

IMPROVING THE VALUE OF ROUNDTABLE

College of Commissioner Science Doctoral Project
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In an ever-changing society, the value of the traditional Scouting America roundtable has become a key concern across the nation and specifically here in the Middle Tennessee Council. In this project I will review potential barriers and opportunities/solutions concentrating on roundtable value to the current volunteer and make suggestions for the next step.

Purpose of the Project:

1. **Review Current Formats:** Analyzes different roundtable formats across various districts.
2. **Evaluate Satisfaction Levels:** Assesses how satisfied attendees are with the current offerings.
3. **Offer Enhancements:** Suggestions to improve roundtable experiences.

Historically roundtable has been an offering for Scouters to gather, typically monthly, to share ideas and receive formal updates on the Scouting program. Informally, there are often “meetings before the meeting,” “meetings after the meeting” or “parking lot meetings” where participants often share ideas, struggles and successes with one another.

The Scouting America roundtable Support site states the purpose for roundtable as follows:

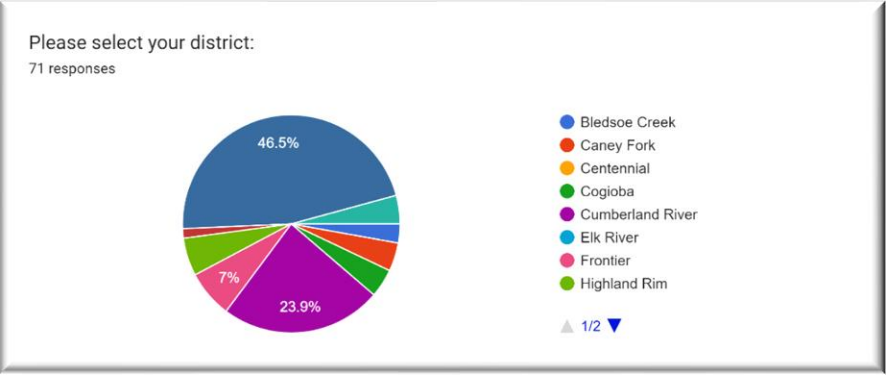
Roundtables serve unit leaders by:

- *Providing networking opportunities*
- *Offering current program training*
- *Providing and capturing information through unit leader/commissioner collaboration*

Citation: ([Roundtable Support](#))

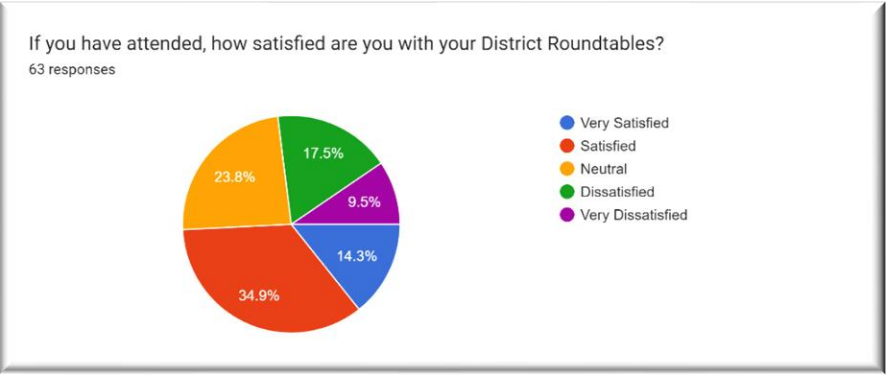
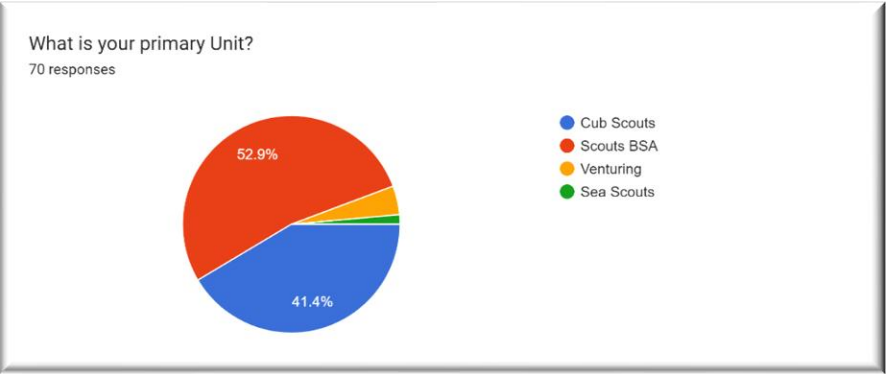
This paper will review the four (4) high-level questions asked in the survey, followed by fifteen (15) in-depth questions with a summary of each question. Potential solutions, options and barriers are discussed after reviewing the data.

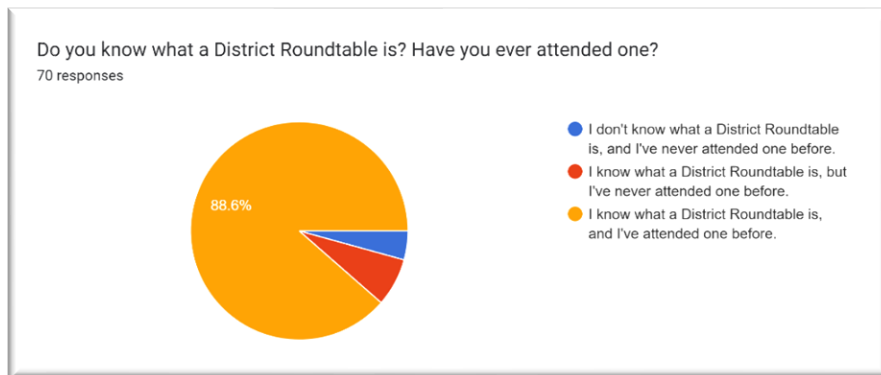
The data was collected via an unblinded survey. The survey was sent to all Key-3 members of the Natchez Trace District via email and shared with other districts via social media Sites. The doctoral committee and council commissioner team did not wish for the author to proactively engage district commissioners’ in an effort to value their current volunteer commitments. There was a total of seventy-one (71) responses from nine (9) of the twelve (12) MTC districts. 46.5% came from the Natchez Trace District. Although the bulk of the data came from one district, the responses, though differing from district-to-district, carried an overall theme consistent across the council.



