



THE *Scout* ASSOCIATION
OF MALTA

The Way Forward

A discussion paper on the
structure of our Association

October 2023

Introduction

The Scout Association of Malta stands at a pivotal moment in its storied history.

Over the past century, we've evolved, adapted, and grown in ways that our founders could have only dreamed of. Yet, as with any long-standing organisation, the passage of time brings with it new challenges, new perspectives, and new opportunities.

The challenges and solutions presented in this document are not only a reaction to immediate concerns, but a proactive approach to align our association with today's best practices. The evolving needs of our members, and the ever-changing landscape of our society are also factors we have to keep in mind.

Our ultimate aim is to ensure that we remain relevant, effective, and true to our core values, while continuously learning and improving in every aspect.

In framing these challenges, we have drawn inspiration from successful examples within the global scouting community as well as from the best practices of other organisations.

We invite you to engage with the ideas presented in this document, keeping an open mind and considering how these proposed changes might pave the way for a brighter, more impactful future for Scouting in Malta.

This document is the start of something exciting. Let's come together, discuss, and shape the future of scouting in Malta. Remember, this is just a starting point. Your insights, your experiences, and your voice will guide us in the journey ahead.

Kevin Camilleri
Chief Scout
October 2023

Why This Document Matters to You

- **A Thought-Starter:** This isn't a long, wordy report. It's a concise discussion paper designed to be easy-to-digest, even for the busiest among us.
- **A Conversation Igniter:** We're at a crossroads, and it's time for a chat. This document aims to stimulate discussion amongst all of us - whether you've dedicated your life to scouting or you're just starting on this journey.
- **Facing Today's Reality:** Scouting has evolved over the past 115 years, and so has the world around us. This document paints a picture of the realities we operate in now and the challenges and opportunities they present.
- **Your Voice Matters:** We're in this together. This document is an open invitation for every leader to have their voices heard. Whether you're a 'lifer' or just beginning, your input is valuable.

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Providing Feedback

We value the insights and contributions of each member of the Scout Association of Malta. Your feedback is the cornerstone that will help shape the future of our association.

Please share your thoughts on the online form below – it will help us collate feedback and produce a final document later on.

Feedback Link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/CD6AuB9vH5>

if you prefer to discuss directly, feel free to send an email on chiefscout@scouts.mt

The problem with our structure

Before you start reading...

Before you read any further, when discussing the structure of an organisation, you need to forget the names and the faces of the people who currently hold these posts. Today it is Anton and Kevin, tomorrow it can be whoever. You should never change the structure of an organisation to suit the personalities in that role. This is a place for logic, not emotion. We need to learn from the mistakes we made in the past.

So, first a bit of theory:

According to WOSM, in a Scout Organisation, the General Assembly will vote and elect a number of people they trust to sit on their National Board (we call it the National Scout Council). The job of the members of the Board is to ensure that:

- a) the organisation knows where it is and knows where it is going (strategy),
- b) that it is being run properly (governance), and
- c) that everyone in the organisation knows what should and should not be done (policy).

WOSM also emphasizes that the people who are responsible for the governance of an organisation should not be involved in the day to day running of it – just like the accountant of a company cannot be the one to do the financial audit of the company. The day-to-day running of the organisation is the job of the Executive (Chief Commissioner and the Commissioners, in our case).

This is where it gets a bit tricky.

If the Board is responsible for the Governance of the organisation, it makes sense that the Board chooses the CEO. The CEO (or whatever name we choose to use for this role) will create an effective team and be responsible for the day-to-day operations according to the strategy, governance and policy of the organisation. The CEO will report on the progress made, challenges and successes to the Board.

The Board then reports on progress to the General Assembly which may choose to approve the progress made or to change the direction.

And here lies the problem.

In our current structure, the General Assembly elects the National Scout Council AND the General Assembly ALSO elects the Chief Commissioner. In the current structure it is very possible to have a situation where the two elected bodies do not see eye to eye on something. On one hand, the National Scout Council could get frustrated because it cannot make progress on areas it believes are important. On the other hand, the Chief Commissioner can get frustrated because the Council's direction could be seen as interference. These issues are rarely black or white, and since both sides are equally elected, they could technically both be right.

The problem is the structure, because the leadership of the organisation is vested in two elected entities.

