



## The “Super Group” Concept Explained

### WHAT IS A “SUPER GROUP”?

A “Super Group” in its simplest form is the amalgamation of two or more Groups for the purposes of:

- Redeployment of volunteer resources to increase focus on program delivery,
- Strengthening the financial support to the programs sections, and
- Ensuring the continuation (viability) of program sections in both rural and urban locales.

The concept of a “Super Group” has developed in reaction to the challenges that many groups are facing in relation to finding adult volunteers, financing the group and its activities, reducing the duplication of administration, and many other challenges that tend to detract from delivering quality Scouting programs.

### THE “SUPER GROUP” RATIONALE

Over the years, we have seen a changing dynamic in volunteerism within our communities. This has been extremely evident in Group Committees. Many groups have been operating with less than the desired three (3) members, namely a chairperson, treasurer and secretary. (Without these positions being filled, a group may not be permitted to continue operating. The reason is that the Group Committee fulfills an important and crucial role in the efficient operation of program delivery, by providing administrative support.) The most successful Groups in terms of membership, finances, volunteerism, resources, etc., have a Group Committee who knows and fulfills their roles. Those that do not, usually have frustrated and unfulfilled volunteers who tend to burn out quickly.

Every group is required to do exactly the same tasks, within the same timelines. Every group is required to do a budget, to prepare a year-end financial report, to recognize its leadership, to keep minutes of meetings, to collect outdoor activity paperwork, to coordinate fundraising efforts, to recruit membership, to register the membership, and so on, and so on. Such tasks are extremely important to the vitality and vibrancy of any group, whether it be rural or urban.

High performance Groups have, in addition to the three key roles mentioned above, volunteers filling the roles of a fundraising coordinator, a registrar, a quartermaster and a vice-chair to name a few. One benefit of having this number of volunteers on the Group Committee is that the workload (tasks) is divided among more people. The workload no longer seems overwhelming when it is broken down and shared.

### THE EXAMPLE:

Consider the following “rural” example of 3 Groups that are within 30 km of each other. *(It is important to note that this example can be applied to as few as 2 Groups or as many as 5 or 6, depending on geography):*

Group	Beavers	Beaver Leaders	Cubs	Cub Leaders	Scouts	Scout Leaders	Venturers	Venturer Advisors	Group Cmte	Total
Group A			14	2	4	2			2 (C/S, T)	22
Group B	5	2	10	2	4	1*	3	1*	3 (C, T, S)	31
Group C	23	3*	6	2*					1 (C/T/S)	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>88</b>

\* Leaders doing double duty (Group B = Scouts and Venturers, Group C = Beavers and Cubs). Duplication factored out.  
(C=Chairperson, T=Treasurer, S=Secretary. “/” denotes that the person is doing two roles.)

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## **The Example Analysis:**

The chart reflects many typical groups currently within the Council. Although these groups are similar in relation to total membership, each is very different in their needs. On the surface, these groups may be functioning reasonably well in terms of leader to youth ratios, but experience tends to show that these groups will struggle eventually due in part to a smaller membership base. Typically, the smaller the group is, the fewer volunteers are available to deliver the program due to the administrative responsibilities. Some Scouters find themselves in the unenviable position of doing 'double and triple duty' to meet the needs of the group. As indicated earlier, this is not a sustainable approach and very likely would lead to the group's closure.

- Q. Collectively, the "example" groups are three (3) program leaders and three (3) group committee members short. So what does the "Super Group" concept offer to fix this?
- A. It offers a combining of existing volunteer resources. In the case of the above example, these three groups could form a complete Group Committee of 4, 5 or 6 members. These individuals are already involved in the functions of the group and would probably appreciate splitting their workload among others. One (or even two) of the committee members may be more interested in assisting as a leader with a program section.

Keep in mind the earlier statement that a small group is required to do exactly the same tasks, within the same timelines.

## **WHAT WOULD THIS "SUPER GROUP" LOOK LIKE?**

1. The three groups would combine administrations, namely the six (6) existing Group Committee members would come together to form a stronger and more functional committee. This group could easily have a Chair, Vice-Chair (who would be assigned a specific task with the Group), Treasurer, Secretary, Fundraising Coordinator and Registrar.
2. The existing program sections would continue to operate as usual (same locations & evenings). The New "Super Group" now has: 2 Colonies, 3 Packs, 2 Troops, 1 Company and a full complement of committee members.
3. A Group Committee meeting would consist of the newly formed Group Committee (6 members) and eight (8) Section representatives (one from each Section), for a total of 14 volunteers sitting around the table.
4. Comparatively, Group A had 18 youth, Group B had 22 youth, and Group C had 29 youth. Now the "Super Group" has 69 youth!

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DOING THIS?**

1. The program sections continue to function as usual, but now there are more individuals to support the sections administratively.
2. More people will sit around the Group Committee table. This means more ideas, feedback, experience, and knowledge to draw from. More Scouters within a group creates a valuable internal resource for other leaders. Their experiences and talents may prove beneficial to the entire group, especially other same sections.
3. Periodically the same program sections (i.e. the three Cub Packs) could come together (linking) to make an event or activity more exciting for the youth because they would make new friends. The event/activity itself would be more enjoyable for the leaders because they would have more adults present to assist and supervise the youth. The above example indicates that six (6) Leaders would supervise thirty (30) Cubs. Camping trips, two-deep leadership, etc would all be made easier with this kind of support.
4. The increase in volunteer support at program activities may produce the side effect of encouraging more parents to help out, whereas before they may have been resistant because they believed that too much responsibility would be heaped on them.



