

PROPOSING THE VM MERIT BADGE

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ABSTRACT

A new Boy Scouts of America merit badge for Value Methodology (VM) is proposed. This would serve SAVE International’s PACE Initiative to “Promote VM awareness, Advocate use of VM, Certify members, and Educate members.”

BACKGROUND

At the 2018 SAVE International Value Summit, the author’s proposal to introduce Value Methodology (VM) to grade school learners in the United States through STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education was received with interest by the audience, including members of the Lawrence D. Miles Value Foundation (MVF). According to its website, the MVF “was created in 1977 to promote and fund the development of educational programs, new applications, and a research library for the study of the Value Methodology.”

As summarized in Figure 1, the author proposed that VM inclusion in STEM education would promote VM awareness and advocate its use by leveraging the country’s increased focus in STEM education to fill the projected shortage of skilled workers for STEM jobs, thereby creating new VM opportunities in the marketplace (Wong, 2018).

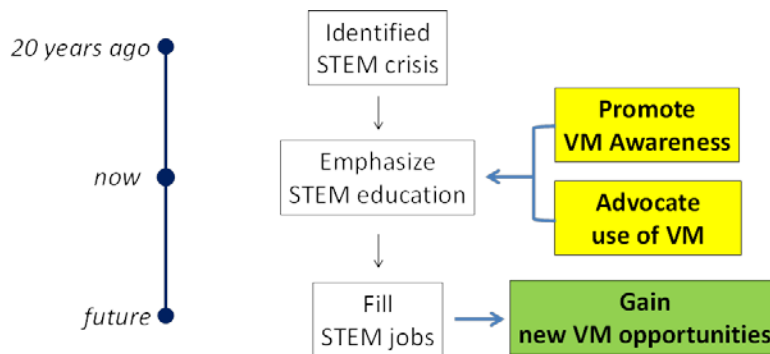


Figure 1. VM Inclusion in STEM Education

In the months since the proposal was presented, the author has monitored the current White House administration’s website for new federal grant opportunities to develop VM content for STEM education curricula with the intent to return to the 2019 Value Summit to report progress. No new federal funding opportunities have been identified yet. This paper discusses a new potential opportunity that has materialized: proposing a new merit badge to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), a badge for VM.

The BSA’s merit badge program is part of its advancement program, the process by which a Scout progresses from rank to rank in Scouting. Earning merit badges “allows Scouts to explore many fields, helps them round out their skills, and perhaps introduces them to subjects that will become lifelong interests or rewarding careers.” (BSA, 2018) Advancement is based on experiential learning, designed to educate and expand horizons, using practical situations that build retention through repeated use of skills (www.scouting.org).

PROPOSAL

A new merit badge for VM aligns with the BSA’s objectives. VM is a “systematic process used by a multidisciplinary team to improve the value of a project, product, or process through the analysis of functions” (SAVE, 2018). “VM helps achieve an optimum balance between function, performance, quality,

safety and cost. The proper balance results in the maximum value for the project.” (www.value-eng.org)

The purpose of BSA merit badges is to provide Scouts with opportunities for learning, personal growth, physical development, career awareness, citizenship, and life skills development (BSA, 2016). A merit badge itself is a simple embroidered patch, but the intangible end result of earning one is having fun while gaining self-confidence and achieving a goal, sometimes overcoming obstacles and solving problems (BSA, 2018).

Proposals for new merit badges are reviewed based on: (1) how well the proposed topic fits with Scouting, (2) the practicality of the proposed badge, (3) how fun and engaging the subject is for Scout-age youth, (4) resource requirements, and (5) uniqueness (BSA, 2016). A survey of the existing 137 merit badges found that there are none that cover VM (www.scouting.org).

A merit badge proposal application is first reviewed by a volunteer task force to determine whether it would be recommended to the BSA’s Pilots and Programs Development Committee (PPDC) for consideration. The task force may form a focus group or conduct an interest survey for feedback on the proposal. If recommended for consideration, the proposal and any related information gathered would be reviewed by the PPDC within 120 days of receipt (three reviews are conducted annually). The PPDC would decide whether the proposal is adopted, deferred, recommended to be combined with another merit badge, or denied. If approved, the proposal would move into the development phase, at which time the proposal’s identified resources for developmental support may become involved. (BSA, 2016)

Figure 2 shows an excerpt of the BSA Merit Badge Proposal form. The author proposes the formation of a SAVE International (SAVE) task force to develop a proposal for the VM merit badge to submit to the BSA.

TITLE. Please provide a short proposed title for the merit badge. Value Methodology

DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE. Please describe the proposed merit badge and the rationale for its creation. Attach or provide separate sheets or documentation as needed.

REQUIREMENTS. Please provide a draft of the merit badge requirements. Develop and attach a draft of requirements and initial thoughts behind those requirements for the merit badge. Be as specific as possible.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CONSIDERATION. Please provide any additional information for consideration, such as the availability of outside resources for developmental support, external considerations, and so on. Attach separately if appropriate.

Figure 2. BSA Merit Badge Proposal Form Excerpt

The BSA receives over 400 merit badge suggestions a year. From 1995 to 2015, twenty-seven new merit badges were added. (US Scouting Service Project, 2017)

MERIT BADGE CONSIDERATIONS

The VM merit badge proposal would be evaluated based on how well VM fits with Scouting. As shown in “The Foundation of Scouting” on the BSA homepage (Figure 3 below): “The mission of the Boy Scouts of

America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.” Learning the six-phase VM job plan would equip Scouts to make trustworthy, helpful, and economical decisions over their lifetimes that would benefit themselves as well as others. And for Scouts pursuing their Eagle Scout ranking, they could apply the VM job plan to their Eagle Scout service project to achieve an optimum balance between function, performance, quality, safety, and cost:

1. Information Phase – look at what we know
2. Function Analysis Phase – “What are we trying to do here?”
3. Creative Phase – brainstorm ideas
4. Evaluation Phase – choose idea(s)
5. Development Phase – work on idea(s)
6. Presentation Phase – share ideas(s)

These six phases would be followed by Implementation – make idea(s) into reality.