Most organisations solve the problem by electing only one entity – the National Board, and then the board chooses the chief executive. This is the recommended practice that is the standard in most NGOs and companies. This is also the practice recommended (and to a certain extent enforced) by

WOSM. (This is a very condensed version of a rather technical topic. If you would like to read more, please take a look at <https://treehouse.scout.org/services/good-governance>)

But wait... it gets even more complicated

Putting aside the question of who is leading the organisation, our structure has a second critical weakness. When our structure was originally created, it was based very heavily on the assumption that we would have lots of volunteers available to get things done.

But life has changed in the past twenty years, and volunteers who are willing to give their time and energy to run an organisation are fewer and fewer. As a result, we end up putting massive pressure on the volunteers we have. The burden of running an organisation and the administrative requirements continue to get heavier and more onerous, but our capacity isn't growing at the same rate.

The reality is that we have a problem with overworked volunteers who are getting burned out and the situation is unsustainable. Seeing the situation, there are less people willing to take on these roles, and it is just a vicious circle.

With the severe lack of capacity, we also end up with many people frustrated with the responsiveness and level of services we offer. People in key positions also get frustrated because they have ideas and want to do new things – but there simply isn't the capacity to complete the tasks we already have – let alone add new ones.

And finally, the cherry on the cake...

When you consider the WOSM fees, rent, water electricity, internet, insurance for each member, the legal requirements (mandatory POMA check), audit fees, legal and registration expenses) and all the other expenses required to provide even the most rudimentary of services to 4000 members, the annual membership fee that SAM collects from each member is inadequate. The ridiculous fee has contributed heavily to our lack of resources and is not sustainable.

It's time for change.

The next part of the document is written in a challenge + solution format. Please go through the different challenges and give us your feedback.

In the feedback form, we will ask you to rank the challenge based on how important you think it is, whether you agree with the proposed solution and then you will have a space to add your thoughts.

Challenges and Proposals

1. Unclear Organisational Leadership

- **Challenge:** The current leadership structure, with both the National Scout Council and the Chief Commissioner being elected by the General Assembly, creates ambiguity. This uncertainty is further exacerbated when the leadership dynamics are influenced by strong personalities. Consequently, the National Scout Council faces challenges in effectively overseeing the governance and strategy of the organisation, as the head of the Executive is not directly accountable to them.
- **Proposed Solution:** The National Scout Council appoints the head of the Executive directly. This will ensure clear delineation of responsibilities and solidify the leadership structure of the organisation.

2. Unsustainable Workload for Key Volunteers

- **Challenge:** The demands and expectations placed upon key volunteers like the Chief Commissioner are exceedingly high. Given that this is a volunteer position, the workload is often unrealistic, leading to bottlenecks, potential burnout and reducing the effectiveness of the role.
- **Proposed Solution:** Introduce full-time, paid staff members to lead the key Executive and Administrative functions of the association. The new organisational structure would then encompass teams of volunteers who would focus on the scouting part of the organisation. The idea is to have a volunteer-led organisation supported by professional paid staff.

3. Disconnect Between Governance and Executive functions

- **Challenge:** The current organisational structure creates a communication gap between those formulating governance policies and strategies (the National Scout Council) and those tasked with the day-to-day execution (the Executive). While the roles are and should be separate, it is hard to set the policy of an organisation without speaking to the people who execute it – and vice versa.
- **Proposed Solution:** Foster open dialogue and collaboration by organizing joint meetings between the National Scout Council and the Executive at least a few times annually. These sessions will be dedicated to planning, discussing, and deliberating matters of shared interest. Furthermore, a representative from the National Scout Council should actively participate in Group Scout Leaders' forums to facilitate a two-way feedback mechanism.

4. Shifting from a Hierarchical to a Service-Based Structure

- **Challenge:** The current organisational framework of the Scout Association of Malta is predominantly hierarchical, emphasizing rank, control and authority. Many modern

organisations, including the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM), have transitioned to a needs-based structure, where the organisational setup mirrors the requirements and the services offered to its members.

- **Proposed Solution:** Reorganize and structure the Association based on the services the national level offers to its members. Potential service-based divisions could include: Adults, Youths, Finance, Safe From Harm, Group Support, Communications, Legal, Administration, Events, and Uniforms & Equipment. This approach aims to create a more responsive and member-centric organisational setup.

5.Engaging Past Members and the Broader Community

- **Challenge:** Over the years, Scouting in Malta has touched the lives of countless individuals both directly and indirectly. However, as an organisation, we currently lack a structured mechanism to reconnect with these individuals, along with others who might be interested in our activities and willing to offer support.
- **Proposed Solution:** Establish an informal supporters network. This platform would serve as a bridge, allowing former members, parents, stakeholders, and other interested individuals to stay informed, receive regular updates, and extend their support as they see fit. Importantly, this network would be devoid of any membership obligations, ensuring flexibility and inclusivity.

