



The Scout Association's Strategy
Discussion Document
Version 1.1 – 5th May 2013

scout
vision

LEADERS Executive Quality

STRATEGY

scouting Skills
objectives
Finance

KPIs

RESOURCES
basic principles
human resources



SCOUTS
Nibnu Dinja Ahjar

“Be a surfer. Watch the ocean. Figure out where the big waves are breaking and adjust accordingly.” - 37 Signals

“You’ve got to think about big things while you’re doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction.” - Alvin Toffler

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Introduction to this document

“Scouting is a game with a purpose”

This powerful quote describes the essence of Scouting in a nutshell - the fun, adventurous journey of discovery which we offer to our members, coupled with the leadership, values and methodology encompassed in our mission.

We all know that times change, the social and economic realities of the world around us change, and consequently the needs and expectations of our members also change. Being a Movement with more than 100 years of experience in this field, we also accept that to remain relevant, Scouting also needs to change.

Change is a term that is sometimes incorrectly associated with an “out with the old and in with the new” mentality, but change in Scouting means something different. Change in Scouting is better described as “evaluate your surroundings, analyse your organisation and the needs of your members, see what you are doing right and wrong; and then plan for the future”.

This is exactly the process that the National Scout Council has embarked upon in the past few months. The objective of the exercise is to take a good hard look at the way the whole Association is working and then come up with proposals to plan a roadmap or strategy for the future.

In order to reach the stage where this document could be created, three separate workshops were run: one with the members of the National Scout Council, one with the members of the Executive and one with representatives from each district. This document is a summary of the main ideas that emerged during these workshops and it is presented in the form of a white paper which should trigger further discussion before a concrete action plan is put into place.

The document is divided into five sections: Our Organisation, IHQ, Our Groups & Districts, Our Leaders and Our Members. Each section contains a number of proposals and ideas related to this area. Not all proposals may have the same importance and not all of the ideas may be feasible – but there is ample material for discussion.

I have been tasked with the job of running the workshops, writing the white paper and collecting the resulting feedback that it generates. I am looking forward to receiving your ideas and comments by email on kevin.camilleri@gmail.com



Kevin Camilleri
National Scout Council Member & International Commissioner

24th March 2013

Our Vision

A Story from the Middle Ages

Three stone masons in the Middle Ages were hard at work when a visitor came along and asked them what they were doing. The first stone mason was hard at work, sweat beading his brow. "I am cutting this stone," he grumbled. The second stone mason, though less distraught, responded with a deep sigh, "I'm building a parapet." The third stone mason replied with a radiant face, "I am building a beautiful cathedral that will glorify God for centuries to come."

-- Author unknown

A challenging yet achievable vision embodies the tension between what an organization wants and what it can have.

-- Peter Senge, The Fifth Discipline, 1990

A vision of success is a clear and succinct description of what the organisation or community should look like after it successfully implements its strategies and achieves its full potential.

The benefits of a creating a vision include:

- Members of the organisation can see how they fit in;
- Agreement on the vision unites us and enables the organisation to do more;
- The more specific and reasonable the vision, the greater the chances of success;
- The vision can help members recognise barriers to success
- The vision helps us remain relevant for our members

At this point many ask what the vision for the Scout Association of Malta is.

To be honest all three workshops tried to define the Association's vision with varying degrees of success. All persons involved have agreed that the most important factor of the vision is that it unites us all in achieving the same goal.

For the moment I believe we should put the definition of our vision aside for the moment. Keep all of the above in mind and we will come back to the Association's vision once we have examined and debated all the discussion points.

The next part of the document is a summary of all of the discussion points that were raised during the workshops. The points are listed in a question style which should elicit a debate on these issues. Some of the questions will probably require a bit of background understanding of the workings of our organisation and its history to understand the issues that are being debated – but this should not stop you from asking questions and debating them.

Our Organisation

The Association's Structure

The structure by which the Association operates has raised a number of questions that should be debated.

- Does the practice of having an elected Chief Scout and National Scout Council on one hand and then an elected Chief Commissioner with appointed Commissioners on the other hand make sense? Should the General Assembly vote for the Chief Scout and the National Scout Council, who would then appoint the Chief Commissioner and the other Commissioners based on suitability for the job?
- Should we consider the employment of corporate services (like auditing and training of our staff) so that we can become more professional?
- Should we reconsider the number of groups we have on this island and redistribute them to make more sense in terms of available resources? Now that all section leaders can vote at the General Assembly, is the concept of a district in the sense of a power centre or lobby group still relevant?

Finance

There is a general agreement that the way in which we manage our finances needs to be overhauled.

- Should we have people specifically dedicated to obtaining funding through government and EU schemes like Youth in Action?
- Should we review our existing facilities like Congreve Hall in Floriana with a view to renovating them and making them more efficient for our needs today?

The Voice of Scouting

Many agree that we need to make our voice heard on a national level.

- Should we create a Federation with the Malta Girl Guides for the purpose of having a stronger voice on national issues in Malta and to be able to better leverage our position as the largest youth organisation in Malta?
- Should we strive for recognition from the government that we provide an essential and necessary service to the community and we should be supported like other similar organisations?

Feedback

It has been argued that the Association needs a formal mechanism whereby it can collect feedback from all its stakeholders about how it is doing and how it could improve. One area that many mentioned could be improved is the simplification/reduction of our bureaucracy.