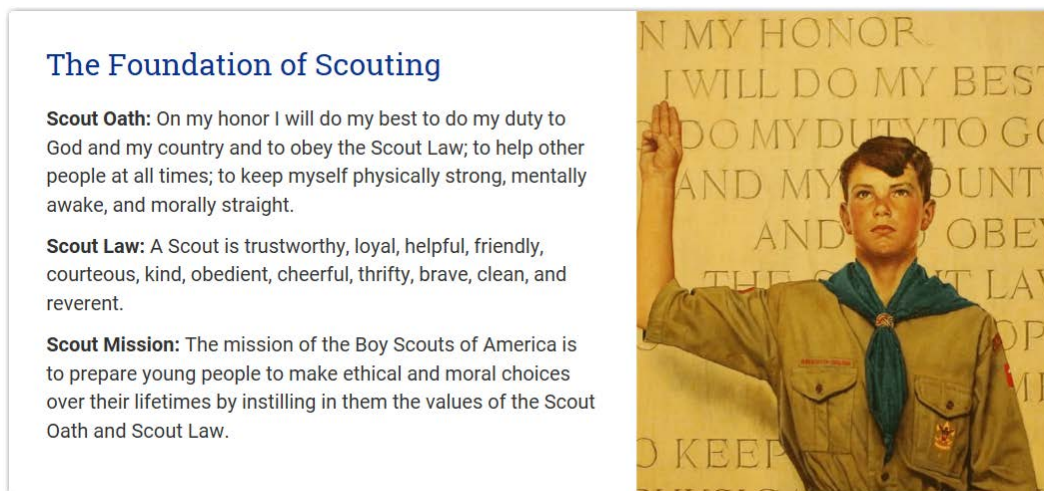


Figure 3. The Foundation of Scouting (www.scouting.org)

The proposed VM merit badge would also be evaluated based on its practicality: “the resources to recruit merit badge counselors, uniqueness, existence of standardized “rules” and administrative organization, safety and risk considerations, etc.” (BSA, 2016). Value Methodology Associates and Certified Value Specialists would be well qualified to apply and register with the BSA to serve as VM merit badge counselors that “can extend a young person’s attention span: more will be heard and understood, discussions will be more productive, and true interest will be developed” (BSA, 2019). The Value Methodology Standard is used to apply the principles of VM in a consistent manner, and an administrative organization within SAVE or MVF (i.e., the proposed SAVE task force) could provide the necessary developmental support resources for a VM merit badge. The requirements to earn a VM merit badge should not pose any safety or risk concerns. And a BSA merit badge for VM would be unique, different from any of the BSA’s current merit badges.

Evaluation of the VM merit badge proposal would also include an assessment of how fun and engaging VM is for Scout-aged youth. The author’s case study of a Girl Scout troop applying VM to its design project demonstrates interest and engagement by Scout-aged youth in VM (Wong, 2018). “Earning merit badges should be Scout initiated, Scout researched, and Scout learned. It should be hands-on and interactive, ...so enticing to Scouts that they will want to take responsibility for their own full participation” (BSA, 2019). The SAVE task force proposed by the author should be committed to developing the VM merit badge content with this in mind. (The BSA publishes a requirements document and merit badge pamphlet for each merit badge offered.)

The resource requirements for earning a VM merit badge would be ordinary, and the cost implications

would be incidental. The Scout would follow the BSA-recommended process for earning a merit badge, per the Guide to Advancement 2019:

1. The Scout develops an interest in a merit badge and may begin working on the requirements.
2. The Scout and unit leader discuss the Scout's interest in the merit badge.
3. The unit leader signs the Application for Merit Badge portion of a "blue card" (the nationally recognized merit badge record) and provides the Scout with at least one counselor to contact.
4. The Scout contacts the counselor.
5. The counselor considers any work toward requirements completed prior to the initial discussion with the unit leader.
6. The Scout, the Scout's buddy (e.g., a friend, parent, guardian, sibling or other relative, or another Scout working on the same badge – in compliance with the BSA Guide to Safe Scouting), and the counselor meet, often several times. The counselor helps the Scout to learn to know or do what is required to earn the badge, in accordance with the BSA-published merit badge pamphlet and requirements documentation.
7. The Scout finishes the requirements.
8. The counselor approves completion and signs the Application for Merit Badge and the Applicant's Record.
9. The Scout returns the signed blue card to the unit leader, who signs off on the Applicant's Record section.
10. The unit leader gives the Scout the application record.
11. The unit reports completion of the merit badge.
12. The Scout receives the merit badge.

BENEFITS

A BSA merit badge for VM would support SAVE's PACE Initiative to "Promote VM awareness, Advocate use of VM, Certify members, and Educate members." Even submitting a proposal for this new merit badge would serve PACE by exposing those involved in its review to VM. And if the badge was approved, not only would the Scouts be educated in VM but also their leaders, peers, parents/guardians, and other family members. This knowledge of VM would not be restricted to the confines of Scout activities but would carry over into other areas, thereby increasing awareness of VM wherever these individuals go in their spheres of influence. And with greater familiarity with VM, new opportunities for its application will arise – benefiting the health and future of the value industry.

REFERENCE LIST

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