



FOCUS 2019: Activation Rate Committee

# Activation Event Guide

Exist Today, Thrive Tomorrow





We've all talked about "sash and dashers," but that mindset generally involves the lodge placing the blame on the "sash and dash" Arrowman for never coming back. However, a fair amount of these young people never return to the Order because they were never given a reason to. The most significant driver of youth membership retention is getting 50 percent of youth inducted to attend their first "fun" event -- as soon as possible -- but at least within no more than 6 months after being inducted. The period of activation begins at the induction itself, and ultimately, our job isn't complete until the Arrowmen returns and stays engaged.

A majority of the youth that are inducted into the Order of the Arrow never attend an event after their Ordeal. If you're reading this, you're actually an anomaly. Nearly 70 percent of Arrowmen never become activated. Just think about that for a moment. If you're a vice chief of program in your lodge, you may spend countless hours planning events, but not even 30 percent will come to even just one of them. Since our election to national office, we've traveled around to many of your lodges and sections and seen the exciting programs you create as a direct result of your commitment. We want to see more of our members see that program and actually experience what the OA for something more than the sash.

Before we can explain how an activation event works, we have to understand what it is.

**The definition for an activation event is as follows:** *"An event held within 6 months, but preferably within 90 days, following an induction weekend with the intent to involve new members, encourage retention at the local level, build personal growth, and ensure future involvement in the OA."*

You'll notice that the definition doesn't include an exact list of events that qualify, because if we did, we surely would leave out activation events unique to your lodge. In deciding if a program is truly an "activation event," think back to the guidelines of this definition – will the event energize new members to become involved in the OA? If the answer is yes, it likely qualifies as an activation event.

It is our sincere hope that throughout the course of this guide, you can truly understand what it means to plan and execute a successful activation event, and leave a lasting impact on our Arrowmen for generations to come.



## Factors of an Activation Event

**Immediacy** | The more hastily new members are engaged, the more likely they are to maintain an interest in the Order of the Arrow. **Successful lodges hold activation events within 1-2 months of the induction weekend.** This is sooner than the 6 month period suggested, however, the more quickly lodges hold activation events, the more likely we are to capture new Arrowmen.

**Locality** | **Activation can only take place at the local level of the OA.** Relationships can be encouraged with a smaller scale event, such as the ones found in this guidebook. Events that take place at a conclave may be helpful in creating an enjoyable experience, but a conclave itself is often too impersonal to create connections. For lodges with a chapter structure, this level is the most rewarding for long term retention.

**Price** | Activating new members can potentially come at a cost. In order for a new member to become engaged in the local program, they have to be “hooked” at their first event. **To incentivize attendance (and further reward them for completing their induction), it is best to create an event with little to no cost for new members.** Already engaged members or “senior leadership” should be able to pay their own way to help subsidize the cost. If further financial planning is needed, this should be taken into account when planning out the lodge’s annual budget.

**Purpose** | An activation event should create personal accomplishment for newly inducted Arrowmen, and build awareness of the organization at large. New members should be educated with either hands-on activities pertaining to the OA program or provided information about how to further become involved. **Parents of younger members are a huge influencer when it comes to the involvement level of their son/daughter.**

**“My activation event allowed me to get engaged in this incredible program. I wouldn’t be in this position if I didn’t show up to my second event as an Arrowman, and I’m extremely thankful for those who encouraged me to do so.” - Ryan N. - Illinek Lodge Chief**



## Best Practices | *Successful Activation Events*

### Chapter and Lodge Meetings

*\*Please note: A primary factor of activation is based on **locality**. If the lodge has an effective chapter program, activation events **should be constructed on the chapter level** to create an easier opportunity for a new member to become engaged. If the lodge does not have chapters or does not have a large amount of membership, activation events can be conducted on a lodge wide scale, as long as it does not strain attendance of new members.*

**What** | Within a month of the induction, chapters/lodges will hold a meeting that serves a primary purpose of engaging new members. Chapters/Lodges that said meetings were successful noted that elangomats were expected to attend them as well and interact with the Arrowmen that had been in their clan. During the meeting the members would break out into focus groups to talk about the different areas of the lodge program and build interest (i.e. AIA workshop/ceremony practice, program/service planning teams, elangomating, leadership opportunities.) It is recommended that food be offered at the meeting. Similar to the structure of the National Leadership Seminar, food should be served by already “senior leadership” to ensure the new members feel welcomed by their peers. The focus of the meeting should not be about they can do for the lodge, but rather what the lodge can do for them. The entire Lodge Executive Committee is expected to be in attendance, and should lead different focus groups to ensure those new members present leave the meeting having selected a committee to become involved with.