Monitoring our Strategy

Creating a strategy is not enough. Should we appoint specific people whose responsibility is specifically to monitor the progress we make on achieving our strategy and reporting back on any progress or lack thereof?

IHQ

Our Administrative Setup

Almost every person whom we consulted with regarding our administrative setup agreed that we have work to do on this front. With the lack of paid administrative staff, volunteers who fill key posts in the organisation spend a lot of time doing routine administrative work that keeps them away from the real scouting work they would like to do.

- Should the Association bite the bullet and employ at least one full-time administrator to run the day-to-day administrative and communication tasks and to provide a much needed element of administrative continuity between the volunteers that fill our other posts ?
- Should we have a full-time staff member whose job is to source funding and run funding projects for the Association ?
- With the possible introduction of full-time staff, should we review our communication strategy and way in which we recruit and manage adult volunteers ?

Provision of Services

The concept of turning IHQ and our Districts into service centres for our Groups is not new.

- Should the focus of our district teams shift to the concept of providing tailored support to our Groups by continuously assessing their needs and supporting them ?
- Should the Association offer specific services to Groups like Legal, health and safety, audits, insurance, funding consultancy etc ?
- Should we set up a National Scouting Resource Centre for leaders which would include books, forms, downloads, videos, how to guides, e-learning modules etc to centralise our knowledge pool ?
- Should we introduce the concept of a professionally published magazine on the lines of the one published by the UK Scouts ?

Image and Branding

The implementation of the Branding Exercise that took place some time ago was positive but it is seen as incomplete by many.

- Should we further strengthen our Branding policy by bringing groups together on this issue ?
- Should we update the image of the Association with a new uniform ?
- Should we engage dedicated people who would work full time on our marketing and communications ?
- Should we design and run a good advertising campaign ?

Our Groups and Districts

Quality Standards

Despite the publication of the Group Self-Assessment Guidelines some years back, many admit that this initiative has not been taken seriously by Groups. The quality of scouting that is delivered in some Groups leaves much to be desired and in some places there are questionable management practices in effect.

- Should the Association enforce a “Minimum Standard” for all Scout Groups ?
- Should the terms of reference for the post of Group Scout Leader be updated to ensure that quality standards are a critical element to this role ?
- Should the role of GSL have a specified term and a formal mechanism of choosing a new GSL be put in place ?
- Should all Groups adopt the same accounting, record keeping, banking, property, equipment, human resources, organisational, succession planning and statutory practices ?
- Should we launch a Quality Service Charter encompassing the service that the Association offers to our young members ?

Our Leaders

Recognition

Our leaders are the driving force behind Scouting in Malta. Without them we would not be able to offer this service to society.

- Does the present awards system duly recognise the efforts of our leaders ?
- Should we reward our leaders with badges and medals or should we do it differently ?

Training

Training of leaders is widely accepted as an absolute necessity.

- Should we review our training and appointments structure to ensure that untrained leaders will be a thing of the past ?
- Should our training system incorporate the training of leaders on how to cope with the inclusion of a wider section of society ? Is there a strategic or policy discussion that needs to take place before we do so ?
- Should we make WoodBadge training and re-certification compulsory for our leaders ?

Our Members

It is generally accepted that we have a solid youth programme especially with the renewed programmes of the Beaver, Cub and Troop sections and with the work on the new Venture and Rover Programmes. However as a youth organisation we have a lot of work to do in the areas related to youth involvement and youth empowerment.

Youth Programme

- Should our youth programmes for our different age sections be reviewed so that the changeover from one age-section to the other is smoother ?
- Should our adult training scheme have a more direct focus on youth needs and how to bring out the best in our youth members ?

Youth Involvement and Empowerment

- Should the Association review the way in which it formulates its opinions so that it includes the opinions of youth members ?
- Should we have an active and effective National Youth Council entrenched in our Constitution ?
- Should the idea of youth councils within the scout group (like the Patrol Leaders' Council) be given more importance and should their input be included on a national level ?

A Strategy for Success

A successful scouting organisation would generally have the following elements:

- A fun and relevant Youth Programme
- Motivated and well trained Leaders
- Scout Groups that meet and exceed agreed Quality Standards
- A solid feedback mechanism which caters for all the stakeholders
- A positive scouting image and brand which projects the desired message
- A financially stable and administratively strong setup

The purpose of this document is to create a starting point from which we will build our strategy. Your feedback and ideas are necessary to make this happen.

The way forward

We have a number of ideas on how this strategy white paper should develop, however a lot depends on how much feedback we receive from Groups and Leaders and Members.

Some believe we should only rely on written feedback, trusting that GSLs and their leaders will discuss this document internally and send us their ideas. Others believe that there should be a structured workshop run on a national, district or sectional level where leaders can come and discuss and voice their opinion. Someone even told me that publishing a white paper is a waste of time because nobody will bother to read it (*grazzi u awguri...😊*).

How, in your opinion, should we discuss the contents of this white paper (and all the other topics that may come up) so as to give everyone a chance to voice their opinion ?

How are we going to reach an agreement on a Vision that really unites and inspires us ?

What are your opinions on the topics presented in this document ? Do you have any concrete proposals or ideas that we should add ?

Finally, where do you wish to see this Association in the next 10 or 20 years ?

Please send your feedback by email on kevin.camilleri@gmail.com. All feedback received will be catalogued and presented to the National Scout Council for further review and action.