



Digital Tools

Development and Management

Group Development

At the heart of the development of a Group lies regular analysis and consideration for:

- Where the Group is **now**.
- What **changes** are happening that the Group must adapt to.
- Where does the Group want to be in the **future**.

The RAG

The foundational tool for this analysis is the **RAG Assessment**. Within Scouts, a RAG assessment comprises a series of questions based on the expectations of The Scouts and how the Group (or District, or County, etc.) matches up to them. A RAG (Red, Amber, Green) isn't a tool of judgement or punishment – it's a tool to guide you in a structured way towards things that you (as a collective) are good at (Greens), and things that you might be able to do better at (Ambers and Reds). It is natural for most Groups to have some "must do betters" in the mix perpetually, as not every question in the Group RAG is relevant to every Group.

Fortunately, The Scouts provide a tool to help us produce these fairly easily:

https://prod-cms.scouts.org.uk/media/18747/group-rag-toolkit_sept-2022.xls

This spreadsheet includes worksheets for each Section (Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts) and the overall Group. If you place your RAG in a shared place (Google Drive, Sharepoint, etc.), you can even get your Section Leads to complete their own worksheets!

The important part is to be honest when answering the questions. If you're not honest in analysis, the analysis will be meaningless.

The SWOT

The next component of a Group analysis is the SWOT. This comprises four lists:

- **Strengths:** What are the Group's best features? What do we do well?
- **Weaknesses:** What aren't we so good at – or don't do at all?
- **Opportunities:** What's happening around us that we can take advantage of?
- **Threats:** What's happening around us that might negatively affect the way we go Scouting?

The best way to do a SWOT is via a collective brainstorm. That way, you stand less chance to miss things that wouldn't always come to your own mind.

The Group RAG Toolkit spreadsheet includes a worksheet for your SWOT. This keeps all of your Group development scribbles in one workbook – very helpful!

Planning Matrix

The next step in the development planning is to create a **Planning Matrix** based on the RAG and SWOT. The workbook has some information on how to do this, but unfortunately doesn't include a specific worksheet.

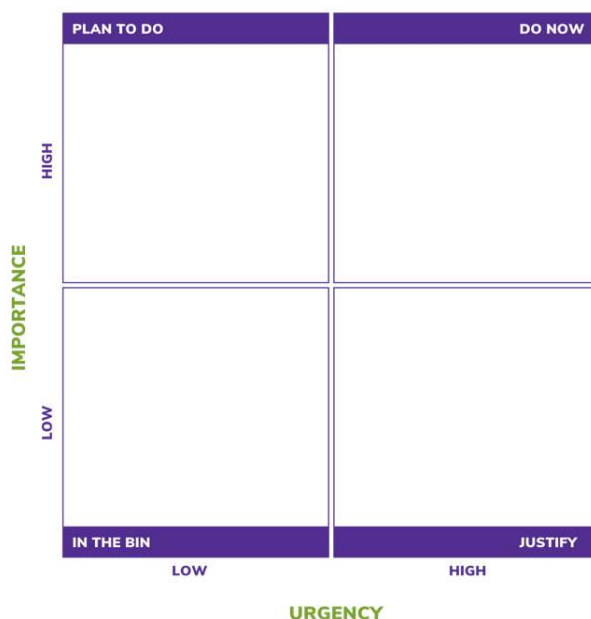
The Matrix is a tool to organise the work you need to do, as hinted by the RAG and SWOT, into a reasonable and achievable list of priorities.

Things to consider:

- Anything Amber and Red from the RAG may need action to push towards Green.
- Any Threats from the SWOT may need mitigation.
- Any Opportunities from the SWOT may need taking advantage of.
- Any Weaknesses may need action to push towards becoming Strengths.
- Any Strengths and RAG Greens may need action to ensure they are maintained.

The Planning Matrix prompts you to organise the actions from your analysis by urgency and importance. Urgency – can it wait until later, or do we need to do it now? Importance – is this going to have a large or minor impact on the Group?

Consider each action, and categorise them into the quadrants of the Matrix. Scribble stuff over the borders



between the quadrants if you need to!