**Planning** | It is expected that a planning process would take place with key lodge leadership prior to the meeting itself. The last thing we want to happen is for an unprepared Arrowman to not understand his/her role, and not do their best to have a lasting impact on our new members. Every Arrowman deserves to have an incredible first impression. Planning for the event should start no later than 6 months out. Here are a few things to think about when preparing for the event:

- Have you reserved a location for the meeting?
- Has the meeting been marketed to new members and (if youth member) their parents, as well as existing members?
- Has lodge leadership been contacted about their required attendance?
- If lodge leadership cannot attend, has someone been selected to fill in, and been briefed on how to execute their focus group?
- Have you assigned someone to make/purchase the food?

All of these factors can make or break your lodge’s activation event - so it’s best to stay on top of them! In the months leading up to the event, it is best to have a few meetings with the key 3 of the lodge to ensure all planning has been executed, and everyone is on the same page. It is also best to have at least 1 meeting with the entire LEC to ensure they understand the process of the meeting.



**Marketing** | In order for the meeting to be successful, it needs to be marketed to 2 different types of membership. The first being new members, and (if youth member) their parents. An event created for new Arrowmen cannot happen without them! Starting at the OA Welcome Session prior to the induction weekends for the year, parents of upcoming members should be given the dates for the lodge's activation events, as well as location. Monthly reminders should be sent out to ensure the meeting remains on their calendar, as well as something to track attendance. If the event is free, consider utilizing a program like AirTable, Google Forms, Eventbrite or your council's registration system. No matter the system you use, tracking attendance is crucial to understanding the success of this year's event as well as guidance for future events. The second being already existing members or "senior leadership" of the lodge. It's extremely challenging to get new members to buy into the opportunities an organization presents when that organization doesn't have already engaged members. The already existing members serve a key purpose in ensuring the activation of every new member who attends the meeting. What they do matters, and it's crucial they are present, and engaged in the program. Please make sure all meeting attendance is tracked properly, and the data is put into lodgmaster to ensure your lodge hits the performance benchmark for activation! A post meeting email should be sent no more than 24 hours after the meeting ends. An example email can be found [here](#).

**Cost** | As stated before - the cost should be minimal to none. The only factor a lodge should need to account for is a location (if one needs rented) and food for the membership. If the food is something similar to that of a cracker barrel, the lodge should try their best to budget so that new membership doesn't need to pay. If a fee for new members is inevitable, something around the price range of \$5 should be the maximum amount charged.

**Event Length** | The event should be no more than 2-3 hours.

**Support** | As an organization, we understand that this task can be a difficult one to undergo if your lodge has never done anything like this. To help support you on your mission to ensure the 50% benchmark for activation rate is met, we will be utilizing 2 resources aimed to help you succeed. The first being your section - the boots on the ground team whose main priority is to ensure your success. The section will be reaching out to the leadership of your lodge to ensure that your lodge is planning to do an activation event following each induction, and that they are planned, marketed, and executed properly. Remember - they exist to serve and support you. Please reach out to your section chief and adviser if you need assistance. The second is the national thrive team - a group of talented youth leaders who were once in your position, and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure you and your lodge are successful. If you need further assistance, or would simply like support to ensure your plan is ready to go, please contact [thrive@oa-bsa.org](mailto:thrive@oa-bsa.org) and our team will reach out to you asap.



THRIVE

ORDER OF THE ARROW

### What do Arrowmen think about this idea?

"Providing a local opportunity to a newly inducted Arrowman is a great way to activate their experience in our Order."