District Survey Participation:

Natchez Trace – 33 (46.5%)	Cumberland River – 17 (23.9%)	Frontier – 5 (7%)
Highland Rim – 5 (5.6%)	Trail of Tears – 3 (4.2%)	Caney Fork – 3 (4.2%)
Cogioba – 3 (4.2%)	Bledsoe Creek – 2 (2.8%)	James E. West – 1 (1.4%)





The previous data is high-level views of the respondents with four (4) primary questions: district, primary type of Scout unit, awareness of roundtable and satisfaction levels. The questionnaire also asked fifteen (15) detailed questions that will be reviewed throughout the report. The questions were:

1. Why did you give that (satisfaction) rating?
2. If you have attended, when did you first start attending roundtable?
3. How often do you attend roundtables?
4. Please describe why you choose to **attend or not attend** district roundtables?
5. What makes you come back each month? (select all that apply)
6. What could we change to make you more likely to attend roundtable each month?
7. What roundtable topics are of interest to you and would make you want to attend? Feel free to include past topics that you liked a lot.
8. Are there any roundtable topics you have seen that are less interesting or seem unimportant?
9. What kinds of barriers get in the way of you attending roundtables? (select all that apply)
10. Have you ever presented anything at roundtable?
11. Would you be willing to present at a future roundtable? **If so, on what topics?**
12. What do you think of the idea of holding some or all roundtables as virtual meetings or offering a virtual option? Would you be more or less likely to attend?
13. Would you be interested in coming to a local council-led or multi district roundtable?
14. What night of the week does your unit meet? (select all that apply)
15. What night of the week are you available to attend roundtable? (select all that apply)

SYNOPSIS & BRIEF COMMENTARY ON DETAILED QUESTIONS

1. Why did you give that (satisfaction) rating? – 62 Responses

Commentary:

Key reasons for neutral or dissatisfaction: distance, evenings available, conflicts, poor and/or poorly delivered content, disorganized, unfriendly, or clique-like presenters and/or participants, lack of in-person options, lack of virtual options, lack of information pertaining to age-specific programs

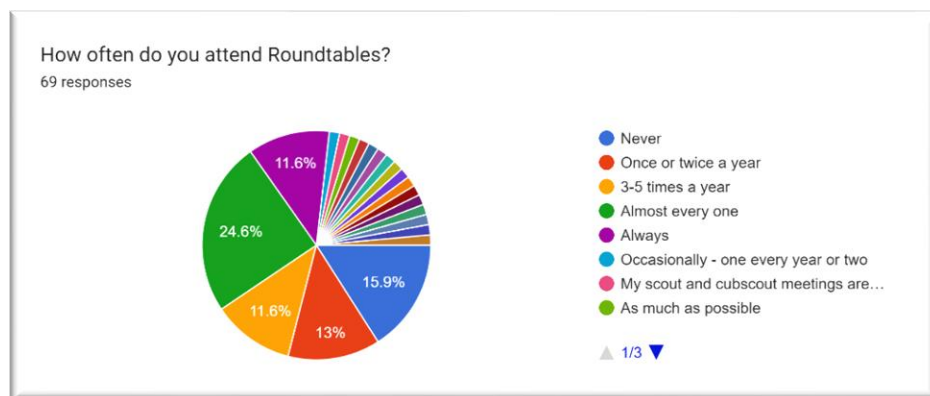
Key reasons for satisfaction: informative, fun, engaging, camaraderie, loyalty, or expectations

2. *If you have attended, when did you first start attending roundtable? -61 Responses*

Commentary:

Responses range from recently attending to 30+ years ago, and there appears to be no key correlation between satisfaction and length of attendance. There are satisfied/neutral/dissatisfied responses in all ranges.

3. *How often do you attend roundtables? – 69 Responses*



Commentary:

47.8% of respondents attend at least 3-5 per year or more roundtables and even those that continue to attend on a regular basis have varying degrees of satisfactory ratings. Those that continue to attend and are neutral or dissatisfied tend to do so out of obligation and camaraderie.

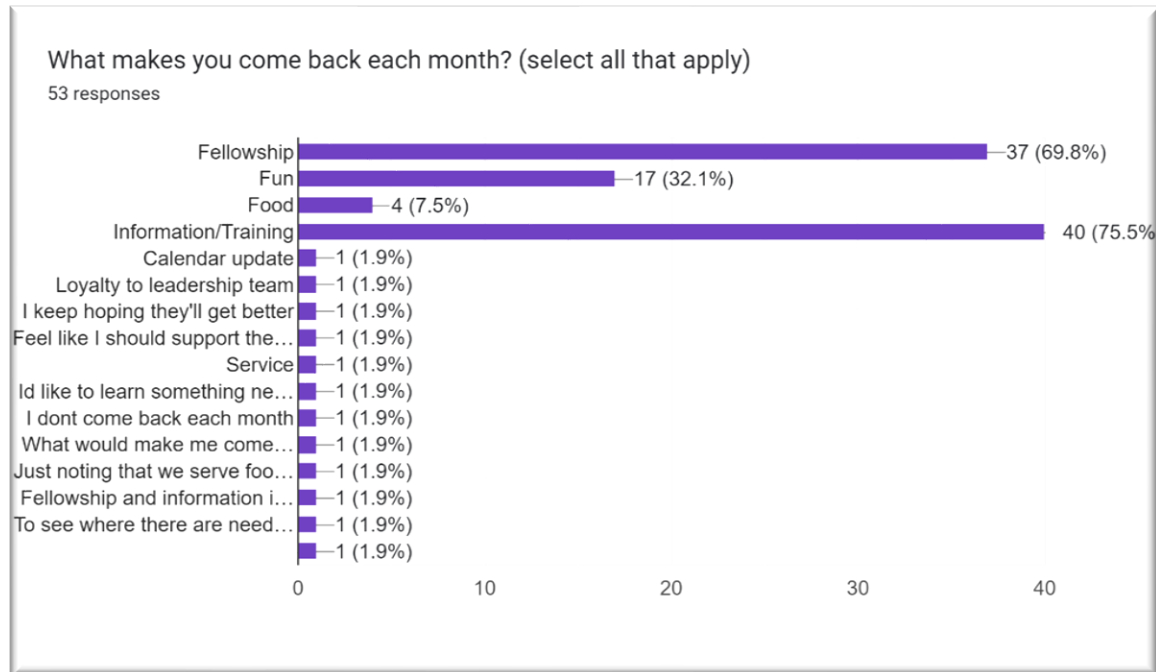
4. *Please describe why you choose to **attend or not attend** district roundtables? – 68 Responses*

Commentary:

Routine attendance reasons: information, connection and networking, fellowship, and camaraderie

Non-attendance reasons: conflicting schedules (night of the week), lack of time, childcare, poor and/or disorganized meetings and information

5. *What makes you come back each month? (select all that apply) – 53 Responses*



Commentary:

Information/training and fellowship are the clear drivers for roundtable attendance.

6. What could we change to make you more likely to attend roundtable each month? – 56 Responses

Commentary:

Changes for better attendance: 20% of respondents state that better topics and/or the value of the topics would increase future attendance, also 20% of respondents state the new/different or more engaging speakers would increase attendance. After this, responses with greater than 10% of suggestions include: location changes, day of week changes, virtual offerings and clear, concise, and advance notice of the topics and agenda.

