

GUIDANCE ON PREPARING A  
NATIONAL SCOUT ORGANIZATION'S  
CONSTITUTION



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# INTRODUCTION

A constitution consists of a set of fundamental principles and rules according to which an National Scout Organization (NSO) is acknowledged to be governed.

This pamphlet serves as a basic guidance to a NSO on preparing or revising its constitution. Section 1 below provides some overall tips to bear in mind during the drafting process. Section 2 provides detailed guidance and sample provisions to consider while provisions are formulated. Section 2 should be used as a checklist of the necessary provisions in a constitution, and not to be used as a standard model.

If an NSO has already adopted its constitution and is considering making amendments, the NSO should first refer to Section 3 before reviewing Sections 1 and 2.

The World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) Regional Support Centres and the WOSM Constitutions Committee are available to support an NSO with advice during the drafting process. All provisions in the constitution must also be compatible with country laws.



## **SECTION 1. GENERAL POINTS**

- A. Each NSO must draft a constitution that best suits its needs and circumstances. As a world-wide Movement, it is not possible to provide an exact model constitution which would be relevant for every situation in every country. The following sample constitution merely provides a starting point for NSOs to use during its drafting process.
  
- B. Experience suggests that the following general points should be borne in mind during the drafting process:
  - I. Restrict the constitution just to the essentials. Keep it as concise as possible.
  
  - II. Ensure that the references to the fundamentals of Scouting comply with those set out in the WOSM constitution.
  
  - III. Day-to-day operational and management details are better set out in separate Rules of the Association. This will allow them to be modified as the organisation develops without having to change the main constitution.
  
  - IV. Keep the national governance structure as simple as possible. The functions of the General Assembly and of the National Board should be clear.
  
  - V. Details of other committees and working groups need not be in the main constitution but can be included in the Rules.
  
  - VI. Register the organisation as a formal legal entity in the country and ensure the constitution complies with the registration requirements.
  
  - VII. Finalise the drafting of the new constitution well ahead of the General Assembly. Allow time for an English draft to be sent to the Global Support Centre in Kuala Lumpur for checking by the WOSM Constitutions Committee. The Constitutions Committee often needs time to clarify some points with the NSO.

## **SECTION 2. SAMPLE CONSTITUTION**

- A. The following lists provisions that the NSO should consider including in its constitution.
- B. Notes are provided at the end of each section.
- C. This sample constitution is not meant to provide a standard model. It can be used as a check list of the most important provisions required in most constitutions.

### **The Scout Association of xxxxxx**

#### **Preamble**

- 1. The Scout Movement was founded by Robert Baden-Powell in 1907. Scouting in xxxxxx was started in xxxx.

#### **Name of Organisation**

- 2. The name of the organisation is The Scout Association of xxxxxx. It is registered as a not-for-profit organisation with the Government of xxxxxx.

#### **Notes**

- 1. The Scout Movement is open to all young people without distinction of gender. Most NSOs no longer use the term 'Boy Scout' in their title but call themselves 'The Scout Association of [country].'
- 2. The NSO must be registered as a legal entity in its own country. The main constitution should describe the nature of the registration (eg not-for-profit organisation; non-governmental organisation; charity etc).
- 3. Only include the registered address of the NSO if required by the country authorities. This will avoid having to change the constitution if the organisation changes its national address.

#### **The Scout Movement**

- 3. Scouting in xxxxxx is a voluntary non-political educational movement for young people. It is open to all without distinction of gender, origin, race or creed in accordance with the purpose, principles and method conceived by the Founder as set out below.
- 4. The aim of the Association is to contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities

5. Scouting is based on the following principles:
  - a. **Duty to God:** Adherence to spiritual principles, loyalty to the religion that expresses them and acceptance of the duties resulting therefrom.
  - b. **Duty to others:** Loyalty to xxxxxx in harmony with the promotion of local, national and international peace, understanding and cooperation. Participation in the development of society with recognition and respect for the dignity of humanity and for the integrity of the natural world.
  - c. **Duty to self:** Responsibility for the development of oneself.

