolve over time? Each year, the program is evaluated as to its effectiveness and to the levels of recognition achieved. If a requirement is shown to be an ineffective influencer of good program or youth retention, it will be eliminated. If the point system is shown to be too high or too low, it will be altered. This is done annually.

16. At first glance, Journey to Excellence appears to be fairly complex. How do we respond to volunteers and professionals who have difficulty understanding the program or the need for its adoption? Every document has an explanation page, and there is also a glossary of terms. All of this is available online with the forms. You can also e-mail questions to jte@scouting.org.

17. What role should professionals expect Journey to Excellence to play in the context of the measurement of their professional performance? That will be dependent on how closely the Journey to Excellence program aligns with their SMART goals. Some will more than likely be very close, while others may not match up at all. Every council and staff leader will be different.

18. Do the various performance measures apply to a small, rural council as well as to a large, metropolitan council? Care was taken when developing the requirements to consider units, districts, and councils in all areas. There were urban, suburban, and rural volunteers and professionals on the task force. The key performance indicators of success in Scouting are universal.

19. What role do roundtables play in the implementation of Journey to Excellence? Roundtables should schedule a few minutes each month to provide information about the Journey to Excellence program and to answer questions. A trained commissioner should be ready to answer any questions that arise.

20. What is the difference between a determined and a performance improvement standard? A determined standard is one that is achieved or not achieved. An example would be participating in two service projects. An improvement standard is one where improvement alone will be enough to achieve the requirement. An example would be improving Cub Scout camping by having a 2 percentage point increase.

21. With regard to the endowment fund criteria, what is the definition of a permanently restricted gift? Will the program consider the value of pledges or other planned gifts? If not, will recognition programs continue for these types of gifts? A permanently restricted gift to the endowment fund is any contribution where the original gift must be kept, but the earnings may be used to support council operations. The Journey to Excellence program will only recognize actual gifts (cash and pledges), not deferred and planned gifts. However, councils will want to continue their efforts in cultivating and securing deferred and planned gifts.

22. For purposes of the membership growth, why are we including the Exploring component of Learning for Life but not any other Learning for Life components? Exploring is our community-based LFL program, which operates similarly to the way our traditional programs operate and is almost exclusively member-paid.

23. Council membership growth includes Exploring, but retention is limited to only traditional programs. Why? Youth join Explorer posts to investigate career choices. As a result, some decide on a different career path and choose to drop out of the post. In these cases, retention suffers by design.

24. Given the camp and high-adventure standards for Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, why did we decide not to provide a similar measurement for Venturing? The number of Venturers reported as participating in a long-term or high-adventure experience remains small. Including these in the count would not be comparable with the larger number of Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts participating in camping.

25. In terms of council leadership and governance measurement, why are we also not measuring the district leadership? We are, it's in district requirements in the Leadership and Governance section.

26. Is there a point recognition system for Learning for Life units? Explorer Posts and Clubs have their own JTE scorecard and are participating in the program. No other Learning for Life units will participate in Journey to Excellence.

27. How do the performance measurements for retention and membership take into consideration the performance of councils and districts that have historically performed at or above the national standard? Councils and districts that have been performing at or above the national standard can continue to achieve recognition by remaining above the standard. The requirement is to be above the standard or have a 2 percent increase. This way, those high-achieving districts and councils can continue to be recognized, even with a very small or no increase.

28. How do the performance measurements for finance take into consideration the performance of various councils and districts that have historically performed at or above the national standard? The silver and gold levels will be challenging for everyone, as they should be. However, as with other criteria, high-performing councils will be recognized for remaining at or above the national standards.

29. Is it necessary to satisfy the criteria for each level in order to be eligible for consideration for the next level? For instance, can gold criteria be attained without satisfaction of the bronze and silver criteria? In order to claim the points for silver, you must be able to qualify for the bronze level first. The same for gold; you must qualify at the bronze and silver levels to get the points for gold. The council award is based on total points earned and does not require bronze achievement in every single criterion. The unit awards require a prescribed number of criteria to achieve bronze. Once that is met, the overall point totals determine the overall bronze, silver, or gold levels.

30. Has any consideration been given to councils that expend significant resources in supporting Scoutreach units? Do historical measurements indicate that these youth are more difficult to retain in the program, and if so, are we providing a disadvantage to councils with large Scoutreach programs? True, some units have had poor records in retention, advancement, camping, and other measures. The Journey to Excellence program rewards continuous improvement such that all units can increase their positive impact.

31. As to fiscal management, is the measurement of positive unrestricted net assets only measured at year-end? For councils, the dashboard is updated three times each month and will show data for the last closed month.

32. Are the community service hours exclusive of hours that are already devoted to community improvement, such as Eagle Scout projects and Order of the Arrow service work? Does service to the Scout council count in the same manner as service to nonScout interests? Service hours by Scouts, leaders, parents, OA lodges, and Eagle Scout projects make the Scouting program visible in your community. Any service projects that benefit another person or organization can be counted.

33. What constitutes council-generated net contributions? Friends of Scouting, project sales, net special events, foundations and trusts, and other direct support, but not including legacies and bequests.

34. Where on scouting.org is the information? The search engine does not find it anywhere. Go to www.scouting.org/jte.

35. As volunteers go through online training, will this be entered automatically on the dashboard? Yes, as online training is taken, the council's dashboard will be updated.

36. If a Cub Scout, Boy Scout, or Varsity Scout advances more than one rank in a year, does the council receive credit for more than one advancement? No. The standard is for individual youth earning at least one advancement during the year, not for the total number of advancements during the year.

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