

Faith Based Initiative: Targeting the Faith Community



What is FBI?

The Faith Based Initiative (FBI) is a strategy for growth and retention. Faith based units last longer and participants advance farther (according to BSA research). The FBI is an approach to developing collaborative partnerships between local scout councils and congregations. The goal of the FBI is increased membership. It takes religious emblems programs out of programming and leverages them as membership tools. It also provides resources WHY councils should work with the faith community and HOW to approach them.

The FBI was launched in 2011 at the BSA Top Hands Conference and supported by the National Religious Relationships Task Force.

This overview of the *Faith Based Initiative: Targeting the Faith Community* has been compiled by P.R.A.Y. as part of their mission to increase collaborations between local congregations and BSA councils. For more information, visit the P.R.A.Y. website at www.praypub.org.

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Rationale & Benefits

Why FBI?

Because it works. It's "old school" and all about relationships. The FBI is not a quick fix or magical cure for declining membership. It is a strategy for collaboration based on mutual benefits and long-term relationships.

Rationale:

- 70 percent of BSA units are chartered by faith-based organizations
- BSA research points to congregations as the best place to start new sustainable units
- BSA statistics show that faith-based units last longer and participants advance farther
- Boy Scout councils and faith-based organizations share similar goals, i.e. membership growth, retention, trained leadership, quality programming, and financial stability.
- Collaborations between Boy Scout councils and faith-based organizations will not only benefit children and youth, but will also benefit the organizations themselves.

Rationale & Benefits

Benefits to Children and Youth

The most compelling reason for the FBI is that children and youth benefit. Young people are stronger when scouting organizations and congregations intentionally work together. Both organizations possess unique resources in carrying out their work with children and youth. However, when a congregation and a council work together and share resources, more young people are served more effectively and efficiently. Both organizations, working together for youth, can reach objectives not attainable by either working alone.

Rationale & Benefits

Benefits to Congregations

Congregations benefit from BSA's proven youth program:

- BSA provides citizenship training, character development, fitness, leadership experience, life skills, values, etc.
- BSA has high brand recognition to attract young families
- BSA provides outdoor resources (local and national facilities)
- Adults receive leadership training
- The skills that youth and adults develop through Scouting can be transferred to the congregation

Scouting provides opportunities for ministry:

- Faith formation programs can be supported by the religious emblems curriculum
- Potential for community outreach and evangelism (typically half of the Scouts in a unit are not active in a congregation)
- Potential to increase membership
- Potential to bring men into the church
- Not restricting God to Sundays (church can be the lecture hall, scouts can be the laboratory)
- Scouting provides an intergenerational ministry contacting young people with older adults.
- Scouting provides a service to the neighborhood and larger community through its many service initiatives.

Rationale & Benefits

Benefits to Local Councils

Council membership can increase:

- Youth in the congregation may join Scouting because parents are looking for values and religious organizations share common goals
- Adults may volunteer to be leaders because they see it as a service to their congregation
- Research shows that faith-based units have better retention
- Research shows that Scouts in faith-based units achieve greater rank advancement
- The tenure of adult leaders also increases
- Potential to increase Friends of Scouting
- Congregations can help target diverse and underserved populations

Council program can improve:

- Congregations provide Duty to God emphasis
- Congregations reinforce Scouting values
- Congregations can help recruit clergy for religious retreats and camporees

Religious Emblems

Religious Emblems: The Linchpin Connecting Scouting and the Faith Community

The Religious Emblems programs are developed by the national religious organizations to encourage their members to grow stronger in their faith. BSA has approved of these programs and allow the awards to be worn on the official uniforms, but the emblems are created and administered by the various religious groups. Understanding this simple fact - BSA does not create the religious emblems - is the key to leveraging the religious emblems programs.

Religious emblems provide congregations with an immediate connection. Here's a program for faith formation developed by their own national religious body or committee for use with their own youth members.

- Religious emblems can be your “foot in the door” into congregations.

