

Building Evidence in Scouting Together

Frequently Asked Questions

This frequently asked questions (FAQ) document provides answers to questions related to the Building Evidence in Scouting Together (BEST) Study, which is being carried out by researchers at the Institute for Research on Youth Thriving and Evaluation (RYTE) at Montclair State University (MSU) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). The BSA, MSU, and AIR are partnering to explore the Scouting experience in a first-of-its-kind, national study.

This document was last updated on November 28, 2018 and will be updated periodically throughout the course of the study. You can always check bsabeststudy.org for the most recent version of this FAQ.

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General Study Information

Why are you doing this study?

The BSA is interested in learning more about how Scouts and adult leaders work together and how the BSA can help Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters better support all Scouts.

Who is conducting the study?

This study is being conducted by researchers at the Institute for Research on Youth Thriving and Evaluation (RYTE) at Montclair State University (MSU) and American Institutes for Research (AIR).

Who is funding the study?



The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation is funding this study through a generous grant to the Boy Scouts of America. The BSA contracted with MSU to design and implement the study, with support from AIR.

How long will the study last?

The study began with a planning phase in 2017. Data collection began in 2018 and will last through 2020.

How is the BSA national office involved?

The national office is providing input on the study, but the study is being conducted by external, independent researchers at MSU and AIR.

What are the benefits of participating in the BEST Study?

When each Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster shares his or her experiences in the BSA program—including training, troop activities, and engagement with both youth and other adults—we can learn more about how those experiences affect youth development and outcomes. When each Scout shares his or her experiences in the BSA program—including training, troop activities, and engagement with both adults and other youth—we can learn about their development and outcomes. Researchers also can identify how the experiences of both adult leaders and youth interact. By identifying these relationships, together we may help make Scouting better for all. That's what the BEST Study is designed to do.

Troop Participation

How many troops are participating?

We are inviting 2,500 troops to participate in the study. Only individuals within those troops are eligible to participate.

How many people are participating?

The number depends on how many people sign up! We think it could be as many as 25,000 Scouts and 7,500 Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters. If you are part of an invited troop, we hope you will be one of those people.

How did you select which troops could participate?

The research team used a statistical sampling technique to be sure we have representation from all different types of troops from across the United States.

Even though my troop was not invited, can I still participate in the study?

Because this is a scientifically random sample, only members of the selected troops may participate.

What are you asking us to do for this study?

Each person who signs up for the study will be invited to complete three online surveys between early 2019 and spring 2020. A small group of people also will be invited to participate in three telephone interviews between early 2019 and spring 2020.

How do I sign up my troop and individuals within the troop for the study?

We will be launching a study registration portal in the coming weeks. If your troop was selected for the study, we will share specific instructions with the Scoutmaster for how to register for the study when the portal is live.

Does everyone in the troop have to participate?

No; everyone in the troop does not have to participate in the study. For your troop to be included in the study, we ask that at least eight Scouts and the Scoutmaster sign up and participate.

What if no one in my troop wants to participate?

You will have an opportunity to let us know when the study registration portal is live; in this case, we will remove your troop from the sample list.

We were invited to participate in the study, but our troop has fewer than eight Scouts. What should we do?

Contact us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org and we can discuss your troop's participation.

Do I need an e-mail address to participate?

For Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters, we need an e-mail address for each person so that we can send the link to the online survey. For Scouts, we would like to have an e-mail address to send an individualized link. If Scouts do not have their own e-mail address, they can enter the e-mail address of a parent or guardian if the Scout will be able to access the survey e-mail so that the Scout can take the survey. If an individual Scout does not have an e-mail address or a parent/guardian e-mail address that can be used, we will provide an option for Scouts to access the survey through a survey website.

Will study participation count toward rank requirements?

No. However, participants will receive a special three-part BSA Study patch, and participation in the study is one way in which Scouts and adult leaders may live the slogan "Do a Good Turn Daily" or "help other people at all times" according to the Scout Oath. Participants are offering their time and experience to help make BSA programming better.

What happens if someone decides to participate and then changes his or her mind?

That's okay. Any person can decide to stop participating at any time during the study. There will be opportunities to withdraw via email and responding as such to the survey.

Survey Participation

How long will the surveys take?