7. What roundtable topics are of interest to you and would make you want to attend? Feel free to include past topics that you liked a lot. – 48 Responses

Commentary:

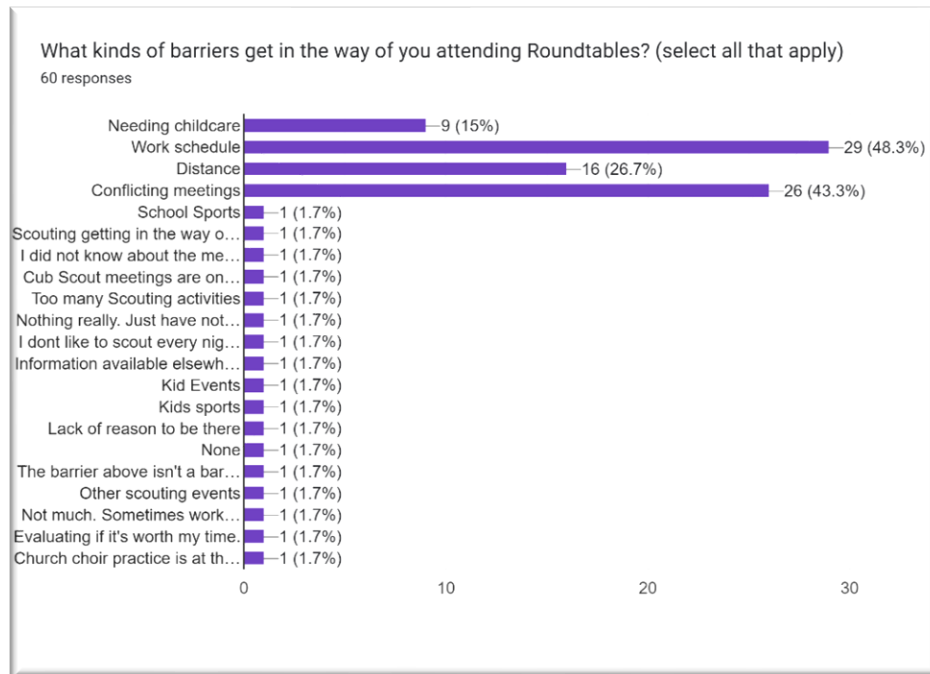
These responses offer an opportunity for roundtable commissioners to design upcoming content for future meetings. One consistent theme centered on the desire for true breakouts at meetings for content based on age level Scouting programs.

8. Are there any roundtable topics you have seen that are less interesting or seem unimportant? – 34 Responses

Commentary:

1/3 of the responses said NO topics were less interesting or less important, those that did respond tended to be based on age related topics being delivered to the wrong audience (lack of breakouts) and/or general dissemination information that could be addressed in an email or another medium.

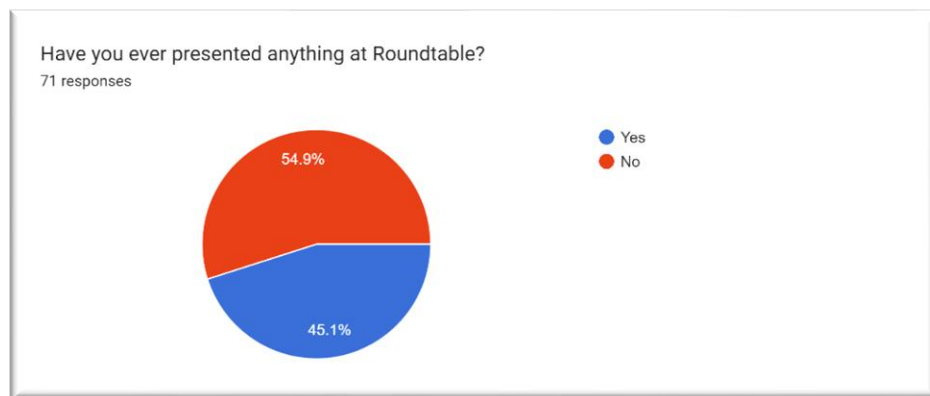
9. What kinds of barriers get in the way of you attending roundtables? (select all that apply) – 60 Responses



Commentary:

The busy/diverse life of the modern Scouter is the overriding barrier to attendance. Moreso than content, delivery, or other complaints.

10. Have you ever presented anything at roundtable? – 71 Responses



Commentary:

This data shows there are opportunities for fresh, new, and different presentations, which is a resounding theme for improvement.

11. Would you be willing to present at a future roundtable? If so, on what topics? – 49 Responses

Commentary:

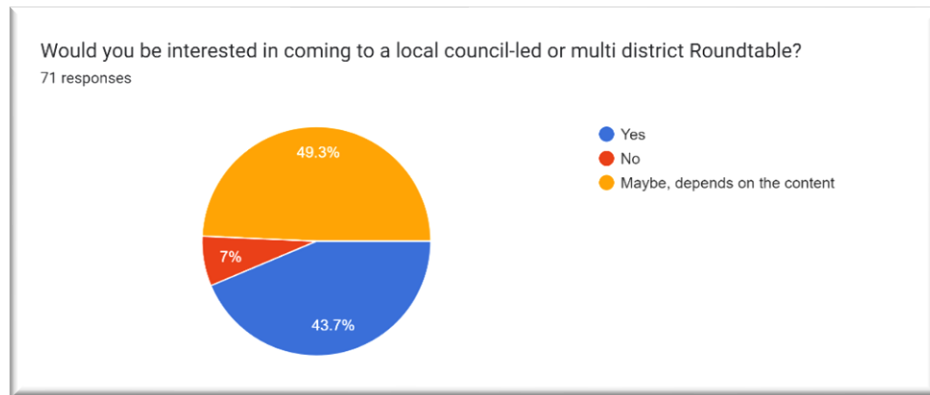
These are more responses that could be shared with roundtable commissioner teams for engagement. Also, many respondents didn't offer a specific topic but stated a willingness to engage with their peers and simply offer support if a topic was requested.

12. What do you think of the idea of holding some or all roundtables as virtual meetings or offering a virtual option? Would you be more or less likely to attend? – 62 Responses

Commentary:

There is a resounding desire to offer a virtual or hybrid option. There is also a clear understanding that historic virtual options tended to be disorganized and disengaging for the virtual participants when it was presented as a hybrid version. Many respondents prefer in-person meetings but appreciate the opportunity to attend virtual sessions. Few are completely against virtual sessions.