Religious emblems not only help youth grow in faith, but also help congregations reach out into the community. They provide a non-threatening way for congregations to invite nonmembers into their congregation. Religious emblems also create opportunities for Scouting families to connect with members of the congregation and build personal friendships within the congregation.

For these reasons, religious emblems can be seen as the linchpin connecting Scouting and the faith community. It is essential to have more than just a cursory understanding of religious emblems in order for the FBI to succeed.

Religious Emblems

Know the Specifics

Since the Religious Emblems programs are developed by each individual religious organization and not by the BSA, this means each religious emblem program will be different from the rest of them. What you say about one program may not necessarily be true for the others. Before approaching any congregation, it is important to have a working knowledge of its faith-specific emblem.

It's important to do your homework. You can start by visiting <https://www.praypub.org/religious-emblems> and filling out a religious emblems analysis sheet.

Religious Emblems

Religious Emblems Coordinator Positions

It is not enough to know about religious emblems and how to leverage them. The council must promote them. Councils should take advantage of the Religious Emblems Coordinator (R.E.C.) positions that exist at the Council, District, and Unit levels.



The purpose of the R.E.C. positions is to encourage all youth to earn the emblem of their faith.

Scouting should promote religious emblems usage like BSA promotes other youth advancement.

The Council, District, and Unit R.E.C.'s can strengthen relationships with existing and potential religious chartered organizations.

For more information, please visit <https://www.praypub.org/rec-info>

Do Your Homework

Selecting the Faith Group

Be strategic in selecting the religious institutions to approach.

There are several different approaches that councils can take in selecting the religious institutions with which to work. Councils may choose a combination of these approaches. Councils may target:

- A single denomination, one that is prominent in the area, and contact its national and/or regional offices to start working with the local congregations;
- A specific geographic area, one that is strong in Scouting and target the various religious organizations in that region;
- Clergy who are already very committed to Scouting and work with their specific congregations;
- A community that is not being served by Scouting and work with the religious institutions in that area.

There are several tools that can help in the selection process:

- Community Assessment - By reviewing (or conducting) a community assessment, local councils can identify the neighborhoods currently being served by Scouting and where the religious institutions are located. A community profile may reveal some natural opportunities for partnerships.
- Profile of national denomination/religion – Becoming familiar with the national denominations - their structure and beliefs - and knowing how they relate to Scouting and if they have common goals or even a national agreement with BSA can help the council determine which national organizations to target for partnerships.
- Profile of local religious institution – Becoming familiar with the facilities, programs, and memberships of local congregations can help councils determine which institutions to target.
- Ministerial associations, rabbinical groups, denominational clergy groups, ecumenical groups – Councils can introduce Scouting to these groups by making a keynote presentation or hosting lunch at one of their meetings. A presentation made in this type of group setting is an excellent way to get a feel for which organizations are interested in working with the local council.

Regardless of the selection process, local councils need to articulate the reasons why specific organizations were chosen and list specific goals and objectives to help the partnerships succeed.

Do Your Homework

Become familiar with the individual congregation

- Learn the terminology and specific language used in the targeted religion/denomination especially in addressing religious leaders (e.g. pastor, minister, priest, rabbi, elder, etc.) and in referring to the house of worship (e.g. church, synagogue, ward, congregation, etc.).
- Determine the best person to contact. Is it the clergy, president of the congregation, the leader of the men's group or the youth department? Finding the right person is critical.
- Read several of the most recent newsletters and talk to some of the members to become knowledgeable of the organization's activities and programs and to learn how the organization serves its membership and the community around it. This will help gain insight into where the opportunities for partnership exist.
- Find and develop "cultural informants"

Do Your Homework

Approaching the Faith Community

- Show congregations WHY they need Scouting
- Stop selling Packs, Troops, and Crews
- Start selling SOLUTIONS to congregations and their needs
- Show congregations how Scouting can contribute to the congregation's membership growth, retention, leadership, and program
- Be prepared to respond to controversial issues

- Create a Structured Sales Worksheet per prospect
- Create a detailed Recruitment Plan per prospect
- Use Shark Tank presentation techniques
- Rehearse your talking points
- Role play the interview
- Be confident, professional, enthusiastic

What is your ask?