Group Development Plan

The last step is to complete a **Group Development Plan**. There's one in the RAG workbook. The Development Plan worksheet includes six rows of action. Don't be tempted to add more – stick to the six. Choose from your High Urgency/High Priority actions from your Planning Matrix first, then work across as needed.

To make a Development Plan really work, regularly review. Make sure your Teams and any Team Members assigned actions are getting them done within timescales agreed. Re-assign actions if needed. Update the Action Plan at your review sessions.

Once an Action Plan has been completed, go back to your Planning Matrix and grab the next six in the priority order it suggests.

And keep going...

How Often to Analyse?

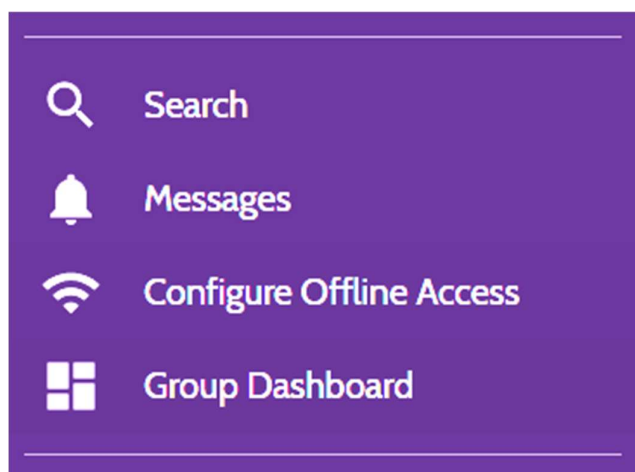
As often as you like! Where there's a lot to do- say, if the RAG comes out with a lot of Ambers and Reds – perhaps once a quarter would be good. If things are more stable, with lots of Green and few Threats, perhaps every year or two.

You have the tools. It's up to you how to use them!

Group Management

Online Scout Manager is a great tool for managing a Group. You've probably used it to track badges, sort out camps, keep track of kit, and mark off meeting attendance.

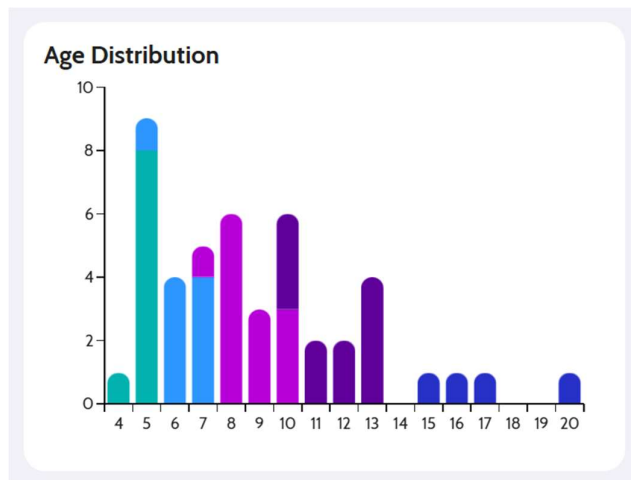
But there is a whole section of tools available that can help a Group Lead manage their Group – the Group Dashboard.



From the Group Dashboard, you can perform a number of actions, including:

- Sending emails/texts across the entire Group, or parts of, including templated emails such as newsletters.
- Keep tabs on the programme across the Group's Sections.
- Manage Gift Aid.
- Search for individual members.
- Keep track of Group payments.

An element of the Group Dashboard that is very useful for planning and management is the Age Distribution graph.



This graph at a glance shows you where gaps in your Group's membership might be. Forewarned is forearmed! These gaps might indicate future drops in numbers for a Section – for example, where the distribution indicates that a number of young people will be leaving one Section with fewer or no young people due to come into the Group at a similar time. This can help plan out your Threats – for example, considering an action to focus on Beaver recruitment because you've identified a drop in Beaver numbers due to migration up to Cubs with no intake.

Programme Management

As a Group Lead, keeping tabs on the quality of programme being delivered by your team is important.

