

VICTORIAN VENTURER COUNCIL

November 2017

Collective Venturer Units

More Venturers having a great time, no matter where!

(or Hosted Venturer Units in the old language)

These are some guidelines and ideas to bring some **Zing** to Venturing in your local District/Zone.

The aim of a Venturer Unit is to provide each Venturer with an active Scouting program, supported by trained adults to give guidance and assistance along your journey.



Small Unit numbers and those without trained Leaders produce low energy programs and often fail to retain the interest of Venturers, spiral downwards, lose members and usually disappear.

Don't Let This Happen To Your Unit!

In Districts where low numbers of Venturers and Leaders exist, a strategy of combining or sharing Units' programs is an ideal way to build exciting programs and plan for great activities to start you on the road to increasing the number of Venturers and also stop members leaving the movement.

The goal of all stakeholders – Venturers, Venturer Leaders, Parents, Group Leaders, Scout Leaders and District Leaders should be to grow Venturer numbers through an active and exciting program, regardless of where the program runs.

A couple of ideas to consider:

- Two or more Units with low numbers (generally less than 10) can agree to meet together and form a Collective Unit, share a common Unit Council and use the trained or training Leaders from all the feeder Groups
- Units in a District/Zone can adopt a combination of a shared program for all or part of the time, keeping the option of participating in their Group events or activities to maintain this important linkage.

A Collective Unit which is dynamic will achieve growth, retain Venturers, excite prospective members (from scouts and off the streets) as they will want to be a part of what they see is a "great opportunity" to have fun together and be a part of the action.

Some Guidelines

Good communication between the Venturer Leaders, Group Leaders and District Venturer Leaders sells the success of this idea.

Get it in Writing (aka Formal Agreement)!

- Collective Units do work well if there is a formal agreement to its aims and how it will operate between the Scout Groups with registered Venturers (and Scouts ready for linking) so that they understand the concept
- Where Groups/Units will be forming a single, formal Collective Unit, one Group needs to be nominated as the hosting Group, with that Group Leader having primary administrative responsibility. This needs to be discussed and agreed between all feeder Groups.



- Where possible, try and have an adult Leader from each Group for support
- Work out 'who pays what' and reporting channels to feeder Group Leaders
- Keep it as simple as possible, but cover all the bases and expected roadblocks
- Make sure Scout Leaders in the feeder Groups are in the loop
- Where Units are located across Districts, the agreement of each Zone/District Venturer Leader and the District Commissioners should be sought
- Make sure that all parents are informed on the Unit structure and collective arrangement so that it doesn't go off the rails through incorrect perceptions and bad communications
- Provide for an annual review to see what is working and what is not, so things can be fixed
- Make provision for the success in growing numbers and how the Collective Unit might dissolve when each Group has sufficient Venturers and Leaders to sustain independent Units.

Things to Consider

- Venturers and Leaders remain registered in their home Group and need to still be involved in their Group's functions and activities. It is important that they maintain this link to their home Group to encourage members from the Troops and be involved in Home Group events
- Group Leaders can and should link Unit members from other Groups in the Extranet via the *Crewing* module (ask your DC or Venturer Commissioner – Region for assistance if required)
- Don't lose identity of the "original" groups
- Set a target timeline (say 12 months - like a formal contract) so that everyone is clear that there will be a review to see how things are going and plan for the next period
- Identification:
 - Will the Unit have its own Unit Name/Unit Name Tape and Unit Scarf?
 - If the Unit gets a Unit Name approved (seek Victorian Venturer Council approval), or has an existing name, then this can also be worn on your sleeve
 - It's a good idea to still wear your Home Group nametape (so people can recognise you)
 - Scarves – can be a unique Unit scarf OR each Venturer can wear their home Group scarf
 - Alternatively, you might consider a Unit shirt to create an identity
 - Talk about all this and what will work best for the Unit
- The Constitution:
 - Adopt a single, agreed Constitution. It has to work for everyone rather than having confusion of multiple documents
 - If Venturers are coming from other Units, involve them in creating the new constitution with the best elements from each existing one so they all have a sense of ownership
- Unit Council – there can only be one! Make sure when you are getting it together that Venturers from all Groups have the opportunity to be a part of the Unit Council and to be elected and participate in elections and other decision making.
- Leaders:
 - Collective Units offer adults the opportunity to share the Leadership support as well as assisting trainee Leaders who are often dumped in at the deep end – sink or swim!
 - With 2 or 3 Leaders, you can plan for a night off, be an activity-based leader or share the administration stuff
 - 2 Leaders is a **minimum** to keep if happening and on track (as well as being a National Rule). Don't overlook Parent Helpers who are great for activity transport and Rovers who are looking for Service for their Award Scheme
- During the planning stage, have a list of questions and make sure everyone is involved. Don't leave things hanging as often they become festering issues
- Make sure that the Scout Troops from the feeder Groups know who you are and plan some "Back to Scouts" nights to show the Scouts that Venturers are cool and do exciting stuff and they will want to be a part of it in the future
- Set out "who owns what" equipment, etc. At the beginning and determine how and who will pay for maintenance and updates.
- Money:

- Will you have your own Unit Bank Account? Who will have access?
- If the Unit has their own funds, do the feeder Groups assist with funding for equipment, badges, record books, activities and events (Australian/Overseas Ventures)?
- How are Unit subscriptions managed?
- Feeder Groups should be responsible for Youth registrations, Leader registrations and Training costs
- Make sure that fundraising distribution from Groups has been discussed and agreements established
- Remember that Venturers are accountable for their actions to the Leaders and also to the Group Leaders of the Collective Unit. This needs to be clearly understood by the parents, Venturers and Leaders. The buck stops with the Group Leaders on all issues.

How to Keep It Going

- Communication – this is the key to success! Make sure information is free-flowing everywhere it needs to
- Ensure ALL Group Leaders are equally informed/involved at all times (and especially for activities outside the hall) - Keep ALL the Group Leaders in the loop!
- Venturer Leaders should be a part of each Group Council (sometimes nice to share this across the feeder Groups)
- Keep running regular “Back to Scouts” nights to keep contact with the sources of new Venturers
- Keep in touch with the Z/DVLs so they know what is happening and can help out if there are any issues
- A periodic meeting between VLs/GLs and D/ZVLs will that all parties are kept in the loop
- Use the Award Scheme as a catalyst to develop interesting and absorbing programs, and build the sense of achievement for other Venturers to take up the challenge
- Involve the feeder Groups with the Award scheme achievements of their Venturers and recommendations for the Queen’s Scout Award
- Disagreements – bring in the Z/DVL if it looks like the “wheels are falling off”. As a last resort the Z/DVL should involve the District Commissioner (but it should be sorted out well before it gets to this stage if all parties talk and listen)
- Make sure that the Unit Council OWNS how the Collective Unit operates – perhaps the Unit Chair should be invited to the Group Council(s) each term to give the youth perspective on success or raise potential issues
- Create a sense of belonging. Don’t get caught up in politics and make sure that everyone has fun along the way.



Plan, Do, Review

- Plan the structure and how the Unit will operate for the first 12 months (Program / Week Nights /Activities / Major Events / Service Activities, etc.)
- Go out there and create brilliant, exciting and awesome programs and ensure that the Award Scheme is part of the ethos of the Unit
- Review how you are going regularly – each month, each term and especially at the end of the year as you set your goals for the coming year
- If it is not working – don’t give up! Work through what are the issues and between the Unit Council and the Leaders, find a solution that will bring stability and agreement to build strength and commitment to the Unit’s objectives. Seek guidance from Z/DVL’s or your Venturer Commissioner – Region who are always willing to assist
- Celebrate your successes, keep up the momentum and share your ideas with others.



Success - now it’s time to make two Units

If your Unit grows and grows and is “busting at the seams”, it may be time to look at splitting off to form a new Unit as part of the reward for your great success. Don’t rush this - plan, discuss and communicate!

Collective Units are not created for long term solutions – in time all feeder Groups will have the right to start their own Units (if they wish) as part of successful Scouting.

There should be a clear understanding that youth members have the choice to join a new home Unit or stay as a member of the Collective Unit.

Remember that 10 Venturers and 2 trained Leaders is the base to aim towards. Any potential split should be discussed with everyone involved – Venturers, Parents, VL’s, GL’s, Z/DVL and District Commissioner – and a clear plan agreed on when and how the new Unit will form their own entity.

Somethings to consider

- Don’t rush, take your time and start by doing 1 or 2 nights a term as separate units, then move to 1 or 2 nights a month
- Once the Units have gone their own ways, think about still doing some things together. Invite each other to any special nights, maybe camp together at Vic Gathering or Anything Goes and consider inviting each other’s members to participate in Expeditions
- Make sure each Unit has enough records in regard to their members’ Award Scheme progress.

And..... don’t forget to make contact and network with other Units in your District/Zone as joint activities can be fun and also they can help out with numbers for hikes and special activities.

Having an awesome time for all Venturers is the ultimate goal.