#### Notes

1. **Definition of Scouting.** It is a requirement of a NSO's membership of WOSM that the organisation defines the nature of the organisation in its constitution. See the WOSM Constitution Article I.1 for a definition of Scouting.
2. **Purpose of the NSO.** This section could be based on the text set out in WOSM Constitution Article I.2.
3. **Principles.** This section should set out the principles to which the Scout Movement and thus the NSO adheres. See WOSM Constitution Article II.1.

### The Scout Method

6. The Association achieves its aim through the Scout Method. This is a system of progressive self-education through the interaction of all the following elements:
  - a. The Scout Promise and Law,
  - b. Learning by Doing,
  - c. Personal Progression,
  - d. Team System,
  - e. Adult Support,
  - f. Symbolic Framework,
  - g. Nature,
  - h. Community Involvement.

The Scout Method is practiced by creating a meaningful education experience for young people. It should be used in a way that is consistent with the Scout Movement's Purpose and Principles. It is further described in a relevant policy adopted and reviewed from time to time by the World Scout Conference.

## Notes

1. A reference to the Scout Method should be included. The above is drawn directly from WOSM Constitution Article III.1.

## The Scout Promise

7. All those wishing to become a Member of the Association are required to adhere to a Scout Promise and Law. The Scout Promise is:  
On my honour I promise that I will do my best —  
To do my duty to God and the King (or to God and my country);  
To help other people at all times;  
To obey the Scout Law.
8. Alternative wording to the above for younger sections and those of other faiths are published in the Rules of the Association (hereafter called Rules.

## Notes

1. As a member of WOSM it is a requirement to include the wording of the Scout Promise in the constitution. The language must reflect the Principles of Scouting and be approved by the World Scout Committee.
2. NSOs should adapt the wording set out in WOSM Constitution Article II.2 to suit the culture of their country.
3. Other versions of the Promise (eg for younger sections or for other faiths and none) can be included in Rules. The main constitution should provide authority for this provision.

## The Scout Law:

9. The Scout Law is:
  - i. A Scout's honour is to be trusted.
  - ii. A Scout is loyal.
  - iii. A Scout's duty is to be useful and to help others.
  - iv. A Scout is a friend to all and a brother to every other Scout.
  - v. A Scout is courteous.
  - vi. A Scout is a friend to animals.
  - vii. A Scout obeys orders of his parents, Patrol Leader or Scoutmaster without question.
  - viii. A Scout smiles and whistles under all difficulties.

- ix. A Scout is thrifty.
  - x. A Scout is clean in thought word and deed.
10. The Association may allow the use of different forms of the wording of the Scout Law (eg to suit different age ranges). These are published in the Rules.

#### Notes

- 1. As a member of WOSM it is a requirement to include the wording of the Scout Promise in the constitution. The language must reflect the Principles of Scouting and be approved by the World Scout Committee.
- 2. NSOs should adapt the wording set out in WOSM Constitution Article II.2 to suit the culture of their country.
- 3. Other versions of the Promise (eg for younger sections or for other faiths and none) can be included in Rules. The main constitution should provide authority for this provision.

### **General**

- 11. The motto of the Association is 'Be Prepared'.
- 12. The emblem of the Association shall be used in accordance with the Rules.
- 13. The flag of Association shall be used in accordance with the Rules.

### **International**

- 14. The Association is a Member Organization of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. It enjoys the rights and privileges of membership and is required to fulfil its obligations.

#### Notes

- 1. State that the NSO agrees to the obligations as a Member Organization of WOSM as set out in WOSM Constitution Article VII.3.

### **Membership and Appointments**

- 15. The Scout Association of xxxxxx shall have the following categories of members:
  - a. Youth Members;
  - b. Adult Members;
  - c. Associate Members

16. Details of the rights and obligations of Members are set out in the Rules.
17. Registration of membership and termination of membership shall be in accordance with the Rules.
18. The appointments and roles in the Association are established in accordance with the Rules.
19. Any appointment made is subject to the right of the Association to cancel, withdraw or suspended the appointment as necessary.
20. The reasons for termination of membership include resignation, non-payment of the membership subscription, or conduct incompatible with Scouting.
21. Any member dissatisfied with a decision to terminate their membership may appeal such decision in accordance with the procedures set out in the Rules.