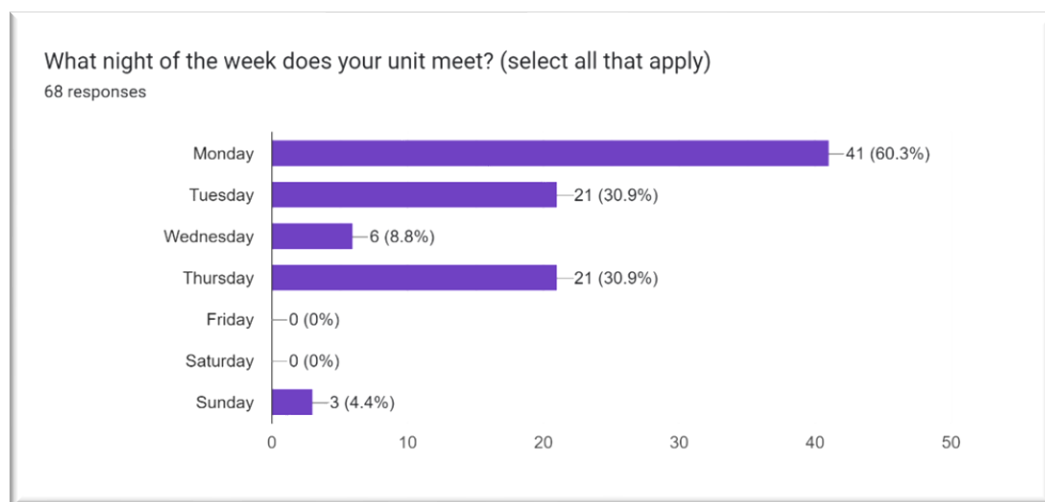
13. Would you be interested in coming to a local council-led or multi district roundtable? – 71 Responses



Commentary:

There is a clear desire for a council-led or multi-district level roundtable option.

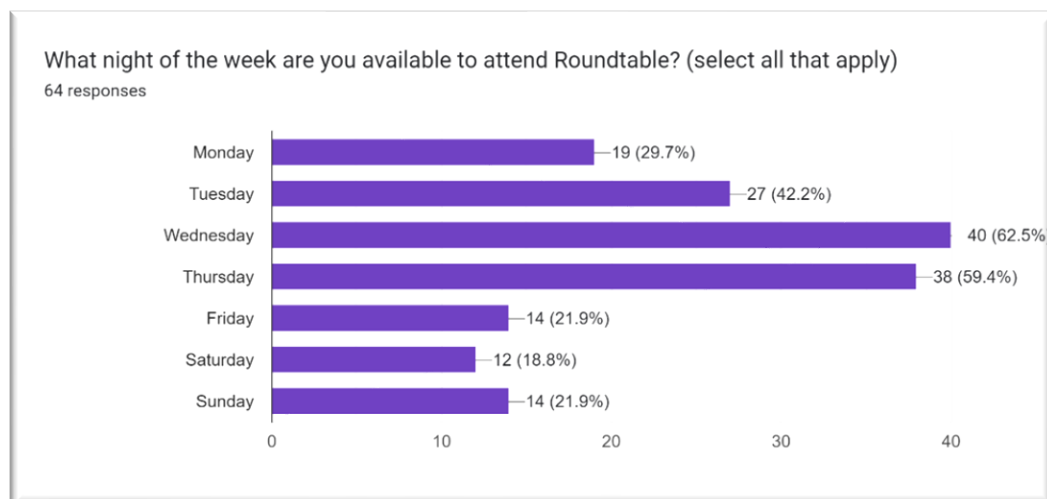
14. What night of the week does your unit meet? (select all that apply) -68 Responses



Commentary:

Although many (not all) roundtables tend to meet on Thursday evenings around the council, a considerable number of units meet on this evening causing attendance conflicts.

15. What night of the week are you available to attend roundtable? (select all that apply) – 64 Responses



Commentary:

Wednesday night (the historic 'church night' in the south) appears to be the best night for many respondents. Followed by the 'typical' Thursday and even weekend options.

OPPORTUNITIES/BARRIERS:

In an ever-changing world, this survey reflects frustration with roundtable delivery. The value offered by roundtable has been questioned by many Scouters. Assumptions vary, but changes in the way differing generations prefer to receive their information in new and different formats appear to be a common consensus. The 2020 pandemic forced roundtables to shift to a virtual format for a period. In the years' since, some districts have chosen to remain virtual only; this is typically based on vast geographies and limited in-person attendance. Other districts have offered hybrid versions that are both in-person and virtual, while some have returned to in-person only meetings.

Of the 63 responses centering on satisfaction levels, the following aggregates are:

- Satisfied/Very Satisfied: 49.2%
- Neutral/Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied: 50.8

With over half the respondents sharing an overall neutral to varying levels of dissatisfaction, there clearly is an opportunity for improving roundtable. 11.4% of respondents also had never been to roundtable or were unaware it was offered. This validates the opportunity to better broadcast and share roundtable across districts.

Recurring themes on neutral or dissatisfaction or non-attendance are the following:

- Value of the topics
- Delivery of the topics

- Clear and advance notice of the meeting dates/times and agenda
- Conflicting events/time/day of week
- Distance/location

Recurring themes for positive or satisfactory ratings are the following:

- Information dissemination
- Fellowship
- Commitment

Potential barriers to the data are the following:

- Several districts are more satisfied w/ their roundtable
- Several districts are less satisfied w/ their roundtable
- 46.5 % of responses are from one district (Natchez Trace)
- Non-blind questionnaire
 - Were respondents honest?

SUGGESTIONS:

Based on data collected, the following are suggestions that may drive roundtable attendance.

In the fast-paced modern world, Scouters want to feel as if they receive value for their time. Scouters are not interested in traveling to meetings for basic information that could be electronically disseminated. They want the information they do receive in-person to be pertinent to their units. Scouters also prefer the information to be shared with preparation, vigor and bearing. New and different voices are important to the modern Scouter.

Scouters want advance notice with a detailed agenda to validate whether spending the time to attend a roundtable is worth their time. The majority see the value of in-person meetings, but they appreciate a well-run virtual option when needed. If virtual, the program must be engaging. Virtual options do give the busy Scouter with conflicting time constraints the opportunity to listen to the topics they need and drop afterwards without the guilt of arriving tardy or leaving a live meeting early.

Location, distance, and the day of the week are a struggle for many Scouters. The option of a rotating location, especially in large geographic districts, is appealing to the modern Scouter. For instance, in the Natchez Trace District, which is much smaller geographically than many other districts, the idea of rotating between the three (3) key areas of Brentwood, Franklin, and Nolensville has been broached.

Many roundtables tend to historically be held on a Thursday evening. Though not a consistent request, the survey showed Wednesday was the best weeknight and it had the lowest number of unit meetings. Wednesday in the south has historically been a church night, but modern Scouters prefer this evening as an option. Hosting the roundtable on Wednesday could potentially drive-up attendance. Occasional weekend meetings were suggested but that could conflict with unit outings.

Those who routinely attend roundtable see the value in sharing information and meeting with other Scouters. Outside the meeting interactions are important to those Scouters. Newer Scouters find veteran Scouters that 'run the show' and are unwilling to embrace and lead change as a challenge and it deters them from attending. They do not like sidebar conversations during meetings and they desire breakout meetings with content for their specific aged Scout in mind. A Cub Scouter finds no value in a meeting geared entirely towards Scouts BSA and vice versa. Many roundtables have evolved into this scenario due to lack of planning on the commissioner team, lack of attendance and institutionalization. New topics are desired from volunteers!

Fellowship and commitment to the program appear to drive many Scouters to continue to attend roundtable even when they are neutral at best with their opinions. Fresh ideas, new presenters, and rotating locations/days/options could drive engagement.

