**Selecting a Wood Badge Staff**

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Start with a vision of a successful course. What does this picture of future success look like? Look back on your previous Wood Badge experiences. Which experiences would you want others to have?

The design of the course is amazing; if implemented by a diverse staff possessing skill and heart, you will get amazing results. The most important job of a course director is to select a staff. If done well, the course will almost certainly be a success.

How then do you identify those staffers? What qualities are needed?

**STAFF EXPECTATIONS AND QUALITIES**

Wood Badge is the pinnacle of leadership training for adult Scouters in the BSA. A Heart of Virginia Wood Badge staffer will therefore be viewed as a role model of Scout leadership. They should support Council activities and policies in all their Scouting roles. Serving on a Wood Badge staff is a gift. Only one out of every 5 or 6 participants will get that opportunity.

Staff composition should reflect the diversity of the council in every way achievable (age, sex, program, ethnicity, geography, religion). Participants should be able to identify/connect with a staffer who is like them. More on that later.

It is a national requirement that at least one third of each staff *must* be new. Depending on the available talent, it can be up to one half. Too much course memory and continuity is lost if exceeding one half. The entry roles for staffers are Troop Guides, Assistant Quartermasters, or Assistant Scribes.

Staffers are trainers. Each is expected to have a visible, instructional part in the course. Ideally, staffers will have some previous experience in instruction – whether at the district or unit level. It is a *requirement* that all staffers have recent EDGE training.

A great staff will also have a diverse, complementary set of skills and talents. The course is like a 6-day symphony - sometimes complex with many instruments playing in harmony. Skilled musicians are needed to play each instrument. A Wood Badge course works best when you have skilled people playing all the “instruments”, following the director’s lead.

A potential staffer should be ***exceptional*** in two or more of the following:

* **T**echnical skills: medical, audio visual, graphic, IT, organizational
* **A**ttitude: spirited, nurturing, selfless
* **P**resentation – experienced, proven trainer
* **E**xperience: broad and/or unique

Think about some of the roles required for the course. For example, what skills are required of a Troop Guide? I’d say you most want someone who is trainable to do the 3-4 presentations and has a great attitude. Having a broad knowledge of Scouting is helpful when advising about tickets, but other staffers can help fill in the gaps. Other staffers will handle the technical skills.

**PRE-SELECTION “SCOUTING”**

In most instances, a person’s selection as course director should come as no surprise. They have recently been in a role of leadership as an ASM or SPL – usually the ASM Program. During any course, a senior leader should be observing the staff and participants, making mental notes about who might make good staffers for the next course, and in what role they might be placed.

In most cases, the future CD will serve as the backup - knowing that their turn comes next. This gives them a window of up to 3 years to observe and prepare. Outside of the course itself, the bead ceremonies are great opportunities to check out potential staffers and also lay the groundwork for recruiting participants. They are more likely to say “yes” if they know the person and see that they took the time to be at their ceremony. Don’t pass up that opportunity.

A future course director should also attend as many council-level activities as possible – to “bump” into Scouters they might want to recruit as staff and participants. You can casually get to know them better and find out their current level of activity/interest.

**NOW THAT YOU’VE BEEN ASKED**

The Wood Badge coordinator is your supervisor (boss). He is the conduit through which all selections and key decisions pass.

There is an important protocol to follow BEFORE asking anyone to serve on staff. You will first discuss possible course dates with the WB coordinator and three staff roles: ASM Program, the mentor, and staff advisor. They and all other staff selections must be approved through the chain of command BEFORE anyone is asked. This is the chain-of-command:

1. Wood Badge Coordinator/committee
2. Council Training Chair/committee
3. Council Program VP
4. Scout Executive
5. Area 7 Wood Badge coordinator

It is assumed that the backup will be the next course director. This person should be prepared to take on the CD role in 2-3 years and have a stable family/work situation. The work ahead will consume a big part of their time for the next 3-4 years.

The prerequisites for the backup are the same as being a course director. They must have served as a Troop Guide and held one of the other required positions listed in the Admin Guide: ASMP, ASMTG, ASMF, SPL, QM, and Scribe. The backup may not be a former course director.

The mentor is traditionally the previous course director, but not always. This should be someone who is trusted completely, understands the CD’s strengths and weaknesses, and gives frank but supportive advice.

The [professional] staff advisor can be requested but the choice is really up to the Scout Executive – who understands the overall responsibilities of the council staff.

After these three selections are approved, it is best to set staff development meeting dates and review possible staff selections with the Wood Badge coordinator, the backup CD (ASM Program), and staff advisor. At the end, it is the course director who makes the final decision - but it is important to have the backup in general agreement, for if something happens to the CD, then the staff will be theirs to lead.

Next order of business is to create a list of ANYONE the CD may want to call upon to serve as a staffer. All who have been beaded can be put on your list. There is no limit to the number of names on the list; suggest it be a large number - at least 80-100 names. Remember that an HOV staff must be diverse, is usually 23-25 in size, and that some who are asked will say “no”. Use the format in the Admin Guide; the list should include contact info and other relevant information such as district, sex, program, suggested role in the course.

Like all staff selections, you are NOT to start staff “asks” until the list is approved by the Wood Badge coordinator and has been reviewed and approved up the chain of command. Even after the list is approved, it is protocol to wait till the previous course has completed and you are announced as the next CD to ask anyone. Relax. There is time to do this.