Fortunately, there's a tool that can help with this:

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/running-your-section/planning-your-programme/programme-development-toolkit/>

At its most useful, this tool is used by Section Leads and their teams when planning their programmes. Pointing

them at the toolkit can help them to compare their programme to the expectations of The Scouts.

The toolkit comprises advice and a form of “programme RAG”. It is best introduced to new Section volunteers to help them as they gain experience in constructing programmes, and for experienced volunteers to dip into if they need a bit of a bolster.

Programme Ideas

There are many good sources for programme ideas. Two of these are:

The Scouts Badge Descriptions

Virtually every badge description has a “**Tips**” section, with programme ideas and, fairly often, resources to download or link through to.

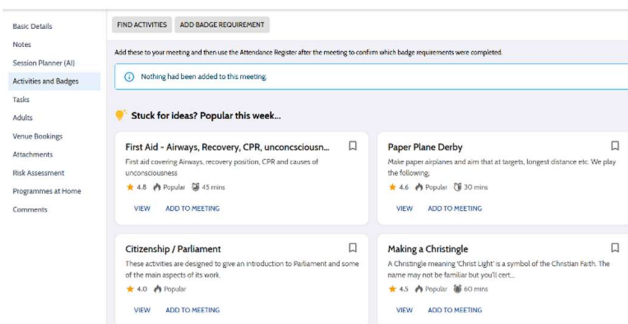
Tips

- You can complete this badge individually, in Patrols, or in other small groups.
- For option 1, you could investigate any activity completed as part of Scouts, such as archery, climbing or zip lining, or a hobby you do outside of Scouts, such as cooking, trampolining or swimming.
- If you choose to do a presentation to share your knowledge with others, this could be in the form of a video or animation.
- For option 2, you could share what you have discovered with your Patrol, Troop, another Group, a leader or someone else. There are lots of ways you could do this. Why not plan a demonstration, a presentation, run an activity or create a video?
- Why not tie this badge in with British Science Week in March?
- Guidance for leaders
- Why not see if there is a local STEM Ambassador who can provide some support?
- This badge can contribute towards a CREST Award.

The easiest way to access these is to search for the Section and the badge, either via Google (or search engine of your choice), or The Scouts web page search.

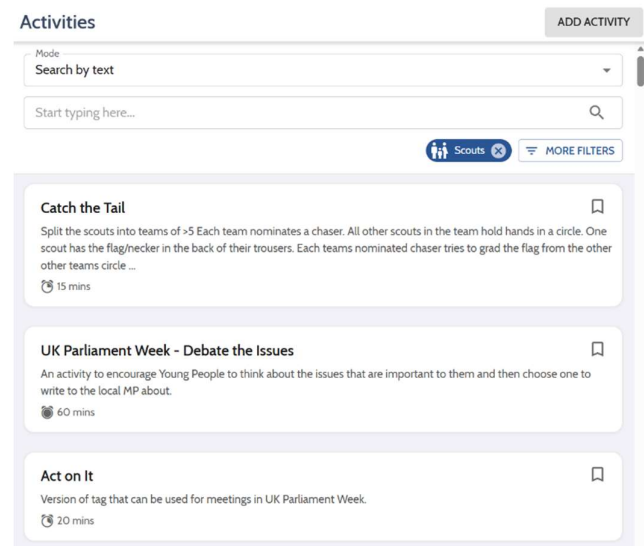
Online Scout Manager

When you go to fill in detail for a programme item in Online Scout Manager, and select “**Activities and Badges**”, you are presented with a handful of ideas that can inspire you.



You can also click through to “**Find Activities**”, from the save screen, that provides a searchable library of activities uploaded by other volunteers. This tool is

great for assembling a programme quickly.



Even better, via “**Add Activity**”, you can add your own activities to the library for others to enjoy.

For Tinkerers

Online Scout Manager API

As you use Online Scout Manager, you find that you build up a huge amount of data on the Group and its Sections. Much of this data runs the day-to-day management of the Groups, Sections, and young people.

But you can truly unlock the power of this data via **Online Scout Manager's API**.

