

## Running an Online Forum

### What is an online forum?

A forum is a meeting or medium where ideas and views on a particular issue or issues can be exchanged. Every year forums take place across the country in each scout county, province, nationally. Due to the current climate, this year online forums are highly recommended. This will be an online meeting for youth members to discuss relevant issues.

### How to plan/run an online forum?

- The first thing to be considered when planning an online forum is what platform you will be using. A platform with a waiting room is suggested such as zoom (This is to ensure ratios remain controlled in line with GDPR).
- Secondly a date and time should be selected and advertised however necessary, through Instagram accounts, Facebook pages, Group newsletters, Section meetings or emails.
- Thirdly you should begin to plan the actual forum itself, this can be done in the form of a timetable. Time is essential in the successful running of a forum especially when it comes to running a forum online. The forum should be running for an estimated number of participants i.e. avoid planning programme for large groups if only a small group will actually attend.
- To begin the forum, it is a good idea to split the members into separate pods in different calls in order to get a maximum number of participants involved. Pods should also be run for separate sections i.e. do not have Rover Scouts and Scouts in the same pod. These calls can be easily monitored by scouters or youth members that are running the forum.
- It is best to run one or two icebreakers before moving into any discussions. This is important because it will start the day off in a social way, and it will give everyone the chance to get to know each other. These icebreakers can be very easy to organise, such as 2 truths and 1 lie, speed friending, or a quick Kahoot quiz.
- It is an excellent idea to invite special guests to speak at your forum, they can have a background in scouting or not. Special guests can be a great break in the day giving participants time to relax while also learning. Special guests can range from mental health speakers to motivational speakers, there are no limits. You can also have these guests speaking to all participants at once or circulate through the sections, it all depends on your timetable.
- Once again you can split up your sections and begin to discuss some topical debates. This will divide the passionate speakers from the crowd. Debate topics can be ridiculous or serious ranging from statements such as 'The voting age in Ireland should be lowered to 16' to 'The correct name for a neckerchief is a necker'. It is best to run a mix of heavy and light-hearted debate topics to keep participants entertained and engaged.
- It is important to give participants a lunch break to relax themselves before the heavier topics of the afternoon. Depending on your timing you can give a thirty minute to an hour break for lunch. You could encourage participants to do something active or during the break, you could do this by setting an optional lunchtime challenge of 'Find 5 objects outside beginning with the letter A'.
- Straight after lunch is an ideal time to run through motions proposed by groups or participants. These motions can be on anything about the running of Scouting Ireland from a



group level right the way up to national level. The delegate should have a speech prepared explaining their motion to everyone. Once this 2-minute speech is completed, the floor is opened for any questions by anyone to the person proposing the motion. Once all questions are answered or however many the chair allows there is a vote to see whether or not the motion is passed or denied. This can be done by a raising of hands.

- Once all of the motions are carried out it is election time. On a national level it is preferred to give notice before the event if you shall be running for the role of a national youth representative. On a provincial/county it may not necessarily be essential. Anyone who cares to run for youth representative should have a speech prepared. Once all speeches are completed it is voting time.
- Once the voting is complete and counted up it is time to reveal the results. When the results are announced you are able to finish the forum by thanking everyone and shutting down the call and all extra chat rooms.

**Communications:** It is important to stay in contact with relevant people while planning an event such as an online forum. If you are planning a county forum, an email should be sent informing all groups in the county of the event. Further emails should be exchanged discussing how many participants will be attending per troop as well as how many are interested in running for the title of youth representative. It is also wise to attain the email address of all participants in order to send them zoom links for the main forum call as well as their pod/side call. If you are looking to organise a special guest/guest speaker it is important to email them in advance asking them to join as they could say no. This is important too as you can inform them of all the details to see if they are free at their allocated time.

**Sample Timetable:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Person in charge</b>
9.30	Introduction	CPC
9.40	Ice Breakers	County reps
10.00	Guest Speaker 1	All
10.30	Debate	County Reps
11.30	Guest Speaker 2	All
12.00	Lunch	N/A
1.00	Motions	Chair/Participants
2.00	Election	All
3.00	Finish	CPC

**How to run the election process online:**

There are many possible ways to handle online voting. One possible website you may use to create an online anonymous vote is Survey Monkey. First create a poll where only a single answer choice is allowed, and label each answer choice with the name of a candidate. Use the email invitation collector. This ensures each respondent may only vote one time per email address. You are also able to keep track of who has or hasn't voted while keeping votes anonymous. Finally, go to the 'Analyse Results' section of the survey. As the responses come in, you will be able to see which candidate has the majority. To distribute the poll just email the link to all of the participants.



For motions of the forum, it may be better to do polls in Zoom, or the web conferencing app that you are using. If this won't work, you could set up individual forms on Survey Monkey or Google Forms.