#### Notes

1. The constitution should define who can be members of the organisation. Their rights and obligations; and arrangements for their suspension and expulsion can be included in the Rules.
2. Reasons for termination of membership should be stated (eg resignation of member, non-payment of membership subscription, conduct incompatible with Scouting etc).
3. Procedures for appeal against termination of membership should be set out in the Rules.

#### **General Assembly**

22. The General Assembly is the governing authority of the Association and shall exercise all powers conferred on it by the Constitution.
23. The members of the General Assembly are:
  - a. Chairperson of the National Board  
(General Assembly Chairperson)
  - b. All other members of the National Board
  - c. All members of the National Commissioner Team
  - d. Two adult delegates from each of the Association's Districts  
(or Regions)
  - e. Two youth representatives of each of the Association's Districts  
(or Regions).
24. Observers, without the right to vote, may also attend meetings of the General Assembly.

25. The functions of the General Assembly are:
- a. (see note 3 below)

#### Notes

1. **General Assembly** (or often called National Assembly, National Council or National Conference). Typically, this is the highest governing authority of the NSO. It is responsible for agreeing to the policy/strategy of the organisation. It is the body to which the National Board is accountable.
2. **Membership of the General Assembly**. The constitution should state who are the members of the General Assembly; who can attend meetings; and who can vote. Provision may also be made for observers (ie those who may attend but do not have the right to vote).
3. **Functions of the General Assembly**. The constitution should include the functions of the General Assembly. These may include:
  - a. responsibility for determining the general and strategic policy of the organisation in order to achieve its purpose.
  - b. electing national officers (eg the Chairperson of the National Board; the Chief Commissioner (or Chief Scout); the National Treasurer; and the National Secretary).
  - c. receiving and approving the Annual Report of the National Board.
  - d. receiving the externally audited annual accounts of the Association.
  - e. amending the constitution. Typically the constitution would state that that a two-thirds majority of voting members would be required to amend the constitution.

#### Meetings of the General Assembly

26. The General Assembly shall meet once a year at its Annual General Meeting.
27. Extraordinary Meetings of the General Assembly shall be held at the request of 20 percent of the members of the General Assembly or by decision of the National Board.
28. The time and place of meetings shall be decided by the National Board.
29. Eight weeks notice of an Annual General Meeting and four weeks notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting shall be given.
30. The notice of the meeting shall be accompanied by the agenda and papers.

31. The agenda for the Annual General Meeting of the General Assembly shall include:
  - a. To receive the Annual Report of the National Board.
  - b. To receive the externally audited accounts of the Association.
  - c. To elect the Chief Commissioner (or Chief Scout), Chairperson of the National Board, National Treasurer and National Secretary.
  - d. To elect such other members of the National Board nominated in accordance with the Rules as required.
  - e. To consider any matters referred to it by the National Board.
  - f. To consider any other proposals from members of the General Assembly submitted in writing to the National Secretary not less than ten weeks before the date of an Annual General Meeting and six weeks before an Extraordinary General Meeting.
  - g. To exercise other functions resulting from this Constitution or the Rules.
32. The quorum for meetings of the General Assembly is 50 percent of its members.
33. The Chairperson of the General Assembly shall be the Chairperson of the National Board. In the absence of the Chairperson meetings will be chaired by the Chief Commissioner (or Chief Scout).
34. Each member of the General Assembly shall have one vote. Votes are taken by a show of hand except for elections of persons where the vote will be by secret ballot.
35. Voting members of the General Assembly unable to attend a specific meeting may give their vote to another attending voting member. No attending voting member may hold more than one proxy vote.
36. Voting shall be by a simple majority of members of the General Assembly present and eligible to vote other than for matters where a qualified majority is specified.
37. In the event of an equal number of votes for and against a resolution, the Chairperson shall not have a casting vote.
38. Other rules of procedure for the General Assembly are set out in the Rules.

