OUR VISION FOR SERVING SOUTH JERSEY YOUTH ON JANUARY 1, 2020

The Garden State Council delivers the best programs that develop character in the diverse youth of Southern New Jersey. We serve every youth so they can benefit from the values of the Scout Oath and Law, and make a focused effort to include the youth overlooked by other programs. The council supports a unit footprint that ensures accessibility in every community to a quality Scouting program.

We believe that the young people best prepared to make ethical and moral decisions are those instilled with a duty to their God, their country and themselves; and are trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. It is our obligation to ensure we instill as many youth as possible with these values to be the future leaders of South Jersey, and our nation.

We support a Scouting family of more than 10,000 young people by providing exceptional programs that a local unit cannot provide on its own. By focusing program impact on only the most essential opportunities, and not duplicating unit program, we ensure every program is both life-changing and attractive to those in and out of Scouting.

We are building a financially sustainable council where cost is not a barrier to young people having a full Scouting experience. Sustainability demands a council that is transparent in its operations, and holds leadership accountable to standards that support this mission. We constantly assess how we can improve, and annually eliminate programs that do not meet our standard, while adding new opportunities and technology to keep pace with changing youth culture.

The Garden State Council is a partner to all those in the communities it serves. We encourage direct youth feedback on how we can improve, and we engage the key leaders of the community to guide the council and ensure its stability.

Our standard of inclusiveness and customer experience is achieved through our unique “culture of yes”. Garden State Council leaders ensure every youth has the opportunity to reach his or her potential by placing their experience at the center of all decision making, and adapt our rules and structures to deliver Scouting’s promise each day.
In January of 2013, the Burlington County Council and Southern New Jersey Council merged to form the new Garden State Council. That new organization has spent its first several years bringing together two distinct cultures to form one of the largest youth-serving organizations in South Jersey.

Now, it is time to pivot toward the opportunities of the future.

Those opportunities are rooted in where the Garden State Council is today. At the commencement of this strategic plan process, the steering committee conducted an extensive listening exercise. There were surveys of the council’s volunteers and professional staff, and of the wider community. Three feedback meetings were held in each part of the council’s service area to allow for direct feedback. And the council’s executive board gathered for its first-ever retreat to discuss what those opportunities might look like.

Each element of the listening phase identified the same four essential areas of improvement:

- **Communication**: the council needs to improve messaging to all stakeholders.
- **Property utilization**: office and camp properties are not aligned with the mission, financially sustainable or structured correctly.
- **District structure**: units no not receive the level and type of support they need from districts.
- **Volunteer engagement**: passionate, dedicated leaders are overcommitted and poorly utilized.

Consistent in all conversations was a desire to come together as a single council that is more than the sum of its former parts. Volunteers, parents, and professionals have issued a mandate to design a council that is:

- **Data-driven**: must be analytical and predictive in all areas.
- **Operationally efficient**: tactical execution needs to be flawless.
- **Collaborative**: volunteer driven, and professional supported.
- **Innovative**: constantly trying new things, and eliminating what’s not working.
- **Transparent**: provide visibility in operations and actions.

GSC2020 is a roadmap to ensure the Garden State Council addresses these five key challenges, and realizes the council all stakeholders desire. The vision that opens this plan illustrates that future, and the strategic plan that follows lays out how to achieve it. Beginning January 1, 2017, every action in the council should be measured against the standard: Is it helping the organization advance toward the GSC2020 vision?

In January 2017, 2018, and 2019, the council’s executive board will approve specific goals, determined by the council’s leadership, designed to advance the organization toward the aims of GSC2020. Each goal will be assigned to a responsible party and paired with a timeline for achievement to keep the council progressing toward the opportunities that lay before it.

There is a bright future for Scouting in South Jersey. Families in South Jersey need Scouting now, more than ever, and it is exciting to know that the best days for the Boy Scouts of America and the communities served by the Garden State Council are ahead of it.
Scouting promises every young person a mountaintop experience unlike any other youth program. The council must act as stewards of that experience, by supporting high-quality program delivery in local units. Unit programming is augmented with an 18-month council curriculum that delivers programs to promote character and leadership, with experiences beyond the scope of those delivered by a unit.

**MEMBER EXPERIENCE**

Key measure: **Youth retention**

By January 1, 2020:

- Every unit in the council will exceed 75 percent youth membership retention. Under the leadership of the commissioner corps, the council will implement specific improvement plans or consolidate units below this benchmark.

- The council will have a proactive unit support model in place that emphasizes customer service delivery and continuous unit improvement. An expanded number of districts and field-oriented professional staff will partner to deliver this model to every unit.

- There will be three annual program opportunities (not including summer camp) above the unit level available to each unit. These programs consist of high-quality activities whose scope is beyond what can be delivered at the local unit level.

- All registered youth over the age of 14 will be offered an opportunity to participate in incredible, individual program experiences each year, such as leadership roles in the Order of the Arrow or Venturing Officers Association, or participation in council contingents to national programs.

- The summer camping programs offered by the council will be unique to those offered by competing youth programs and other Scouting programs within two hours of the council.

- All programs above the unit level will be evaluated with a simple, consistent survey. Survey results and event attendance will be used to annually refine, expand or eliminate programming.

- Youth members will have a direct conduit for feedback to council leadership. Listening opportunities will be designed to occur on youth terms and using their technology.

- New families will complete a council-created, district-supported, and unit-delivered onboarding process, designed to welcome them to the Garden State Council family and make them aware of opportunities available to them.

