

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL

SCOUTING AMERICA

Be Prepared:

Planning and Promoting Council Events

A guide for the volunteers who make our events happen • WMC-OPS-2026-01 • Effective October 1, 2026

Our events happen because Scouters give up Saturdays, load trailers in the rain, and stay to sweep the floor. Nothing here comments on your commitment. This fixes a sequencing problem: events were announced before they were planned, leaving the Scouts with a thinner program, the families paying more than they should, and the chair carrying a gap personally.

No event is promoted — no flyer, no post, no email, no save-the-date, no registration link — until three things have been turned in and approved: a budget with a 25% cushion, a named committee, and a full timeline. In addition, activities that include 1 – 3 nights of overnight participation require that a Short Term Camp Administrator is assigned.

Those three things are your Event Packet. Packet approval is your clearance to promote. It is the same thing we teach Scouts to do before a trek.

Does this apply to my event?

Yes, if the council or a district name is on it: camporees and district outings, derbies and family events, fundraisers and donor events, camp specialty weeks and off-season programs at Moses, fee-based training, and recruitment events that cost money or need staff support. Staff-led fundraising events follow the same process; we are volunteer-led and professionally guided, and the office leads by example.

It does not apply to your own unit's activities, funded by your unit. This covers events carrying the council's name and the council's risk.

Key One — The Budget, with a 25% Cushion

Use the council budget worksheet. Show every source of money coming in (with the attendance you are assuming), every cost going out, a cushion line of at least 25% of those costs, your break-even number of Scouts, and the fee with the math that produced it.

The cushion is not padding. It covers the caterer's increase, the tent you rented when it rained, the thirty Scouts who walked in. Add it before you set the fee; otherwise, it gets shaved off to make the price look better and disappears exactly when it was supposed to work. Unspent, it returns to the council general fund.

District klondike — how the math runs	Amount
Food, awards, materials, propane, printing	\$4,000
25% cushion	\$1,000
Total cost to plan against	\$5,000
Scouts expected (last three years)	150

District klondike — how the math runs	Amount
Fee set at	\$35

Without the cushion, the fee looks like \$27. That is the number that gets you in trouble in February. Your staff advisor and Finance Lead will build this with you — ask early.

Key Two — The Committee

No Scouter plans an event alone. Turn in names with a job beside each, and only people who have actually said yes. If required, contact the council NCAP chair when the planning process begins to have an administrator assigned to work with your committee.

Job	What they do
Event Chair	Runs the show and owns the outcome
Staff Advisor	Your council professional and your line into the office
Finance Lead	Budget, spending, purchase order requests, receipts
Program Lead	Schedule, stations, activities
Logistics Lead	Site, equipment, food, setup and teardown, safety
Promotion Lead	Works with council marketing — does not freelance
Registration Lead	Sign-ups, payments, refunds, check-in
Short Term Camp Admin	Assists with planning, budgeting and ensures NCAP standards are met

One person can wear two hats on a smaller event. Three jobs stay three people: Event Chair, Staff Advisor, Finance Lead — the same reasoning as two-deep leadership. Hold one committee meeting before you submit and send the notes.

Key Three — The Timeline

Every milestone gets a date and a named owner: packet submitted, approval, promotion launch, registration open, early-bird close, go / no-go, volunteer roster set, purchase orders in, orders placed, final headcount, event weekend, and close-out within 30 days. When appropriate, the NCAP Local Council Authorization and Assessment Declaration and NCAP Site Appraisal Form are submitted with the packet.

The go/no-go date is the most important line on the page. Name a date and a number: "By March 1, we need 80 Scouts." It must fall before you owe anyone money you cannot get back. Miss the number, and you and your staff advisor bring it to the Scout Executive to scale, move, or stand down. That is not failure; it is why the date exists.

What counts as promoting

Anything that tells someone outside your committee that the event exists: flyers and handouts, social posts and ads, emails and texts, the council calendar, an open registration page, press, announcements at roundtable or a unit meeting, and teasers.

A save-the-date is promotion. Announcing a date is the biggest promise we make to a Scouting family, and it is covered in full.

Turning it in

Build the packet, walk it through your staff advisor, and send it to the Office of the Scout Executive. We review within ten business days and answer in writing — approved, approved with a note, or back to you with what is missing. Counted back from when you want to start promoting, not from the event date:

Type of event	Packet due
Fundraisers and donor events	150 days out
Council-wide events	120 days out
Camp specialty weeks and off-season programs	120 days out
District events	90 days out
Fee-based training courses	60 days out

Spending the money

Purchase orders follow the same principle as promotion: nothing is ordered, signed, or committed until it is approved. Every purchase routes from committee → VP of Program → council office. Two rules cost volunteers the most when missed — you do not sign contracts (send them to the council office), and a receipt is not a purchase order. The full process, lead times, and request form are in the separate handout, Getting It Paid For.

Changes, and closing out

Handle small adjustments in committee and tell your staff advisor. Come back to the office before promoting further if the date or venue changes, costs rise more than 10%, the fee changes, your Chair or Finance Lead steps away, or you are about to commit money not in the approved budget.

Within 30 days of the event, send a budget-to-actual report (with cushion use explained), actual attendance vs. projection, and a short debrief for the next chair. Events that were not closed out last year will not be approved this year.

Start with your staff advisor; they would rather help you build the packet than fix a problem in month three. Thank you for what you do for the Scouts of Western Massachusetts.

Craig Sims

Scout Executive / CEO, Western Massachusetts Council, Scouting America

Event Packet Checklist

Work down it with your committee. When every box is checked, you are ready to turn it in.

THE BUDGET

✓	Item
☐	Event name, date, place, and who it is for
☐	How many Scouts we expect, and why we think so
☐	Every source of money coming in, every cost going out
☐	Cushion line of at least 25% of costs
☐	Break-even number of Scouts
☐	The fee, with the math shown

THE COMMITTEE

✓	Item
☐	Every job has a name next to it
☐	Chair, Staff Advisor, and Finance Lead are three different people
☐	Everyone listed has said yes
☐	First committee meeting held; notes attached

THE TIMELINE

✓	Item
☐	Every milestone has a date and an owner
☐	Promotion launch and registration open dates set
☐	Go / no-go date and minimum Scout count set
☐	Purchase order lead times built into the dates
☐	Nothing non-refundable is due before the go / no-go date
☐	Debrief and final numbers are on the calendar
☐	Last year's close-out is done (returning events)
☐	NCAP Authorization form(s) filled out when required

Signed	Name	Date
Event Chair		
Staff Advisor		
Scout Executive		
Short Term Camp Administrator*		

* When required