

How to get your voice heard

The following steps can be used for getting your voice heard at all levels in scouting or in your community.

This can be used when trying to implement a new policy, propose a new idea for a camp, or start something new in your area.

Step 1: Assembling a Team

Before you start developing a proposal or presenting an idea, you should try to get a few people together who are interested in the same cause or are willing to help.

At each meeting, elect a note taker and someone to keep things on track. This could be a chair and secretary if it's a committee taking on the work.

Keep all communications and notes together, this could be on a shared folder on Google Drive or Microsoft Teams.

Find out what policies/protocols/processes are already in place in relation to your idea, so that you aren't fighting for something that is already in place.

Name all documents in the same format, this will make it easier to find.

Step 2: Set out your Aims

This is an important step to make sure everyone is on the same page!

Write down what you are looking for, it can be easy over time to forget what you originally set out to accomplish.

Keep these as your core values or a guide, although if it changes that's ok too!

If there are multiple people, make sure everyone in the group gets a say.

Make sure everything is agreed on by the end of each meeting and make a plan on how you will move forward.

Step 3: Gathering any Relevant Information

When making proposals, it is important to make sure you have any relevant information and the sources (ie. where you got the information from).

Go through your core values/guide you made to see what information you need.

Look for past information about your topic, and pick out what information would be useful.

Don't forget to include costs if they may occur.

You might not use all the information that is gathered but it's better to have it on hand if needed.



Keep a note of all of the sources you got information from as this will confirm your facts and back up your proposal.

Step 4: Starting your draft

It is important to keep your document/proposal clean and easy to read.

- Start off by writing the main body of your document.
- Use bullet points and short, simple sentences, as using paragraphs and long sentences can confuse the reader and look like a lot of information.

Don't:

- I think we should have more county events for the venture section. Ventures seem to staff lots of events for the county, but we don't have many fun events that we can actually enjoy and do activities/scouting for ourselves. We want more events like hostels, MPCs, adventure events, challenges, go karting etc.

Do:

- There are not many activities for ventures to do, apart from staffing events for younger sections.
- We would like more events like:
 - Hostels
 - MPC
 - Adventure events
 - Challenges
 - Go Karting, etc

When using bullet points it looks clean and it is easier to read. If more detail is required it can be given at a later stage or at a follow up meeting.

Once the main body is drafted, send it out to everyone on your team. Give it some time for people to review, leaving a few days before you have to finally send it off.

Step 5: Gathering Contact Information

It is important to make sure the proposal is sent to the relevant person or team.

Scouting:

- Section: Approach your section leader directly.
- Scout Group: Ask one of your section scouters for the contact information of the group leader/group secretary/group council member. If possible, approach the member of the group council directly.



- Scout County/Province: you can contact your county/provincial reps or find out the email address of the county/provincial team from your section scouter.
- National:
 - National Youth Forum: you can put your proposal down as a motion at National Youth Forum which takes place in January each year.
 - Annual General Meeting (AGM): your scout group could submit your proposal to the AGM which happens every year. It is the company meeting of Scouting Ireland. Your proposal will be voted on by all members of the AGM and you may be expected to speak about your proposal when you present it.
 - Department: You can send your proposal directly to different teams/departments. Email addresses can be found here: <https://www.scouts.ie/Contact-Us/>

Your local community:

You can email your proposal to any of your local councillors, senators or TDs. All TD and senator email addresses follow the same pattern:

[\[firstname\].\[surname\]@oireachtas.ie](#)

eg. john.smith@oireachtas.ie

You can view who your TD, senator or the relevant minister is at <https://www.whoismytd.com/>
Councillor emails can easily be found on your local council's website. A list of all local authorities can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/942f74-local-authorities/>.

Step 6: Finalising your Document

Once you have agreed on your final draft, it is important to make sure the document has all the relevant information.

You should split the document up into the following sections:

- Title page: Name the document, say who it's from and the date sent. If there are many versions of the document, name it as the Final Version.
- Introduction – explain who you are and why you are proposing this idea.
- Overview – provide a brief summary of your proposal/idea.
- Aims - if there were any main aims/hopeful outcomes from your group for your proposal, be sure to include them here.
- Main body - this is where you outline what you are looking for. Make sure this is easy to read and has all the relevant information like costs, facts, timelines, plans, etc.
- Summary - if the document is long you might want to leave a small conclusion at the end.



- Details/Bibliography - here is where you can put any references you made in the document/a list of the sources you used in preparing the document. You can also put any acronyms used in the document.

Naming Documents and formatting.

Naming documents:

Naming documents can be important, this will make sure all documents are simple and easy to find.

Draft documents:

[Team Name or purpose]_[the document]_[initials of authors]_[Draft or Final Version]_[date]

For example: 111thVentures - More County Events – AS/KR - Draft 2.1 - 06/07/2020

Final Document (for when you attach it in your email)

[Title]_[Group]_for_[whom]_[date]

For example: More County Activities - 111thVentures - for County CPC - 06/07/2020

Formatting:

It is important to make sure your document is easy to read and that you pick the correct fonts and sizes. The standard fonts and sizes for documents are:

- Font: Calibri
- Headings: Font size 14
- Body: Font size 12

Use bold for main headings and underline for any sub-headings.

Use italics for quotes, facts or examples.

Keep the page to simple black writing for main body work.

Put a header and page number onto the document.

Once you are happy with the document, run through it and make sure all of the spellings and grammar are correct. If possible, have somebody else read through your document as you may not spot some of your own mistakes.

Step 7: Sending your proposal

When sending your document, you should send it as a PDF. This will ensure any formatting you put in won't change between different computers.

When sending by email, first introduce yourself and let them know briefly what it is you are looking for.

Ensure that your subject line is short and simple. This may encourage the receiver of the email to open it as they will know what your email is about.



Make sure to use an email address that will look good. i.e. [\[name\].\[surname\]99@gmail.com](mailto:[name].[surname]99@gmail.com) rather than Gamer4life@gmail.com.

Sample email:

Subject Line: Proposal to Implement More County Venture Camps

Dear John/Mr. Smith/To whom it may concern,

I hope you are keeping well.

My name is Jane Brady and I am writing on behalf of the 111th Venture section. I am emailing you today with a proposal regarding the implementation of more county venture camps. I have attached my proposal below.

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and if you have any questions please let me know.

Yours in Scouting / Yours sincerely (if you know the person) / Yours faithfully (if you don't know the person),

Jane Brady
111th Venture Section Secretary

Step 8: Follow Up

If you don't receive a response within a week, it may be a good idea to send another email asking if they received the original email. Make sure to attach the proposal again, so they don't have to go looking for it.

If they don't respond to the second email, somebody else may be able to deal with your query. You could send an email to a different department, or to a different section of the organisation.

If you have received a positive response, ask what will be done regarding your proposal in the future. Tell them you and your team are very willing to help, as this may help speed up the process of implementing your proposal. Ask them when you should expect actions to be taken on your proposal.

If you have received a negative response, ask why it can't be done. Ask if there is another way of implementing this, or if there's something else you can do to make the changes you want to see.