6.Representation of Young Voices in National Leadership

- **Challenge:** The dissolution of the National Youth Scout Council has resulted in the diminished representation of young voices in national leadership. We recognize the importance of engaging young individuals passionate about policy, strategy, and governance within our organisation.
- **Proposed Solution:** Expand the number of elected seats on the National Scout Council from 8 to 12, ensuring that at least 40% of the council members are under the age of 30. This structural change aims to provide a platform for the younger generation to actively participate and shape the direction of the Scout Association of Malta.

7.Maintaining Connections with Distinguished Members

- **Challenge:** Throughout the history of Scouting in Malta, numerous exceptional individuals have dedicated their time and expertise to the cause. These individuals have significantly shaped the organisation, yet once their tenure concludes, we often lose touch with them. This not only falls short in showing appreciation for their contributions but also overlooks the potential benefits of leveraging their vast knowledge and experience.
- **Proposed Solution:** Initiate an informal network comprising former Chief Scouts, Chief Commissioners, National Scout Council Members, Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and other prominent figures who have served at the national level. This network would

function both as a think tank, contributing valuable insights and advice, and as a gesture of recognition and gratitude for their unparalleled dedication to Scouting in Malta.

8. Adapting to New Safety Standards

- **Challenge:** The world around us presents various challenges to the safety of our members. The World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) has emphasized the importance of "Safe From Harm," making it a mandatory requirement for membership. The newly introduced standards differ significantly from our current practices, necessitating immediate and urgent adaptation.
- **Proposed Solution:** The new structure will include a dedicated commissioner for "Safe From Harm" who, supported by a specialized team, will undertake a comprehensive review of the new requirements. Together, they will collaborate with the National Scout Council and Executive to formulate and implement a robust policy, training modules, and procedures to align our association with the new safety standards.

9. Boosting Scout Group Leadership at the Local Level

- **Challenge:** The capability of Scout Groups to effectively deliver scouting experiences in their localities is often constrained by a shortage of leaders. Most Groups have long waiting lists and very little capacity to grow beyond their present numbers.
- **Proposed Solution:** Introduce an entry-level adult leader support function. This would allow parents and other interested adults to volunteer, undergo a brief yet pertinent training, and assist in scouting activities. While the training would be concise and locally administered, it would encompass all essential elements related to "Safe From Harm" and foundational scout principles, ensuring a secure environment for our members.

10. Cultivating Leadership for Higher-Level Roles

- **Challenge:** Sourcing leaders capable of managing entire scout groups or assuming national-level responsibilities is an even more daunting task. The absence of specialized training for potential leaders at this tier exacerbates the challenge.
- **Proposed Solution:** Delve into the possibility of offering advanced courses tailored for Group Scout Leaders and Commissioners. This might include enlisting external consultants and exploring courses from institutions like the Scout and Guide Academy abroad.

Points to consider

1. The problems and solutions in the section above are grounded in practical reality – but they are not necessarily the only solution we could adopt. We are keen to understand what you think.
2. The actual structure of the Association and all its moving parts will need a very deep discussion with all parties concerned. This document lays out a framework on which we could build the rest of the structure, but it is not the only model out there.
3. The timeline plays a very critical factor in this discussion. One could typically expect a process of at least 12 months to discuss, consult and approve a new structure, at least six months to recruit the person/s required and probably another 3-6 months of shadowing people in the existing structure before a full transition is made.

Next Steps

- **Group Discussions:** Please discuss these ideas in your group and give us feedback in the provided forms. Feel free to provide feedback as a group or individually.
- **Internal Discussion:** The discussion will also take place within the Association internally, to understand what a service model could look like and how we could best structure ourselves.
- **Collating Feedback:** All the feedback received will be compiled into a more formal document, reflecting the collective insights and recommendations of our members.
- **Constitutional Amendments:** Many of the proposed changes necessitate amendments to our constitution. Achieving this requires a 2/3rds majority approval during a General Assembly. It's a significant step, underscoring the importance of each member's understanding and support of the proposed changes.

Feedback Link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/CD6AuB9vH5>

Together, these steps mark the beginning of a collaborative journey towards evolving the Scout Association of Malta. We invite each one of you to be an active part of this transformation, as we strive to better serve our members and make a lasting impact in our community.