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5. Previously, each group would need to have a volunteer to coordinate the various fundraisers. Within the “Super Group” only one individual is required to do so. The size of the task would not triple simply because there are more members. It would obviously take a little more time compiling information, but the job would not have to be repeated 3 times, only once. As well, you need to consider that this individual may not be fulfilling 2 or 3 roles within the group and can therefore give more attention to the relevant task. Also, with a dedicated volunteer looking after the coordination of fundraising in the group, the group will collectively realize a larger return on fundraising efforts. All sections would have more money available for things like equipment, program resources, and requests for training. Also, youth would spend less time fundraising, and more time participating in program.
6. If a program section found itself in a pinch for leadership one evening, they may have the opportunity to draw from another one of the sections to help out that night. This is more likely, when the relationship is internal to the group.
7. Group equipment would be pooled (figuratively speaking), so that those sections that need a tent or stove would have a direct source to accommodate their needs. Very little would change (if any) in the location of existing equipment, but it is reassuring to leaders who are trying to deliver an exciting program that the equipment may be available.
8. Existing Partner (Sponsor) relationships would be maintained as best possible. This means that the “Super Group” would have the potential to draw on support from three (3) possible venues.
9. Succession planning is a large part of the sustainability and longevity of a group. Having a Vice-Chair, or even a selection of other committee members, would make the replacement of a retiring committee member much easier and make the transition smoother.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES?

A few questions will undoubtedly arise when considering the concept of the “Super Group”. The following would be considered the main issues to be resolved:

- Volunteer Buy-In
- Partner (Sponsor) Support
- Consolidating of Finances
- Arriving at Commonalities (fundraisers, calendar of events, etc.)
- Temporary or Permanent Arrangement? (future potentials)
- Equipment
- Group Charters (history)
- Facilities (expected changes?)

### **Volunteer Buy-In:**

It is absolutely important that a majority of Scouters (Program and Administrative) in each the group see the value of joining and working together.

### **Partner (Sponsor) Support:**

Each Partner needs to be made aware of the urgency to review their relationship with Scouts Canada. The hope is to convince each Partner to continue supporting Scouting, even if it is only the pre-existing sections.

### **Arriving at Commonalities:**

Once you determine what each has in common, it is easier to work out the other details.



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## **Consolidating of Finances:**

It is necessary for each Group to clearly outline in an open and honest manner all financial assets and liabilities, before consolidating “the Books”. Some may push to keep separate the finances based on previous Group entities, but this would require three (3) treasurers, three (3) Group-level accounts, which totally negate the purpose of working together. Do not let financial issues overshadow the focus that should be placed on the youth.

## **Temporary or Permanent Arrangement?:**

It is impossible to know precisely what the future holds, however “prenuptials” can be negotiated to outline what would happen upon separation. It would also outline the specific circumstances or criteria (membership size and sustainability) and the specific timeline that would identify the minimum length of the trial relationship.

## **Equipment:**

This criteria tends to be a very touchy subject, but it does not have to be if all involved keep a couple of premises in mind: firstly, all equipment is Scouts Canada’s equipment; and secondly, equipment purchases are regulated (approved) by the Group Committee, therefore equipment within a Group should be available for use by all sections, based on availability.

## **Group Charters:**

This category also tends to invoke passionate discussions, usually because of the importance and pride that is placed on the longevity and history of the Group. It is important to note that amalgamation of Groups do not necessarily mean the loss of identity that many attribute to the Group Charter. Each remaining section could maintain their previous Group shoulder flashes.

More importantly, is that the Group Charter is not the recognition of the existence of the Group, but an acknowledgement of the established relationship between the Partner and Scouts Canada. The Group Charter can change many times over the years because of new partnerships within the community, while the name may stay the same. If the existing Partners remain committed to Scouting in their respective community or locales, then there should be no reason for the ‘new’ Group not to have multiple Partners and therefore maintain their original charters.

## **Facilities:**

Depending on the specifics of your situation, some sections may find that it is in their best interest to merge two sections to a single facility. Other situations may arise that the Partner is not supportive of the change and declines requests to continue using a facility. If this happens, your Council Field Executive and Membership Development Worker will work with you to explore other options.

## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Ideally, the hope is that Scouters will arrive at their own conclusions about the continuing viability of their own Group, and if determined that they are in jeopardy of losing Scouting, they would initiate discussions with their Group Scouter or Area Commissioner or Council Field Executive to engage the process.

The Area and Council may determine that urgent and immediate action is required to ensure the continuation of Scouting in a given location or community. In such a case, all efforts will be made to include those involved in comprehensive discussions to arrive at an acceptable arrangement.

By working together in an air of openness, fairness and cooperation, the needs of each Group will be met.

Contact your Council Administrative Centre for more information.

Council Administrative Centre  
(905) 571-1346 or 1 (888) SCOUTS NOW (726-8876)  
(Areas 1, 2, & 4 = **ext #22** & Owasco, Whitby, Oshawa, Kawartha Waterways = **ext #21**)