This data collection was heavily skewed to the Natchez Trace District based on proximity and easier access to respondents, followed by Cumberland River. That could create a barrier to the overall data but cutting it by district still showed the common theme for a better product. Several districts are creating an engaging meeting: Trail of Tears, Highland Rim, and Cumberland River are showing improvement. Several districts have negative feedback that consistently centers on a request for new or different presenters and/or openness to innovative ideas and change. Some districts yearn for an occasional in-person option.

The data clearly shows that Scouters that have never presented at roundtable are eager to do so. Many topics and suggestions have been shared that the modern Scouter would like to see and hear. Scouters are eager to volunteer with predetermined topics or even suggested topics. This shows we have engaged leaders that want to improve over the current offering.

The survey asked participants if they would be interested in a multi-district or council-led roundtable. If value-added, they would be interested. This is not likely an option that should be offered monthly, and time-and-distance are certainly a factor, but an occasional offering, which is different than University of Scouting, could be a value-added option. These could be weekend events.

I suggest a train-the-trainer style event that involves roundtable commissioner staff and district commissioners that teaches "what a good roundtable looks like." Consider the Wood Badge "Model Troop Meeting" as a template.

 **WOOD BADGE**

Recommended Presenter
Senior patrol leader and assistant senior patrol leader

Recommended Location
Troop meeting room

Course Connections

Key Wood Badge Themes	Empowering
Connections to Other Sessions	Day Three Troop Meeting and Patrol Leaders' Council

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Delivery Method

- The Day Two troop meeting is facilitated by the senior patrol leader with the involvement of a narrator (the assistant senior patrol leader is recommended) and the assistant Scoutmasters, troop guides, Scoutmaster, and other course staff. (On Day Three, the patrol leaders will assume responsibility for significant portions of the troop meetings.)
- Troop guides will assume responsibility for the pre-opening for the "What Are You Most Afraid Of?" activity.
- A copy of the Day Two meeting plan is included in the patrol leader notebook and the participant notebook. The troop meeting plan is designed to reinforce an efficient method for developing and running a meeting. Participants must have access to everything they need to fulfill their responsibilities.

Introduction

Role-play (1 minute or less): The senior patrol leader, troop guides, and other available staff members portray an unorganized, chaotic troop meeting. Afterwards, the facilitator asks the participants the following questions:

- Is this an effective learning environment?
- Is it a safe environment?
- Is it fun? For whom?
- Does it prepare the Scouts for advancement, facilitate patrols, or provide good leadership opportunities for the Scouts?

Day One Troop Meeting with Narration by Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL)

Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL) (Start of Session): "Welcome, everyone, to this Troop 1 meeting. As the narrator for this meeting, it is my job to point out, as we go along, the seven important parts of a normal Scout troop meeting. I will also describe the function of each of the seven parts. Their order may change. Sometimes the senior

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 **WOOD BADGE**

Troop Meeting Plan

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME	TOTAL TIME
Pre-opening 20 min	"What Are You Most Afraid Of?" activity	Troop guides	20 min	20 min
Opening Ceremony 15 min	Scout Oath and Law New Scout Induction	Senior patrol leader and staff	15 min	35 min
Skills Instruction 10 min	Sanitation	Quarter-master staff or instructor	10 min	45 min
Patrol Meetings 20 min	Review position descriptions and select patrol leaders, assistant patrol leaders, chaplain aide, and scribe Hold elections Note: A chaplain aide cannot be patrol leader for Days Three and Four. Revisit "Start, Stop, Continue" patrol self-assessments Introduce patrol totem (due for SPL approval by dinnertime) flag, and yell/call	Troop guides	20 min	65 min
Interpatrol Activity 20 min	Patrol method first-aid kit game	Troop guides	20 min	80 min
Patrol Leader Installation 5 min	Install newly elected patrol leaders	Senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster	5 min	85 min
Closing 5 min	Scoutmaster's Minute	Scoutmaster	5 min	90 min
Total meeting: 90 min				

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Citations: (2020 Wood Badge Curriculum p 2_02 2)& (2020 Wood Badge Curriculum & Appendix D2_03_01 1)

Create a model roundtable Training for teams with all the proper elements:

- Pre-Opening & Optional Midway
- General Opening
 - Prayer
 - Opening Ceremony
 - Brief General Announcements and Introductions
- Big Rock (Hot) Topic
- Safety Moment
- Commissioner's Minute
- Break-outs by Scouting Program
- Final Brief Q and A
- After the Meeting Fellowship (Cracker Barrel)

Parts of a Roundtable

Roundtables have distinct program elements that help organize the event and manage time effectively. The parts listed below correlate with the program outlines provided in the 60-, 90-, 120-, and 180-minute roundtable program outlines. These may be adapted to fit local needs, but each program portion works together to build a diverse, useful, and relevant roundtable meeting that will engage the audience, convey important information, and add to the knowledge and skills of the attendees.

PRE-OPENING and MIDWAY

The pre-opening activities and the time spent visiting the midway is a definite part of the roundtable program, and not just a time filler for early arrivals. Make your gathering time interesting and active. Set up great resources for your leaders to examine and visit before the formal opening. It's a way to get people to the meeting on time, and it sets the tone for the roundtable that follows.

Organize an interactive, easy-to-join opener such as a get-acquainted game. Ideas for these activities may be found in *Group Meeting Sparkers* (No. 33122) and under the [TIPS: Opening Gathering Period Activities](#) section on the Troop Program Resources website.

The Midway

The Midway is the place where all the activities outside of running your general session and the program specific roundtable session should be located. By moving these outside of your roundtable space, you can eliminate distractions from other Scouters engaging in fellowship and conversation; and, allow those interested in more details about a topic or event to have a place to ask specific questions.

Displays, Information Tables and Parking Lot

Information tables - The majority of interesting materials on national, district or council events and announcements are available here. Have copies of all relevant resources on hand, and if possible invite the appropriate persons representing that activity to discuss and share with your roundtable participants. When done properly, this should relieve the rest of the roundtable from the need for lengthy announcements. Scouters can go to these tables before and during the roundtable when they are easily located in the midway.

Displays - If the resources are available, set out displays that give leaders ideas for their meetings. Encourage leaders to use similar displays at personal, troop or regional unit events.

- BSA programs such as World Friendship Fund, Messengers of Peace, Nova, Adopt-a-School, and religious emblems
- Local events such as details on campfires, day camps, council camp programs, district activities, and local service opportunities
- Neckerschiefs/ideals
- Games that can be made and shared

Parking Lot - There will be time later in the roundtable to answer any questions your participants may have. Make it easy for them to share their thoughts by creating a "parking lot" - a container, a bulletin board, or any method of collecting written suggestions or questions. Be sure to have plenty of blank cards or sticky notes and pens available.

Supplies

Keep a supply of commonly used forms and literature on hand. These could include recruiting fliers, handbooks, leader guides, registration forms, etc.