## Notes

1. The constitution should state the frequency and procedures of meetings of the General Assembly. These may include:
  - a. Frequency of meetings. Typically annual meetings are held. However this may be difficult in countries covering large geographical areas with limited or expensive transport.
  - b. Indicate the advance notice period to be given for meetings and the circulation of the agenda and papers. Typically this might be two months of an Annual General Meeting and one month for an Extraordinary General Meeting. The quorum required for a meeting to be valid. Typically this might be 50 percent of the voting members of the General Assembly.
  - d. The number of votes that are needed for a decision to be taken. Typically, for most matters, this would be a simple majority. For changes to the constitution or dissolution of the organisation this is typically increased to a two-thirds majority.
  - e. Arrangements for voting. Typically voting is by a public show of hands or cards. A secret ballot is usually taken for the election of individuals.
  - f. Arrangements for calling a meeting of the General Assembly when one is not due. These are known as extraordinary meetings. Typically they may be held if requested by 20 percent of the voting members of the General Assembly or called by the National Board.
  - g. State whether proxy voting is allowed for voting members of the General Assembly who cannot attend meetings. If allowed, indicate how many proxy votes an attending member may hold. Typically this would be one.

## National Board

39. The National Board shall act on behalf of the General Assembly during the periods between its meetings. It is also responsible for the day to day management of the Association.
40. The members of the National Board are:
  - a. Chairperson of the National Board
  - b. Chief Commissioner (or Chief Scout)
  - c. National Treasurer
  - d. xx Elected Members of the General Assembly (elected in accordance with the Rules)
  - e. xx Elected Youth Members (elected in accordance with the Rules)
  - f. xx Co-opted Members (co-opted in accordance with the Rules)

41. The National Secretary and Chief Executive Officer are invited to attend meetings of the National Board without a vote.
42. Members of the National Board are elected for three years. They may be re-elected for one further term of three years.
43. Where vacancies occur amongst the members of the National Board, such vacancies shall be filled for the remainder of the term by the runner-up in order of election, at the election in which the former member of the vacated seat was elected. Such runners-up shall only be considered as having served a normal term of service as an elected member, if they filled the vacancy before half of the term of the resigning or deceased member has expired.
44. The National Board shall meet at least xx times per year at a time and place as the National Board may decide. Such meetings may be held using electronic communication technology. Virtual attendance of individuals is permitted.
45. The quorum for meetings of the National Board is 30 percent of its members.
46. The National Board may invite others to specific meetings, without a vote, to assist it with the management of its business.

#### Notes

1. The constitution should set out who are members of the National Board and the length of term of their office. Typically members would serve for three years with the option of standing for re-election for one further term of three years.
2. Considerations include:
  - a. the total number of members on the National Board.
  - b. who are ex-officio members. Typically the Chairperson, Chief Commissioner (or Chief Scout) and Treasurer.
  - c. how many places there are for Elected Members (ie those elected by the General Assembly).
  - d. how many places are allocated for Youth Members. Again these could be elected by the General Assembly.
  - e. how many places are available for Co-opted Members.
3. Procedures for electing and co-opting members to the National Board can be set out in the Rules.
4. Right of attendance at meetings of the National Board. The constitution should indicate who has a right of attendance at meetings without a vote. Typically this might include the National Board's Secretary and the Chief Executive Officer (if appointed).
5. The constitution might also include a provision that the National Board may invite anyone else to a specific meeting to assist it with its business.