Ordeal Member, Western Region

"Attending my first lodge meeting allowed me to truly get to know the members of my induction class. A few of the members from my clan even joined me by volunteering to serve as an elangomat at the next induction weekend!"

Ordeal Member, Southern Region

"I was a little nervous at first to attend my first chapter meeting because I barely knew anyone, but those fears were extinguished when my chapter's leadership not only served me during the meal provided, but went out of their way to learn about my life. I can't wait to attend my next chapter meeting!"

Ordeal Member, Central Region

"I loved attending my first lodge meeting because I was able to spend time with 3 other members of my induction class as we learned how to become a ceremonialist! Each of us will be helping out the team at our summer camp for callout season."

Ordeal Member, Northeast Region

"While my lodge meeting was only a couple hours long, I really felt like I was welcomed by the other members. The meeting was all about our opinion and experience. I will definitely be returning to another lodge event!"

Ordeal Member, Southern Region

## Chapter and Lodge Fellowship Weekend at Camp

*\*Please note: A primary factor of activation is based on locality. If the lodge has an effective chapter program, activation events should be constructed on the chapter level to create an easier opportunity for a new member to become engaged. If the lodge does not have chapters or does not have a large amount of membership, activation events can be conducted on a lodge wide scale, as long as it does not strain attendance of new members.*

**What |** A great way to engage a new member is a weekend camping event. This is probably something they have done many times with their unit, and are already accustomed to how it's structured. Some of the greatest events already in existence utilize themes, and incorporate it into all aspects of the event. For example, if the event is in October, a Halloween theme would be appropriate. You should get creative with your themes. Creativity + innovation + youth leadership = a phenomenal event! It is highly recommended that if chapters are available, an inter-chapter competition take place, with each chapter competing for a lodge spirit award. If the lodge does not utilize the chapter system, Arrowman can simply be divided into teams, or remain with their induction clan. Other suggestions included incorporating aspects of leadership development into the weekend. This would give our new members a chance to understand what the Order is all about! A full schedule of a chapter/lodge fellowship weekend at camp can be found here.

**Planning |** It is expected that a planning process would take place with key lodge leadership prior to the event itself. The last thing we want to happen is for an unprepared Arrowman to not understand his/her role, and not do their best to have a lasting impact on our new members. Every Arrowman deserves to have an incredible first impression. Planning for the event should start no later than 6 months out. Here are a few things to think about when preparing for the event:

- Have you reserved a location for the event?
- Has the event been marketed to new members and (if youth member) their parents, as well as existing members?
- Has lodge leadership been contacted about their required attendance?
- If lodge leadership cannot attend, has someone been selected to fill in, and been briefed on how to execute their assigned portion of the event?
- Have you assigned someone to make/purchase the food?
- Do you have a medical staffer in case of an emergency?

All of these factors can make or break your lodge's activation event - so it's best to stay on top of them! In the months leading up to the event, it is best to have a few meetings with the key 3 of the lodge to ensure all planning has been executed, and everyone is on the same page. It is also best to have at least 2 meetings with the entire LEC to ensure they understand the process of the meeting.



**Marketing** | In order for the meeting to be successful, it needs to be marketed to 2 different types of membership. The first being new members, and (if youth member) their parents. An event created for new Arrowmen cannot happen without them! Starting at the OA Welcome Session prior to the induction weekends for the year, parents of upcoming members should be given the dates for the lodge's activation event(s), as well as location(s). Monthly reminders should be sent out to ensure the event remains on their calendar, as well as something to track attendance. If the event is free, consider utilizing a program like AirTable, Google Forms, Eventbrite or your council's registration system. No matter the system you use, tracking attendance is crucial to understanding the success of this year's event as well as guidance for future events. The second being already existing members or "senior leadership" of the lodge. It's extremely challenging to get new members to buy into the opportunities an organization presents when that organization doesn't have already engaged members. The already existing members serve a key purpose in ensuring the activation of every new member who attends the event. What they do matters, and it's crucial they are present, and engaged in the program. Please make sure all event attendance is tracked properly, and the data is put into lodgmaster to ensure your lodge hits the performance benchmark for activation! A post event email should be sent no more than 24 hours after the event ends. An example email can be found [here](#).