Registration and Mailboxes

A roundtable team member or potential team member should be assigned to greet participants individually as they arrive, help them sign in at the registration table, give them a name tag, and get them involved in the gathering activity. Getting detailed contact information from attendees is important to following up and extending invitations to future roundtables. Pay particular attention to newcomers. Perhaps you can identify them with a special name tag. Explain the format of your roundtable, including the use of the "parking lot" and make them feel comfortable and welcomed.

While many roundtables distribute information electronically, there will always be paper last-minute updates that need to go out. There also needs to be a place to distribute items from the district and council, such as registrations, awards to be presented in a unit meeting, etc. A "mailbox" allows those items to be sorted to each unit. File folders with Unit Numbers in a crate works really well and allows for easy transport.

A wise unit commissioner attending roundtable can check those "mailboxes" during the meeting, and if no one from the unit has emptied the mailbox, the unit commissioner can visit the unit and review them with the leaders, turning that into a quality unit contact in commissioner book.

district commissioner for roundtables calls the meeting to order and starts welcoming all participants to the meeting. Start on time. It is unfair to those who arrived on time to have to wait. Beginning with an enthusiastic greeting will set the tone for a fun evening of learning and fellowship.

Prayer

In keeping with the Scout's duty to God, include a nonsectarian prayer in the general opening session. As some people aren't comfortable praying in public, ensure success by asking a team member or participant in advance to offer the prayer. Begin with an appropriate introduction such as "prepare yourself for prayer as is your custom."

Opening Ceremony

Use a simple opening ceremony that leaders will be able to duplicate in their units. You may wish to delegate this opportunity to a particular unit or use participants if appropriate. Use the U.S. flag to emphasize citizenship, respect for the flag, and character development. Other options, such as reciting the Scout Oath, Baden-Powell words of wisdom, celebrating the birthday of Scouting, or demonstrating alternate flag ceremonies, will provide ideas that unit leaders can use to liven up their unit programs.

Introductions and Announcements

Although you have already welcomed those in attendance, extend a special welcome to newcomers. You may wish to present them with special recognition or a certificate. Make them feel welcome as they'll bring additional unit leaders with them to the next roundtable.

Be sure to explain the flow of the evening's activities. Point out the various program groups and where they will be gathering. Take care of housekeeping items such as the location of restrooms and any policies specific to the building in which you are meeting. This is especially important for newcomers - do not assume everyone already knows.

Next, the chairs or committee members responsible for upcoming events give brief promotional announcements. (It is a commercial not an infomercial!) Limit each announcement to a short introductory statement about the event and where more information can be found, such as fliers and websites. Something along the lines of "Hi I am here to promote 'X' my flyer is (optional color paper is printed on) I will be in the back of the room if you would like more information after Roundtable".

Do not let announcements hijack the time and program needs of unit! Keep them to a minute or less and emphasize that the fliers contain detailed information.

Big Rock Training Topic

The Big Rock topic is information relevant to all Scout leaders across BSA programs. It is important to include a Big Rock topic as part of each month's opening activity. Big Rocks are aimed at reminding unit leaders of basic information that helps them execute a better program. While a number of Big Rocks are provided in this guide, their use is flexible based on the needs of the council or district. If a topic that is not covered needs to be addressed, use the template provided at

the end of the Big Rock section to design a local Big Rock topic. Big Rocks from previous roundtable guides are archived on the [Roundtable Support](#) page, near the bottom of the page.

Commissioner's Minute

This is the chance for the assistant district commissioner for roundtable, or others as appropriate, to give a meaningful thought regarding a point of the Scout Law, or other significant and uplifting message. The Commissioner's Minute helps bring the general session to a close and transition to the program-specific breakout. Explain that the next session will begin in a few minutes and be sure to point out the locations.

Scouts BSA LEADER BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Icebreaker

A brief exercise can help get people settled into the room and focused on the roundtable theme. It also provides a couple of minutes to ensure that everyone has made it to the breakout session and to start building excitement around the program topics.

Sample Ceremony/Skit

A sample ceremony or skit is presented to show leaders how Scouts BSA purposes and ideals can be symbolized in a variety of fun activities. When you have awards to be presented use the opportunity to hand them out using a ceremony. If some troops are noted for excellent ceremonies and skits, the roundtable commissioner might ask those leaders to perform one for the group. Be sure to involve as many participants as possible.

Tips for Troop Meetings

Unit leaders can always use a new idea or approach to keep troop meetings interesting, diverse, and exciting.

Roundtable is a great place to share these tips, whether they are pulled from training resources, shared among participants, collected from commissioner observations during unit visits or found in the "Tips for Troop" section of this guide.

Many books and media resources developed by the BSA are listed throughout this guide. These resources may offer tips, or one or two of them could be introduced at this time. Explain how these materials can be obtained, and how they might help the units deliver a better program for Scouts. Often, leaders are looking for new resources but are simply unaware of where to find them.

Keep in mind that there are also many great books, periodicals, and other media tools produced by knowledgeable groups and experts outside the BSA. Feel free to highlight these as well; but, remember to point out any BSA policies that may be in conflict with the materials referenced.

Scouts BSA Interest Topic

The interest topic is a feature designed to add variety to roundtable programming. Examples might include a training highlight, a review of an upcoming annual event, advancement information, or any of a number of topics

related to Scouts BSA issues.

Several interest topics are provided in this guide and can be used as appropriate, based on council or district priorities. The topics are written as suggested outlines for a discussion or presentation, and each may be customized if desired to fit the needs and interests of the local roundtable audience.

The interest topics include a number of recommended presentation styles designed to create more variety in how roundtable is presented. Varying the presentation style from month to month can encourage greater participation by units and help keep roundtable exciting.

Four basic presentation formats are used for the interest topics. Different formats can be used throughout the program year to create greater interaction and idea sharing among units. A good suggestion is to mix the topics in a way that provides a variety of roundtable formats and increases audience engagement.

- **Expert presentation** features a speaker, often someone with special training or from an outside group, who imparts knowledge to the audience.
- **Open forum** allows participants to share information or ideas, such as possible camping locations or program themes.
- **Directed discussion** blends a presentation and an open forum, as the presenter guides a conversation on the topic and interacts with the audience to achieve certain goals.
- **Roundtable fair or round-robin** is a multi-station event, such as a district program preview night, where participants move between various stations and topics.

Sometimes the interest topic itself and the participants' skill levels will suggest the style to use. For example, a back-packing interest topic directed toward leaders who are not experts might be best presented as a training session.

If the participants are mostly experienced back-packers, an open forum sharing ideas and trails may be more valuable to them.

No matter what presentation format you select, look for ways to help everyone actively engage in the roundtable instead of just being an audience. As in a troop meeting, a fun activity, some hands-on experience, and a good Q&A will create a more enjoyable event and enhance the learning opportunity.

Several topics are provided in this guide as outlines that can be adapted for each roundtable environment.

Councils or districts should use the included template to design local topics for additional program needs. Interest topics from previous roundtable guides are archived at www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Commissioners/roundtable.aspx.

Program Feature of the Month

Scouts are looking for an action-packed program full of fun activities. In this section, roundtable commissioners delve into various program features for ideas to help units deliver quality programs.

Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Units (volumes 1, 2, and 3) provides units with complete monthly meeting plans, outing ideas, and resources. Additional features include recommendations for related advancement and awards, leadership applications, and references to other materials and web resources.

The council roundtable plan should help establish the month in which to present each feature based upon what is most appropriate to the local area. Councils and roundtable commissioners may also choose to come up with program ideas of their own to meet the needs of local units.

Ensure that each feature is presented at roundtable at least three to six months before that program will be used at the unit level. This gives the unit leaders time to gather resources, get training, and work with the youth leaders to present the program in an effective manner.

Consider reaching out to local experts to present this portion of the roundtable. Many subject matter experts, whether or not they have a Scouting background, are eager to share their knowledge of a particular activity.

Cultivating relationships with them will help in gaining community support for the Scouting program. Make sure to provide the experts with any BSA materials they may need in advance; for example, they should come to the roundtable knowing what the *Guide to Safe Scouting* says about their particular area of expertise.

Also, be sure to offer an appropriate thank you for their assistance. If possible, a gift of some sort that is personalized by the district can serve as an expression of gratitude to their time and effort on behalf of Scouting.

Open Forum (Q&A)

At time permits, roundtable personnel should answer questions posted on the "parking lot" or any other questions that have come up as a result of the roundtable discussions. For unique, unit-specific questions, ask for a way to get in touch with the individual after the meeting to provide the information needed.

Closing and Commissioner's Minute

This is done in each breakout group, so it is not necessary to reemphasize all the Cub Scouting groups. The content should be thought-provoking and inspirational. It offers encouragement to the participants to use the skills they learned at the roundtable to provide a better program for their youth.

The Commissioner's Minute can serve as a model for the Scoutmaster's Minute at the end of their unit meetings.

Be sure to end the roundtable program on time as a courtesy to your attendees and presenters.

AFTER THE MEETING

Fellowship (Cracker Barrel)

Knowing that a healthy snack or refreshing beverage awaits may be just the incentive one needs to attend the roundtable. Sometimes simple is best. This fellowship time following the scheduled portion of the roundtable meeting is often a super

opportunity for Scouters to connect with each other. However, time constraints must be respected for those needing to clean up. Checking with the venue ahead of time that no food restrictions exist on use of the facility is critical. Scouters should feel free to leave at their convenience.

This is a good time to collect Getting to Know You surveys or Roundtable Program Evaluation forms. These completed forms may give you ideas for planning next month's program and help ensure you are addressing the needs of the leaders in your district.

Note: In some of the planning outlines, this function is slated for a different time, rather than the end of the meeting.

Team Meeting

At the close of each roundtable, conduct a short team session to evaluate the meeting, and review the plans for next month's meeting. Make sure everyone involved is ready, and ensure the availability of all necessary materials.

The roundtable commissioner and assistant roundtable commissioners should brainstorm and discuss ideas for a follow-up plan for units whose leaders are not attending roundtable. Read and review the Getting to Know You surveys and the Roundtable Program Evaluations. The key to new ideas that will pull in new units and maintain leaders' attendance may be found in these forms.

It is acceptable to perform this function another day to better serve the roundtable team as long as these after meeting functions take place.

Citation: ([Parts-of-a-roundtable](#))

ROUNDTABLE 75-MINUTE FORMAT	
-15:00 – 00:00	NETWORKING TIME (Optional)
00:00 – 10:00	OPENING 1. Welcome 2. Pledge of Allegiance 3. Scout Oath & Law 4. Announcements via handouts, website postings, email, etc.
10:00 – 25:00	HOT TOPICS 1. National or council information that significantly impacts local Scouting or requires immediate volunteer action (such as program changes, new membership recruitment tools, fee changes, new opportunities, etc.)
25:00 – 30:00	SAFETY MOMENT
30:00 – 35:00	MEMBERSHIP MOMENT
35:00 – 65:00	BREAKOUTS (TRAINING & DISCUSSION) 1. Cub Scouts 2. Scouts BSA
65:00 – 75:00	CLOSING
75:00 – 90:00	NETWORKING TIME (Optional)

NOTES: Suggested times may be adjusted as necessary. The roundtable format may also be used for virtual, in-person and hybrid roundtables.

Opening, Hot Topics, Safety Moments, Membership Moments, Breakouts and Closings are supported by National Service Center videos or other National Service Center resources. National Service Center videos can be downloaded from the Roundtable Resources webpage and shown to on-site participants <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/roundtable-support/>

Boy Scouts of America, June 2023

Citation: (<https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/roundtable-support/>)

Safety Moments

Safety Moments are updated frequently, however we encourage you to use the topics as a library of content that best fits your roundtable needs. For Additional Safety Moments visit <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/>.

For ideas on how to use a Safety Moment view this video: [Using a Safety Moment \(2:25\)](#)

- [Safety Moment Gaga Ball](#) ****NEW****
- [Safety Moment Anxiety](#) ****NEW****
- [Scouting Safely](#)
- [Winter Activities](#)
- [Food Allergies](#)
- [Prohibited Activities](#)

Citation: (<https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/roundtable-support/roundtable-planning-resources/>)

Many modern Scouters have never seen a roundtable in this format. Even many members of district commissioner teams entered Scouting after the pandemic and have struggled just to ensure the overall heart of the program thrives. These volunteers haven't had the opportunity to see a well-run roundtable.

Training these teams would be an ideal solution. Roundtable teams could then take these learnings back to their individual district and create new and different models that suit them best. Ideas: Monthly in-person or hybrid; once a quarter live with others virtual, quarterly multi-district, biannual council roundtables could all be options if they are valuable.

Given the opportunity to witness a model roundtable and by recruiting fresh faces to deliver the content in a vibrant and flexible manner, roundtable commissioner teams could truly embody the opportunity to be the heart, build relationships and change the lives of both the modern Scouter and the youth they serve.

Key Findings:

- **Satisfaction Levels:** The survey revealed a split in satisfaction with approximately 49.2% satisfied and 50.8% neutral or dissatisfied. This indicates a critical area for improvement in the roundtable experience.
- **Attendance Trends:** A substantial number of respondents cited a lack of time and conflicting schedules as barriers to attendance. Key drivers for attendance include the desire for information, networking, and fellowship.
- **Content Relevance:** Attendees expressed a need for topics that are pertinent to their specific roles within Scouting, suggesting a preference for breakout sessions tailored to different age-specific programs.
- **Meeting Formats:** There is a strong interest in hybrid and virtual options for roundtable meetings, especially since many Scouters now value flexibility in attending due to busy schedules.
- **Engagement and Presentation:** Many respondents indicated a willingness to present at future roundtables highlighting a potential for greater engagement if varied voices are incorporated into the presentations.

Recommendations and Requests:

Improving roundtable format is one of the top three initiatives in 2025 for the incoming council commissioner. While uncovering roundtable gaps in this project and reviewing some of the high-level feedback, he has requested taking these learnings and implementing a small team for a next phase project in the coming year. The team is set to share these findings at the council commissioner summit in January with a presentation called “Reimagining Roundtable.”