6. Vacancies among members of the National Board. From time to time, and between Annual General Meetings of the General Assembly, vacancies may occur. The constitution should give authority to the National Board to fill a vacancy until the next Annual General Meeting through a fair and transparent co-option process. The detailed procedure on co-option can be included in the National Board's Rules of Procedure.
7. Functions of the National Board. The National Board is responsible for implementing the policy decisions of the General Assembly, acting on its behalf between its meetings and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organisation.
8. The constitution should spell out the exact scope of the National Board's responsibilities and powers and include rules on how the National Board might carry out its duties. Some of the other detailed activities might include:
  - a. preparing certain Rules for the approval of the General Assembly.
  - b. appointing sub-committees or working groups as required, including their remits and membership.
  - c. appointing a Chief Executive Officer with such terms and conditions as the National Board may decide.
  - d. establishing a National Office (Secretariat) if required.
  - e. ensuring funds are available for the support and development of Scouting.
  - f. arranging for bank accounts to be opened in the name of the organisation and determining how many signatures are required to authorise payments. Typically two.
  - g. ensuring up to date accounts are maintained.
  - h. authorising the National Board to acquire or dispose of equipment and property.
  - i. preparing the organisation's annual report and submitting it to the Annual General Meeting of the General Assembly.
  - j. arranging for an independent audit of the organisation's annual accounts.
  - k. submitting the externally audited annual accounts to the General Assembly.
  - l. approving an annual budget.
  - m. deciding on the annual membership subscription and when it should be paid.
  - n. Ensuring the organisation meets its obligations as a Member Organization of WOSM including the requirements of the World Constitution.
  - o. Maintaining relationships with other members of WOSM and other national authorities.
  - p. Making provisions to ensure that Scouting names, logos and brand are legally protected under copyright or trade laws including the WOSM licencing terms of the World Scout Brand.

9. Meetings and Procedures of the National Board. The constitution should:
  - a. Define the frequency of meetings. Depending on the jurisdiction, the minimum statutory requirement is typically once per year. However, note that it may require more than one meeting per year to effectively carry out the functions of the National Board. Therefore, the statutory requirement may be stated, but it is good practice to provide for additional meetings in the Rules.
  - b. Indicate the quorum required. Typically 30 percent of voting members entitled to attend.
10. Voting and other procedure can be described in separate Rules of Procedure established by the National Board and reviewed from time to time. These Rules of Procedure should include arrangements for avoiding members conflict of interest with any matter to be discussed by the National Board.

47. The National Board shall have the power to create sub-committees and working groups for such purposes and for such duration, as it deems necessary.
48. The National Board shall establish its Rules of Procedure and review these every three years.

### **Chief Executive Officer**

49. The National Board may employ a Chief Executive Officer to manage the National Office on such terms and conditions as it shall decide.
50. The role and location of the National Office shall be defined by the National Board.
51. The Chief Executive Officer may, within agreed budgets:
  - a. appoint such paid staff as is deemed necessary from time to time;
  - b. dismiss staff as necessary;
  - c. define the terms and conditions of service of staff.

## **Notes**

1. If there is to be a National Office then state its functions (eg to be responsible for the efficient administration of the Association). Avoid including details on specific functions. These may be dealt with by the Rules.
2. State by whom the National Office is managed (eg a Chief Executive Officer).
3. State that the location of the National Office is decided by the National Board.
4. State who appoints any full or part-time staff. This may be a responsibility of the National Board but it may decide to delegate these functions to the Chief Executive Officer.

## **Structure and Organisation of the Association**

52. The structure and organisation of Scouting in xxxxxx are set out in the Rules.

## **Notes**

1. The structure of the organisation (eg Group, District, Region, National and details of the age ranges and programme for each youth section) can be set out in the Rules. This will make them easier to change as the organisation develops. There is not one organisational structure that must be applied to all NSOs. The structure instead should be tailored to the realities of the particular NSO.
2. Day-to-day operational and management details are also better set out in separate Rules. This will allow them to be modified as the organisation develops without having to change the main constitution.

## **Financial Management**

53. The National Board shall ensure accounts are kept of the receipts and expenditures of the Association and of its assets, credits and liabilities.
54. At the General Assembly, the National Board shall present an externally audited report, including a balance sheet.
55. External qualified auditors shall be appointed and their remuneration fixed by the National Board.