**Cost** | As stated before - the cost should be as minimal as possible. While there are many financial factors to executing a weekend event, the budget should allow for a new member to attend at little to no cost. Already existing members or "senior leadership" should pay the standard event price that your lodge would charge for a weekend event. If a fee for new members is inevitable, something around the price range of \$10 should be the maximum amount charged.

**Event Length** | The event should last at least 24 hours, but no more than a full weekend (Friday evening - Sunday morning).

**Support** | As an organization, we understand that this task can be a difficult one to undergo if your lodge has never done anything like this. To help support you on your mission to ensure the 50% benchmark for activation rate is met, we will be utilizing 2 resources aimed to help you succeed. The first being your section - the boots on the ground team whose main priority is to ensure your success. The section will be reaching out to the leadership of your lodge to ensure that your lodge is planning to do an activation event following each induction, and that they are planned, marketed, and executed properly. Remember - they exist to serve and support you. Please reach out to your section chief and adviser if you need assistance. The second is the national thrive team - a group of talented youth leaders who were once in your position, and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure you and your lodge are successful. If you need further assistance, or would simply like support to ensure your plan is ready to go, please contact [thrive@oa-bsa.org](mailto:thrive@oa-bsa.org) and our team will reach out to you asap.



## What do Arrowmen think about this idea?

"Attending my first fellowship weekend was a great experience! It allowed me to enjoy the company of my new friends, and participate in fun activities. I was worried it would be just like the induction weekend, but it was so much fun!"

Ordeal Member, Southern Region

"I was able to meet my chapter chief at the fellowship weekend. I sat with him and learned a lot more about the chapter and ways to get involved. He was so nice, I signed up for the next event sitting right there with him!"

Ordeal Member, Western Region

My favorite part of the fellowship weekend was seeing other members of my home unit. I had no clue that some of them were so involved, and one was even my chapter vice chief! They introduced me to a lot of different people, who I'm excited to start working with."

Ordeal Member, Central Region

"I was so nervous going into the event, but right when I got there, I saw my elangomat from my induction. It was so nice to see a friendly face that I recognized. He stayed with me for a while until I felt more comfortable with the new people I had just met. I will definitely be attending the next event, and hopefully even more in the future!"

Ordeal Member, Northeast Region

My favorite part of the fellowship weekend were the icebreakers in the beginning. I didn't know anyone else there so being able to meet everyone through an activity was great. I feel like I know a lot more about the people I spent the weekend with now."

Ordeal Member, Central Region



## Chapter or Lodge Celebration

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**What** | Instead of a traditional meeting, a chapter/lodge celebration is an innovative way to create an atmosphere of fellowship and brotherhood around for new members.

Examples of a chapter/lodge celebration includes activities such as:

- Bowling
- Mini Golf
- Go Karting
- Arcade
- Trampoline Park

There are many other options to explore - these are just the tip of the iceberg! It is recommended that food be offered at the celebration. Similar to the structure of the National Leadership Seminar, food should be served by already existing members or “senior leadership” to ensure the new members feel welcomed by their peers. The primary focus of the event should be to engage new members through the aspect of fellowship and brotherhood. Already existing members or “senior leadership” should be encouraged to find a group of new Arrowmen, and engage with them for part or all of the celebration. This will allow your lodge’s new members to feel welcomed as if they are entering a brotherhood of lifelong friends. The event should wrap up with a youth leadership message, with a powerful message emphasizing the importance of each and every new member in attendance.

**Planning** | It is expected that a planning process would take place with key lodge leadership prior to the meeting itself. The last thing we want to happen is for an unprepared Arrowman to not understand his/her role, and not do their best to have a lasting impact on our new members. Every Arrowman deserves to have an incredible first impression. Planning for the celebration should start no later than 6 months out. Here are a few things to think about when preparing for the event:

- Have you reserved a location for the celebration?
- Has the celebration been marketed to new members and (if youth member) their parents, as well as existing members?
- Has lodge leadership been contacted about their required attendance?
- If lodge leadership cannot attend, has someone been selected to fill in, and been briefed on how to execute their portion of the celebration?