- Lack of volunteer resources or skills will not prevent any young person from being a Scout.
Every young person in South Jersey deserves the chance to be a Scout. The Garden State Council must grow both the number of units and youth in each unit to ensure joining Scouting is convenient. All of the council’s membership efforts are inclusive, total, and relevant – and aggressively seek to reduce all points of friction in joining the Scouting program, including geography, timing, technology and cost.

Key measure: Youth membership

By January 1, 2020:

- The Garden State Council will serve 10 percent more Cub Scouts, 50 percent more Explorers and 1,000 percent more STEM Scouts than on January 1, 2017.
- Scouting programs at all levels will be available within 20 minutes of every eligible youth in the council’s territory. The council will annually determine the ideal profile of units, start or consolidate units to achieve it, and ensure each unit is attached to an engaged, supportive chartered partner.
- Opportunities to join Scouting will be presented year-round. Council-led membership drives will be conducted alongside registration for the four youth activity seasons to position Scouting as competitive to other youth activities in the market.
- Every unit will participate in year-round recruiting programs. To support units’ need to focus on member experience, the council will finance and execute recruitment initiatives on behalf of any pack, lab, or post in need of help.
- Youth membership will reflect the diversity of the community each unit serves. The council will support unit outreach specifically to underrepresented communities to achieve this diversity.
- 100 percent of parents in the council’s territory will be aware of Scouting’s local vitality. The Scouting brand will be synonymous in the market with character and leadership development.
- The council’s SJ Scouting brand will offer every potential Scouting family a joining opportunity – on their terms. Marketing will be multilingual, represent diversity, and leverage the current digital tools available.
- Every meeting, program, event or other Scouting activity in the Garden State Council will present an opportunity for new Scouts and families to join a Scouting program.
The Garden State Council is steward of a more than 100 year-old commitment to serve South Jersey’s youth. To ensure the financial resources exist to continue through another century of service, the council must operate in a way that is both financially sustainable for the long-term, and meets all financial needs related to the Scouting program in the near-term.

**By January 1, 2020:**

- The council will achieve financial transparency through an easy to understand, surplus budget that is available to all stakeholders.

- Expenses will be reduced and aggressively managed to ensure the council never operates at a deficit. Quarterly waste analyses, project bidding and a constant emphasis on cost reduction will be used to ensure expense remains consistent with revenue.

- The financial burden of Scouting for families will be reduced and simplified. The council will institute a single support fee for each Scout that includes all council-related costs other than summer camp, including camp usage fees, activities, training and other event fees.

- Financial need will be removed as a barrier to participating in the Scouting program. Through an annual petition of need, the council will ensure that all families are able to afford a complete Scouting experience.

- Each donor to the council will be cultivated in a holistic relationship that makes them aware of all fundraising opportunities, provides better recognition, uses data to present additional gifts, and generates referrals.

- Fundraising events will be analyzed on an annual basis for their attendance, staff resource consumption, and contribution. The board will approve an annual events plan to refine or eliminate current events, and add new events to address missed opportunities.

- The council’s endowment will grow in excess of $10 million to guarantee Scouting’s future.

- Camping operations will be adjusted to eliminate their negative impact consistent with the approved operating budget. The board will appoint a volunteer leader to oversee camping finances, and ensure they perform within the board’s agreed standard for the year.

- The council will align its property portfolio with the current and future needs of South Jersey. An outside consultant will have been engaged to lead this effort, and the board will endorse a clear vision for property utilization, capital improvements, and, if needed, a capital campaign clearly in line with the council’s mission.

- Program and support resources will be modernized. A plan for updating technology, camp supplies, and council assets will be funded in the budget, with allocations for depreciation.
At all levels, Scouting in South Jersey is delivered by capable, committed volunteers. The council must ensure there are enough volunteers to meet program and unit support needs, that those volunteers are of the correct caliber, properly trained, and appropriately recognized. The council must implement volunteer engagement programs that allow Scouting to be part of a balanced family, religious and community life.

By January 1, 2020:

• Each youth-serving program – Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturing, Exploring and STEM Scouts – will have at least one registered adult for every two youth.

• Every volunteer will have a unique path for advancement, growth and development. Three-year term limits for individual district and council volunteer positions will be implemented to create opportunities; training and mentoring will be offered to ensure they are realized.

• Volunteers will be tasked with a reasonable workload that they feel best matches their skills. Each will be placed in roles that allow them to excel and feel valued.

• Volunteers will feel empowered due to a “culture of yes:” the council will answer all volunteer requests affirmatively. The organization will reduce bureaucracy, and address requests through a customer-first approach led by the Council Commissioner.

• The council’s Executive Board will be composed of volunteers who reflect the composition of the South Jersey community, are engaged for their visionary leadership, financial support or community relationships, and given clear expectations for their contribution.

• Information will be communicated to all of the council’s stakeholders on a daily basis, using the digital tools native to their lives. Communication will be available on all platforms, with messages that are relevant and specific to each audience, and aligned with current best practices.

• Collaborative opportunities will exist for broad cross sections of volunteers to exchange best practices and work together – including joint sessions of council committees, and best practice exchanges at the district level.

• The board, district and committee structures will be aligned with the strategic plan. This new structure will accurately reflect the number of volunteers available, and each volunteer or professional will provide annual goals with defined metrics and a succession plan for their position.
Garden State Council Strategic Plan Steering Committee

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