**ORDER OF SELECTION**

This is when things can get complicated. The required key staff positions are:

Course Director/SM ASMP/Backup

Staff Advisor ASM Troop Guide

Senior Patrol Leader ASM Facilities and Support

Quartermaster Scribe

First, look at the required positions and think about who would do the best job. These are your key leaders who will manage others. Don’t put them in the role if there is any doubt they can handle it. The ASMs and SPL should possess the potential of being a course director one day. One or two of them will become one. An important responsibility of being a course director is identifying future course directors and helping them grow into the role.

Second, re-read the “Leveraging Diversity through Inclusiveness” section in the syllabus. Assess the list of key staffers from a viewpoint of diversity and potential for growth. Fight the instinct to put your friends and usual go-to people into those senior roles. The key staffers should be diverse like the staff as a whole. This is a council event and the key leaders should reflect the council makeup where practical. Here is my best guess of the council adult volunteer demographics:

* Age: 18-32 (10%), 33-50 (37%), 51-65 (38%), 66-94 (15%)
* Sex: Male 75%, Female 25%
* Program: Cubs 50%, BS 40%, Venture/Varsity (5%), District/Council (5%)
* Ethnicity: Caucasian 70%, AA 20%, Asian/Hispanic 10%
* District (geography): Capitol (10%), Crater (10%), Rivers (7%), Cardinal (22%), Battlefield (18%), Arrohattoc (18%), Huguenot Trail (15%)
* Religion: Protestant (60%), Catholic (25%), LDS (10%), Other (5%)

The course director should look for opportunities to develop talent from all aspects of the council. Participants will be looking for someone on staff with common experiences to them.

Third, identify which roles will be the hardest to fill because of the limited number of qualified candidates. Traditionally, these are the:

* Quartermaster – thankless, invisible job; best to have been an assistant QM previously or someone that knows the course well
* Health Officer – very few will meet the qualifications (EMT, Nurse, Doctor – see BSA guidelines). This should not be a stand-alone job but an additional role to a full staff position. With that said, be careful not to overload if the HO is also a first-time staffer.
* AV tech – someone who is very computer savvy and understands/has access to sound systems.
* Female Troop Guides (2 minimum, 3 if possible) – usually pulled from previous course or someone who served as Assistant QM or Assistant Scribe
* Minorities – don’t look at this as a quota but make an early effort to identify and recruit.
* Chaplain Aid – like the Medical Officer, not a stand-alone position. The CA should have a passion for the role and buy into the Inter-faith concept. Remember that their meetings will be held concurrent to the PLC.

The last jobs to fill should be Assistant Quartermasters and Assistant Scribes. Hold these open to help round out any diversity gaps.

This is not carved in stone, but one might consider making the “asks” by blocks, in this order:

1. ASM Program/Backup CD)
2. Mentor
3. Staff Advisor *(may be appointed by SE)*
4. ASM Troop Guide
5. Senior Patrol Leader
6. Quartermaster
7. ASM Facilities
8. Food Service Provider *(not a staff position, will recruit helpers)*
9. Health Officer *(supplement to a staff role)*
10. Minority Troop Guide
11. Female Troop Guide
12. Female Troop Guide
13. Female Troop Guide
14. AV Tech
15. Scribe
16. Assistant SPL
17. Chaplain Aid *(supplement to a staff role)*
18. Troop Guide
19. Troop Guide
20. Troop Guide
21. Troop Guide
22. Troop Guide *(if still needed)*
23. Assistant Scribe/Photographer
24. Assistant Scribe
25. Assistant QM
26. Assistant QM
27. Assistant QM
28. Trading Post *(best as auxiliary position)*
29. Game of Life presenter #1
30. Game of Life presenter #2
31. Game Show Host/Rocketman *(will recruit helpers)*

*Note: Red indicates not a full staff role*

Fourth but very important, plan for “life” to happen to a few staffers in 12-18 months leading to or even during the course. People can have job changes, have family situations develop, or the person simply may not be working out.

There should be a contingency plan for EVERY position - as a staff is assembled. Depending on the timing, you may bring in someone in not already on staff – or you may have to shift staff around.

As you put people into the roles, imagine removing each staffer. What would you do? Who would you slide into that role: 1) if it happened early, 2) if it happened during staff development and 3) if it happened during the course? In particular, know who your utility players are.

**MAKING THE CALL**

When making the “asks”, expect some people to need time to consider the implications and discuss with their family. They should be given the key meeting dates and a general job description. This is a big time commitment for them so be realistic and do not understate the expectations. Let them know that you personally selected them and have confidence that they will do a great job.

It is up to the course director to decide if a schedule conflict for any staff development meeting will be problematic. All WB staffers should clear their schedules for all SDM’s unless special circumstances occur and the CD consents. There are only 4 all-staff meetings and we work as teams. Absences set back the team’s development.

Let them know to please keep their selection to themselves until staff development begins. The staff selection process may take 4-6 months. Others who may be asked later will wonder if they were passed over or feel like they were less desired. That is not necessarily the case. There are many more Scouters with the skills to be on staff than spots available.

**AFTER THE STAFF IS IN PLACE**

Congratulate yourself on doing the most important part of the course director’s job. Communicate regularly with the staff so they generally know what’s going on. It will help them get their heads into the job before the staff development meetings start. Their job is now to recruit participants and keep doing their primary Scouting role.