## Notes

1. The constitution should set out the main rules on the financial governance of the Association. These would include procedures for expenditures, audits and accounting.
2. External qualified auditors should be appointed to provide an independent view of the finances of the Association and how they are being managed. This provides protection for the Association and those, including members of the National Board, responsible for managing the finances of the Association.

## Amendments to the Constitution

56. Any amendments to this constitution shall require the approval of two-thirds majority of the members of the General Assembly present and voting at an Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary Meeting of the General Assembly.
57. Proposed amendments must be sent to Members of the General Assembly not less than 30 days in advance of the meeting.
58. Any changes relating to matters covered by Chapters I and III of the WOSM Constitution may only come into effect after approval by the World Scout Committee.

## Notes

1. Any amendment to the constitution should only be made by the highest governing body (ie the General Assembly). Typically this would require a special majority eg two-thirds majority of members present or represented and voting.
2. The constitution should ensure that fair and adequate notice is given for any proposed constitutional amendment. Typically, this notice period is longer than that for any other matters requiring a vote.
3. The approval of the World Scout Committee is required prior to the implementation of any revised constitution relating to matters covered by Chapters I and III of the WOSM Constitution.

## Dissolution of the Association

59. The National Board may propose to the General Assembly the dissolution of the Association.
60. The motion requires a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly members present and entitled to vote.
61. In the event of the Association being dissolved, the assets shall be entirely attributed to an institution whose purpose is of public interest consistent with that of the Association and which benefits from tax exemption. In no event can the assets, in part or in whole or in any way, be returned to the founders or the members or used for their benefit.

## Notes

1. The national organisation should only be dissolved by the highest governing organ. This should be stated clearly in the constitution. Typically this is the General Assembly and requires a two-thirds majority vote.
2. The motion should include a proposal for the disposal of the assets of the Association to a body with a similar aim to that of the Association.
3. The national organisation should include a provision to designate the disposal of assets.

## Rules of the Association

62. Further details of matters set out in this constitution or on other matters relating to the day to day operations of the Association are set out in the Rules.
63. Any Rules, or amendments to the Rules, related to the structure or organisation of the Association must be proposed to the General Assembly for approval by the National Board.
64. The General Assembly approves the Rules by a simple majority.
65. In the event of any conflict between this Constitution and the Rules this Constitution shall prevail.

## Notes

1. Day-to-day operational and management details are better set out in separate Rules. This will allow them to be modified as the organisation develops without having to change the main constitution.
2. Typically the Rules are prepared by the National Board. Some Rules may require the approval of the General Assembly.
3. In some Associations there are also Rules covering more detailed technical matters which the National Board is given authority to adopt and amend.
4. Some subjects which need not be in the constitution and are better described in the Rules are given below:
  - a. Group, District and/or Regional structures; their functions; delegates to the General Assembly of the next level eg Regional to General Assembly; and meetings.