Articulate your goals. What are your designed outcomes?

- What do you want?
- What would be amazing?
- What would you settle for?

- Samples:
 - Forming a new unit
 - Teaching a religious emblems class
 - Distributing lead generation info
 - Sending youth to camp
 - Celebrating Scout Sunday/Sabbath
 - Providing meeting space for existing troops
 - 10 Commandment Hike

Sustaining the FBI

Sustainability

Sustainability is the goal. With sustainability comes long term growth through healthy programs and trained, committed unit leaders. Healthy programs exist within Chartered Organizations that view Scouting as an integral component of their mission and vision, and in the case of faith-based organizations, the buy-in goes even deeper. Scouting is seen as a youth and family “ministry”, not as an outside group that rents their facility once a week.

Sustainability requires:

- Improving relationships with existing chartered partners - this may require a re-visioning effort and a paradigm shift for many faith-based and community partners, who currently view their role with Scouting as that of a “sponsor”, a provider of a meeting facility. The goal is to help them change from a sponsor mindset to an owner mindset...thus seeing Scouting as an integral part of their vision for youth development and ministry.
- New Unit development - the opportunity to set the tone and expectation right from the very first meeting about the essence and values of the chartered partner relationship.

Sustaining the FBI

Treat your Chartered Organization as you would a Major Donor

- The FBI is not a quick fix.
- The key to the success of the FBI is long-term relationships.
- Pay attention to your Chartered Organizations
- Stop treating them as sponsors of units
- Treat them as partners in delivering a quality Scouting experience
- Make your faith-based partners a priority

- Utilize Adult Religious Awards to recognize outstanding service by clergy and lay leaders.
- Invite clergy to a Duty to God breakfast or recognition events
- Send letters to clergy who have helped girls earn their religious recognitions.

Sustaining the FBI

Measurement

If you want to make sure that something happens you need to make it a priority and agree on goals and how you are going to measure it.

- Number of visits to Chartered Organizations
- Number of congregations offering religious recognitions classes
- Number of religious recognition recipients
- Number of District and Unit Religious Emblems Coordinators

Expanding

- Peer to peer recruiting - ask clergy for help in contacting and presenting to other clergy
- Religious relationships committees

Resources

Resource Library

The following are some of the FBI resources that can be found in P.R.A.Y.'s online Resource Library. New materials will be added as they are developed. Please take advantage of these free resources.

- It Takes a Council: Understanding how all parts of the council have a role in growing membership through the FBI
- REC resources
- Interfaith devotions
- Summer camp Duty to God program
- Religious Emblems Analysis Worksheet
- Sample letters to clergy and religious recognition recipients

FEEDBACK

P.R.A.Y. is interested in your feedback. Take the time to let P.R.A.Y. know how you have used these FBI resources or if there is something new that P.R.A.Y. can help develop for you. Click here for the P.R.A.Y. contact form:

<https://www.praypub.org/contact-us>

About P.R.A.Y.

Programs of Religious Activities with Youth

Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (P.R.A.Y.) is a not-for-profit organization whose national board of directors includes representatives from Protestant and Independent Christian Churches and the national youth agencies.

P.R.A.Y. encourages collaborations between churches and youth agencies to benefit young people. Both organizations have unique resources in carrying out their work with children and youth, but when a congregation and a council work side-by-side sharing their resources, more young people can be served more effectively. Both organizations, working together for youth, can reach objectives not attainable by either working alone.

P.R.A.Y. offers webinars and trainings for council staff and volunteers to encourage collaborations with the faith community. Please contact P.R.A.Y. CEO Jason Noland for more information

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