Each survey is expected to require 20–30 minutes to complete.

How many surveys does each person take?

Each person will be asked to take three surveys. The surveys are scheduled for early 2019, summer/fall 2019, and early 2020.

Is there any compensation for participating in the surveys?

Each person who participates in the surveys will receive a special study patch. For each survey completed, that person will receive one segment of the patch. The three segments together form the patch.

We also are offering gift cards for the Scout Shop (for use at www.scoutshop.org or at National Scout Shop locations) for troops that sign up and complete the surveys: \$25 for signing up at least eight Scouts and the Scoutmaster, and \$25 for each survey period if at least 50% of Scouts registered for the study and the Scoutmaster complete the survey. This yields \$100 for the troop (not per person).

How do I earn a study patch?

Each person who participates in the surveys will receive an official study patch. The patch was designed by the BSA specifically for this study. For completing each survey, that person will receive one segment of the patch. The three segments together form the BEST Study patch. Because fewer than 10% of troops have been selected to participate in the study, earning this patch is rather exclusive.

What does the patch look like?

Images of the patch follow. The left image shows the complete patch; the right image shows each individual part.



Will the surveys be anonymous?

Because the study team needs to know who completed each survey for their analyses and to provide incentives, the survey is not anonymous. However, names will not be included in the

survey data; each person will be identified by a unique identification number that only the study team will know.

Interview Participation

How are you selecting people for the interviews?

Through the interviews, the study team seeks to understand the wide variety of perspectives in the BSA and hear from many different voices. The study team will examine information about the BSA and select individuals to participate based on several factors, including their geographical region and length of time participating in the BSA.

How many people will be invited to participate in the interviews?

The study team will identify 100 Scoutmasters or Assistant Scoutmasters and 100 Scouts to participate in the interviews. The same people will be invited to participate in all three interviews during the study.

How long will the interviews take?

Each interview is expected to last approximately 35 minutes for Scouts and one hour for adult leaders.

How many interviews does each person participate in?

Each selected person will be asked to participate in one interview at three different time points in the study, for a total of three interviews. The interviews are scheduled for early 2019, summer/fall 2019, and early 2020.

Will the interviews be recorded?

We will ask for permission to audio record the interviews. Recorded interviews will remain confidential within the study team. A Scout, parent, or troop leader can choose not to be recorded and opt out of the interview.

Who is conducting the interviews?

Trained and experienced researchers at MSU are conducting the interviews.

Do parents have to do anything?

Parents are essential to the success of the Scout interviews. We will ask parents to select the interview times that work best for their families. In addition, parents must consent for their Scout to participate in the interviews. Whenever a member of the research team reaches out to Scouts for interviews, parents will be copied or notified.

Can parents listen in on the interviews?

Yes; parents can listen in on the interviews if they wish. However, we emphasize that some Scouts may feel more comfortable answering questions when parents are nearby but not directly listening to the conversation.

Can parents preview the interview questions?

Yes. If you wish to preview the interview questions prior to the interview, please e-mail us at yourvoice@bsabeststudy.org.

Is there any compensation for participating in the interviews?

We are offering a \$35 Scout Shop gift card to each Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster who is selected and completes the interview at each wave, for a total of up to \$105 to each adult leader. We also are offering a \$20 Scout Shop gift card to each Scout who is selected and completes the interview at each wave, for a total of up to \$60 to each Scout. Scout Shop gift cards can be used online at www.scoutshop.org or at National Scout Shop locations.

Results and Reporting

Will the findings from this study be shared with the BSA national office?

Yes. Findings from the study will be aggregated, or combined with responses from many other individuals, and delivered to the BSA national office periodically. In addition, aggregated responses may be shared with the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation (the funder), other researchers, and the public. However, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Your responses will not be tied to your identity, and the research team will make every effort to keep your information confidential.

Will I be able to see the data for my troop?

No; we are not providing troop-level findings.

Will the local council be able to see the data?

No; we are not providing the data to the local council.

Will you be publishing anything from this study?

Yes; we anticipate publishing about the study in research journals and in reports and other documents shared with the BSA and the field.

Will the names of individual Scouts, Scoutmasters, or Assistant Scoutmasters be used?

No; we will not use participant names in our reports or data.