- Have you assigned someone to make/purchase the food if needed?

All of these factors can make or break your lodge's activation event - so it's best to stay on top of them! In the months leading up to the event, it is best to have a few meetings with the key 3 of the lodge to ensure all planning has been executed, and everyone is on the same page. It is also best to have at least 1 meeting with the entire LEC to ensure they understand the process of the meeting.

**Marketing** | In order for the celebration to be successful, it needs to be marketed to 2 different types of membership. The first being new members, and (if youth member) their parents. An event created for new Arrowmen cannot happen without them! Starting at the OA Welcome Session prior to the induction weekends for the year, parents of upcoming members should be given the dates for the lodge's activation events, as well as location. Monthly reminders should be sent out to ensure the meeting remains on their calendar, as well as something to track registration. If the event is free, consider utilizing a program like AirTable, Google Forms, Eventbrite or your council's registration system. No matter the system you use, tracking attendance is crucial to understanding the success of this year's event as well as guidance for future events. The second being already existing members or "senior leadership" of the lodge. It's extremely challenging to get new members to buy into the opportunities an organization presents when that organization doesn't have already engaged members. The already existing members serve a key purpose in ensuring the activation of every new member who attends the celebration. What they do matters, and it's crucial they are present, and engaged in the program. Please make sure all celebration attendance is tracked properly, and the data is put into lodgmaster to ensure your lodge hits the performance benchmark for activation! A post celebration email should be sent no more than 24 hours after the celebration ends. An example email can be found [here](#).

**Cost** | As stated before - the cost should be as minimal as possible. While there are many financial factors to executing a celebration, the budget should allow for a new member to attend at minimal to no cost. Already existing members or "senior leadership" should pay the standard event price that your lodge would charge for a chapter/lodge celebration. If a fee for new members is inevitable, something around the price range of \$10 should be the maximum amount charged.

**Support** | As an organization, we understand that this task can be a difficult one to undergo if your lodge has never done anything like this. To help support you on your mission to ensure the 50% benchmark for activation rate is met, we will be utilizing 2 resources aimed to help you succeed. The first being your section - the boots on the ground team whose main priority is to ensure your success. The section will be reaching out to the leadership of your lodge to ensure that your lodge is planning to do an activation event following each induction, and that they are planned, marketed, and executed properly. Remember - they exist to serve and support you. Please reach out to



your section chief and adviser if you need assistance. The second is the national thrive team - a group of talented youth leaders who were once in your position, and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure you and your lodge are successful. If you need further assistance, or would simply like support to ensure your plan is ready to go, please contact [thrive@oa-bsa.org](mailto:thrive@oa-bsa.org) and our team will reach out to you asap.

**Event Length** | The event should be no more than 5 hours.



## What do Arrowmen think about this idea?

"When I heard about the bowling event, I saw it as a great opportunity to have fun and meet more people in my lodge. I ended up having a great time and didn't feel out of place since I was so new to the lodge. I will definitely bring some people from my crew next time."

Ordeal Member, Central Region

"My lodge went mini golfing a month after I completed my induction. I didn't really feel like going, but another scout from my unit was going so I decided to as well. I'm so happy I did since it ended up being a ton of fun! I really hope they do another event soon!"

Ordeal Member, Northeast Region

"I ended up going to an escape room event with my lodge two months after my induction. I was in a room full of people from my chapter which I didn't know until later. I ended up getting close with one of the scouts who I learned was my chapter chief. A month later, I became the vice chief of my chapter."

Ordeal Member, Southern Region

"My first event at the lodge level after my ordeal was going to an amusement park. I had a great time and met so many people in the lodge. I even spoke with the lodge chief and ended up being asked to join the social media committee. I think it was that first interaction that got me hooked on the OA."

Ordeal Member, Western Region

"My chapter hosted a go kart event in the spring, and I decided to sign up since I was so new to the OA. It was there that I met a few friends that convinced me to sign up for the summer event. I loved the go karting event because it was so casual but still allowed for me to learn about my chapter."

Ordeal Member, Southern Region