An API is, basically, an interface from one piece of software to another. If you know how to use them, they can be really useful tools.

Some documentation regarding OSM's API has been put together by Newcastle Scouts, and can be found here:

<https://opensource.newcastlescouts.org.uk/#introduction>

This is not official documentation, so treat it with a reasonable level of care. Using it, you can extend the functionality of OSM in ways specifically tailored to your needs.

Online Scout Manager to Calendar Feed

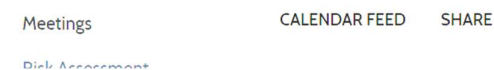
You can add Online Scout Manager's programmes, events, and so on to your calendar feeds. This is useful in a number of ways:

- Section programme calendars shared to Section volunteers, to keep them reminded about what they have got coming up when.
- Programmes shared to your website through a calendar control (such as Google Calendar).

– Sharing calendars to parents – yet another angle to the programme alongside the Parent Portal.

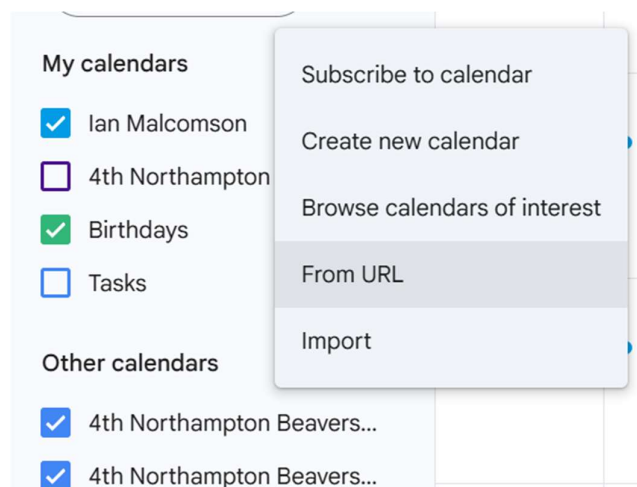
To grab a feed link to a Section's programme and events, go to "**Your Programme**" for the Section (or "**Your Events**"), and click "**Calendar Feed**".

Programme



This brings up a box with the URL you will need to share the programme, link it to a calendar, etc.

To use this link in Gmail/Google, go to Calendars, "**Other calendars**", "**Add other calendars**", and select "**From URL**":



This will add the feed to the calendar. The feed from Online Scout Manager will automatically feed through changes and updates – you won't need to add the calendar again and again, just once.

From Outlook, go to "**Add calendar**", and "**Subscribe from web**". You will be able to paste the URL from Online Scout Manager in to add that calendar feed.

Additional Tools

For the born tinkerer wanting to take things to the next level – creating custom applications (including wrappers for the Online Scout Manager API, for example) – there are several tools that will be useful:

Visual Studio is an integrated development environment (IDE) providing lots of tools for creating software. The Community Edition of Visual Studio is free.

<https://visualstudio.microsoft.com/>

Visual Studio Code is a free, cross-platform IDE that is useful if you want to create lightweight web-based applications. It is lightweight, so is often more well-suited to hobbyist programmers.

<https://code.visualstudio.com/>

Postman is a useful tool when creating applications that consume APIs (such as any you might want to build to wrap the Online Scout Manager API).

<https://www.postman.com/>

GitHub is an online code repository platform that can be used to manage, version control, branch, share, and perform many other software development tasks. It is an industry standard, but is also very useful for hobbyists. Several people have created Scouting-related software applications and shared them through GitHub – the link below drops you onto a list of many of these projects. Often, creating your own project starts with looking at what other people have done!

<https://github.com/the-scouts/see-also>

Meanwhile, on the web... There are a lot of spreadsheets, documents, templates, and other tools people have put together and shared that can help with all sorts of tasks we volunteers have on our plates. A quick search via Google or your search engine of choice can find these. For example, this spreadsheet from South London Scouts can help when figuring out camp costings. All you need to do is look!

https://southlondonscouts.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/4_members_area/county_development_service/resources/programme/night_away/campcost.xlsx