



## GROUP MERIT BADGE INSTRUCTION POLICY

This Potawatomi Area Council policy is to ensure that all badges earned in a group setting are instructed and earned in compliance with the aims and goals of Scouting:

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **Excerpt From Guide to Advancement No. 33088: [ 7.0.3.2 ] — Group Instruction**

It is acceptable—and sometimes desirable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings. This often occurs at camp and merit badge midways or similar events. Interactive group discussions can support learning. The method can also be attractive to “guest experts” assisting registered and approved counselors. Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, panels, and various other techniques can also be employed, but as any teacher can attest, not everyone will learn all the material.

There must be attention to each individual’s projects and his fulfillment of *all* requirements. We must know that every Scout —actually and *personally*— completed them. If, for example, a requirement uses words like “show,” “demonstrate,” or “discuss,” then every Scout must do that. It is unacceptable to award badges on the basis of sitting in classrooms *watching* demonstrations, or remaining silent during discussions. Because of the importance of individual attention in the merit badge plan, group instruction should be limited to those scenarios where the benefits are compelling.

### **Who This Policy Applies To**

- Sponsors of events involving merit badge instruction for multiple scouts including:
  - Council sponsored events
  - District sponsored events
  - Unit sponsored events that are offered to Scouts from units other than the sponsor
  - Non-Scouting organizations or businesses not affiliated with the BSA

### **General Guidelines for All Group Merit Badge Instruction**

- The Council Advancement Committee shall:
  - Post this policy on the council’s advancement website
  - Publicize the policy through the district roundtables
  - Maintain a current list of qualified merit badge counselors
  - Receive and give prompt review to all applications for group merit badge instruction events
- Class structure and operations must comply with the following:
  - The class size should be limited for each counselor, to provide sufficient opportunity for individual review with each Scout.
  - Merit badge sessions should be of adequate length and depending on the merit badge, prerequisites defined to allow the merit badge to be completed in the time allotted.
  - Each class must be taught by a qualified merit badge counselor.
  - The location of the event must provide an appropriate venue for reviewing the subject matter of the badge.
  - Requirements cannot be altered in any way to fit the event format. For example, if the requirement is for a Scout to create a spreadsheet on a computer, they must do it individually and not as a group. Showing the Scout how to do a requirement does not meet the requirement for the Scout to demonstrate the requirement.

- Advancement standards are:
  - The Scout must be reviewed individually by the counselor to ensure that he has met all of the requirements.
  - Partial credit must be given for partial completion of a merit badge.
  - All attending Scouts must bring an approved merit badge application (blue card) with them signifying their unit leader's approval to attend. Fliers and registration materials should urge Scouts to contact a counselor and complete certain requirements prior to the event. Blue cards shall not be issued at the event. (If a Scout does not bring an approved Blue Card, the Scout may not be signed-off at the event.)

### **Additional Guidelines for Unit, District and Outside Organization and Business Group Merit Badge Events**

- Council Advancement Committee application approval must be requested at least 30 days in advance of the event date. The request must include a completed Potawatomi Area Council Application for Group Merit Badge Instruction with appropriate attachments.
- Although it is permissible to charge fees for merit badge fairs or clinics, or similar events, any such charges should be limited to recovering the costs related to presenting the opportunity. Councils and district events may also include in the fee, a reasonable contribution to the council's overhead and administrative costs.
- Sponsoring organization responsibilities include:
  - Complying with this policy and all other BSA advancement and activity policies.
  - Providing a list of all counselors and their phone numbers at the event for Scouts to follow-up and complete the partially approved badges.

### **Additional Notes:**

- Troops planning group instruction for members of their unit only do not need to obtain council approval.
- Non-Scouting organizations and businesses must have approval from the council advancement committee if they plan to present classes, events, or similar activities that are largely devoted to the purpose of offering merit badges. Prior approval is not required if the opportunity only "incidentally" offers some merit badge requirements. For example, a youth recreation center could present a basketball camp and mention in promotional material that participants might, as a result, fulfill some of the requirements for the Sports merit badge.
- Non-Scouting organizations or businesses are not allowed to use protected BSA trade names, images, logos, or artwork without BSA permission.
- The council will not advertise group merit badge instruction events for individual units.
- The council will not advertise for or support in any way group merit badge instruction events that are fundraisers.