The request is also to create a communication mechanism with district and roundtable commissioners. This work group will expand the information uncovered in this survey and continue to collect more pertinent data based on the specific requests and needs of the workgroup. The author will reiterate that for this project, I was requested to gather information on independently without burdening district or roundtable commissioners. The output of this project has created a request for implementation. After

sharing this at a deeper level and gathering more information, the goal for the council commissioner is to create a model roundtable training with the hope of rolling it out in late 2025.

1. **Improved Content and Presentation & Encouragement of New Faces:** Volunteers want pertinent information on relevant topics. Next steps are to ensure that roundtable commissioners and their teams are fully equipped with the tools to run an engaging meeting that will drive volunteers to attend. New and different delivery methods designed to enhance satisfaction and value are necessary.

The survey has collected both content requests as well as potential offerings from willing presenters. The follow-up project has the opportunity dig deeper into these requests, at a district level and build content based on the specific needs of the local volunteers. Between the list collected from this project and any potential future surveys each district will have ample new and different faces to deliver the content. Fresh presenters have the potential to introduce current ideas and maintain the relevance for which the audience is yearning.

2. **Schedule Adjustments:** Consider holding roundtables on alternative nights. Wednesdays are the best night for many of the respondents of this survey. Historically in this region, many volunteers attended church services on this evening, but based on the changing demographics and the requests this could be a better overall night. Further input at a district level could discover if there is a better evening of the week. Rotating locations could accommodate more participants and drive attendance if suitable locations could be found.

Occasional multi-district or even council level roundtables have intrigue from survey respondents. This could be particularly helpful for smaller population districts, so long as distance is not prohibitive. This is why this is likely to be an occasional solution.

3. **Model roundtable training:** The initial suggestion as an output of this project was to implement training for roundtable leaders to ensure meetings are structured effectively, providing a clear agenda and engaging formats. As stated at the outset of my recommendations, the incoming council commissioner feels this is something that needs to be implemented within the year. Further development, based on more research and specific district needs and requests, will clearly aid in developing this final product.

4. **Hybrid Options:** Establish a clear and engaging virtual component for those unable to attend in person ensuring high-quality experiences for all. This would certainly be a phase-two follow-up to the current request for rolling out the model roundtable training. Virtual meetings have a barrier and can be particularly frustrating for the virtual participants in the hybrid setting. This struggle has already been attested to by past districts that have run hybrid meetings and college of commissioner science offerings. The recommendation is to master the live meeting setting and then implement a virtual and/or hybrid version at a future date.

While offering a hybrid meeting option is an endgame goal, it is a longer-term next step for the future if it is to prove successful. Having the team trained and prepared to offer an in-person option that is successful and drawing in volunteers will be the first step in a multi-step for engaging Scouters. Rolling out a premature version of a hybrid roundtable before the team has

the basics down would only cause more frustration for the volunteers committing their time to the program.

5. **Shared Successes & Promotion:** If the output of this survey and the project leads to increased roundtable attendance, engagement, and success for the youth we serve, then it is paramount to share any successes with other commissioner teams within the area and/or even the nation. Also, if a better product is developed the districts need to find new and compelling ways to get people to attend the meetings. Marketing to newer Scouters is key. This could be done via word of mouth with happy volunteers, social media, email, and other mediums. When marketing these future events advance notice with clear and concise agendas is a clear request for success.

Conclusion:

Roundtable has historically been viewed as an essential vehicle for communication and support among Scouters. However, the current format and delivery of roundtable is not delivering the value many Scouters thrive and wish for in many districts here in the Middle Tennessee Council. Without significant changes attendance will continue to dwindle in our fast-paced society. Getting back to the basics and training current roundtable teams how to properly execute is paramount to success. Fresh faces with new and different ideas can drive success. Scouting America offers many untapped resources to run a successful roundtable on the national website. Opening this content and merely sharing it at a meeting is not a substitute for success. Learning how to engage the volunteer at a district level, just as learning how to engage the Scout at the unit level is the method needed for a successful outcome. Volunteers do this for the youth they serve. They desire training, shared learnings and innovative ideas to help with their youth. If our commissioners can commit to 'training the trainer' and implement the aforementioned recommendations of new and different content, fresh faces, schedule adjustments for roundtables and eventually offer a successful hybrid version then we can better serve the meeting's purpose and provide significant value to the Scouting community in Middle Tennessee and beyond.

RoundtableInterestQuestionnaire

smkiddmtcbsa@gmail.com [Switch account](#)



* Indicates required question

Email

Your email

Please select your district:

Choose



What is your primary Unit?

☐ Cub Scouts

☐ Scouts BSA

☐ Venturing



Do you know what a District Roundtable is? Have you ever attended one?

- ☐ I don't know what a District Roundtable is, and I've never attended one before.
- ☐ I know what a District Roundtable is, but I've never attended one before.
- ☐

If you have attended, how satisfied are you with your District Roundtables?

- ☐ VerySatisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐

Why did you give that rating?

Your answer

If you have attended, when did you first start attending

Your answer

How often do you attend Roundtables?

- ☐ Never
- ☐
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ 3-5 times a year
- ☐ Almost every one
- ☐ Always

A District Roundtable is a monthly meeting held within a specific scouting district where unit leaders gather to receive training, share program ideas, network with

.....

Please describe why you **choose to attend or not attend** District Roundtables?

Your answer

What makes you come back each month? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Fellowship
- ☐ Fun
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Information/Trainin
- ☐

What could we change to make you more likely to attend Roundtable each month?

Your answer

What Roundtable topics are of interest to you and would make you want to attend?

Feel free to include past topics that you liked a lot.

Your answer

Are there any Roundtable topics you have seen that are less interesting or seem unimportant?

Your answer

What kinds of barriers get in the way of you attending Roundtables? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Needing childcare
- ☐ Work schedule
- ☐ Distance
- ☐ Conflicting meetings
- ☐

Have you ever presented anything at Roundtable?

☐ Yes

☐

Would you be willing to present at a future Roundtable? **If so, on what topics?**

Your answer

What do you think of the idea of holding some or all Roundtables as virtual meetings or offering a virtual option? Would you be more or less likely to attend?

Your answer

Would you be interested in coming to a local council-led or multi district Roundtable?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐

What night of the week does your unit meet? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐

What night of the week are you available to attend Roundtable? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐

Submit
form

Clear

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

<https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/roundtable-support/>

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcqlclefindmkaj/https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Parts-of-a-roundtable.pdf>

2020 Wood Badge Curriculum p 2_02 2)& (2020 Wood Badge Curriculum & Appendix D2_03_01 1

Parts-of-a-roundtable: www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Parts-of-a-Roundtable.pdf

Roundtable 75-minute format: <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/roundtable-support/>

Safety Moments: <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/roundtable-support/roundtable-planning-resources/>

SURVEY INVITE LINK

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWA9WtPlv3fEdeaL-YVlujePW6g-bz94yBNV04IHtMbJxrmw/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0>