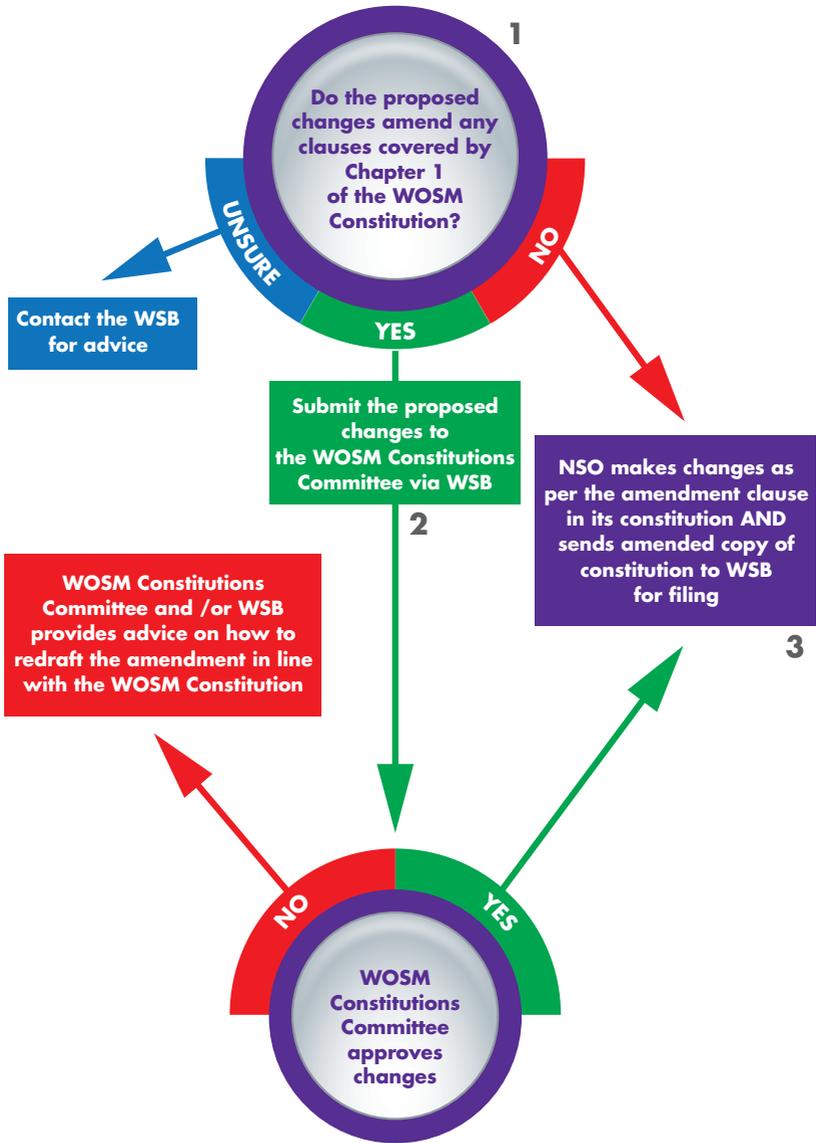
- b. arrangements for the registration of Groups, Districts and Regions.
  - c. youth membership sections and age range.
  - d. details of the Scouting programme for each age section.
  - e. youth awards and badges for progress within each section programme.
  - f. arrangements and requirements for the appointment of adult leaders.
  - h. uniform.
5. Rules considered to be of a more technical nature which could be approved by the National Board might include:
- a. training requirements for adult leaders.
  - b. safety requirements for activities.
  - c. awards for Scouting service.
  - d. insurance arrangements.
  - e. procedures for dealing with disagreements between members of the Association.
  - f. procedures for suspending or terminating membership of youth members and adults.
  - g. any agreement on the responsibilities and rights of any body sponsoring Scouting.
  - h. communications and publications.
  - i. public relations, publicity and promotion.

### **SECTION 3. AMENDING A CONSTITUTION PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BY WOSM**

The constitution of an NSO will normally include a clause which details how it can be amended. This section details actions that need to be taken through a diagram when the proposed changes will amend clauses of the NSO's constitution which are covered by Chapter 1 of the Constitution of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM).

A copy of the WOSM Constitution can be downloaded from the WOSM website ([scout.org/constitution](http://scout.org/constitution)).

Advice can also be sought from the World Scout Bureau (WSB).



**Notes:**

**1. Chapter I (The Scout Movement) of the WOSM constitution covers:**

- Definition & Purpose
- Principles — Duty to God, Others & Self
- Adherence to a Promise and Law
- World Scout Emblem
- Scout Method

**2. The following documentation should be included with the submission:**

- the current constitution in its original language highlighting the proposed changes (amendments; additions; deletions) side by side with an English version highlighting the same changes.
- the document should be formatted as an editable text document (\*.docx)

**3. The following documentation should be filed with the World Scout Bureau following the formal adoption of the amended constitution:**

- the amended constitution in its original language.
- an English version of the amended constitution.
- the document should be formatted either as an editable text document (\*.docx) or as an Adobe Portable Document (\*.pdf).







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