

Programme Planning for Small Colonies



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Planning for a small Colony of say 4 - 8 Beaver Scouts is different from planning for a larger Colony. There can however be some specific advantages to running a small Colony and these include:

- each Beaver Scout can have individual attention from a Leader
- every Beaver Scout's ideas can be heard and if appropriate put into practice
- the needs for personnel, equipment and transport are small.
- the whole Colony can take an active part in planning.

That is not to say there are not disadvantages and these perhaps should be acknowledged. The difficulties of:

- unusual or no Lodge System, if the Colony wished to try this method.
- the success of some events being dependent on a full turn out
- insufficient numbers to undertake minority interests
- possibly an overpowering number of adults

What is important for the small Colony is to focus on the advantages and to try and overcome the difficulties.

Programme basis

Probably the first thing you have to do when running a small Colony is to give yourself permission to change things. Many of the Scout Association publications are written for what may seem to be the ideal Colony but that does not

mean that to change things is wrong. The Balanced Programme is very flexible to run and can be adopted equally well, no matter the size of your Colony. You can still include activities into your Programme that are fun and challenging and you can involve everyone in the planning, as members of the Colony Forum (Log Chews).

Balanced Programme

The Balanced Programme, with the range of Programme Zones, and methods, should present no organisational difficulties for the smaller Colony.

Other programme ideas

A Beaver Scout Programme is made up of far more than just the activities and some of your most successful ideas may well come from the Beaver Scouts themselves. The Programme may well include a large number of evenings away from the Colony meeting place, visiting places of interest such as a police or fire station, or a local sport and recreation centre. It might mean a visit to the local campsite to take part in some of the activities they have on offer, or simply a hike together. All these ideas can be used to help develop a Balanced Programme and some may contribute towards a particular Activity Badge, or Challenge Award. Many of these events may well appeal to some of the Beaver Scout's friends who are not in the Colony, so regular 'bring a friend' events should be considered to recruit further Beaver Scouts.

Using available support

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of running a programme for a small Colony is the ability to recognise and use what help is available from your own District and other organisations around you. Your programme can be greatly enhanced by:

- joint meetings - with other Colonies and other youth organisations.
- joint activities - a wide game with another Colony in your District, or link with another Colony to go on a day visit for example.
- joint Sleepovers - an opportunity for your Beaver Scouts to participate in a Sleepover.
- District camps/activities - many Districts run a wide array of activities which your Beaver Scouts could take part in.

Doing your best

Perhaps the biggest concern expressed by most people running small Colonies is that they are unable to offer everything that other Colonies do. This worry should be firmly put to one side. If your Beaver Scouts weren't enjoying their Scouting, they wouldn't come and it may well be that many of them greatly prefer to be in a smaller rather than larger group.

If you are offering fun, challenge and adventure and giving your Beaver Scouts the opportunity to develop physically, socially, intellectually and spiritually, then regardless of what activities you do, you are achieving the Purpose of the Association.

Always remember to be confident in adapting the programme to suit your Colony's needs. This is not an invitation to bend the rules of the Association, but the opportunity to be realistic about the programme you offer.

Finally, if you are doing your best to offer a Balanced Programme to your Beaver Scouts that is helping them to develop, then you are doing a good job.

For more ideas see The Colony Programme Plus and The Colony Programme Plus 2 available from

Scout Shops and Programmes Online at www.scouts.org.uk/pol