

CM Special Edition 5.30.2026

Commissioners' Role in 2026 Membership Plan



Time allotted	15 -20 minutes
Teaching format	Instructor-led discussions with PowerPoint support, Activity

Resources

Handouts	CM SE 3.31.2026 - What Part of the Flywheel Can Commissioners Influence? – 1 per person
Equipment and materials	- CM SE 3.31.2026 – Commissioners' Role in 2026 Membership Plans discussion document - CM SE 3.31.2026 – Commissioners' Role in 2026 Membership Plans PowerPoint presentation - Computer and projector
Resources for additional participant learning	Membership Growth and Retention: A 12-point Plan

Presentation Outline

Introduction and Course Objectives – 2 minutes

Introduce the learning objectives, noting that by the end of this session, commissioners will...

- **Have** an overview of the 2026 National Membership Plan
- **Discuss** the commissioners' role in these plans
- **Identify** actionable steps for commissioners to support the membership plan

Overview of 2026 National Membership Plan – 5 minutes (slides 3-4)

Council Membership Plan

A new membership growth and development plan has been adopted, focusing on how units, districts, and councils can drive recruiting, strengthen retention, and improve the overall Scouting experience for youth and families.

The goal is to move from ideas to execution, and from execution to impact—resulting in stronger units, better experiences, and sustained membership growth. Commissioners have a major role to play in both growth and retention.

Membership materials, including the *2026 Membership Growth and Retention Workbook*, were sent out to each council Key 3 in February 2026. The council commissioner will have these documents.

12-Point Plan

The 12-Point Plan outlines a comprehensive, end-to-end approach to membership growth and retention. It's designed to move us from intention to execution. Here is a highlight of just a few.

- We need to ground ourselves in a **Growth Philosophy: The “Yes And, Not Or” Mindset**. This means we’re not choosing between growth and retention, or between program and relationships—we are doing both, intentionally and together.
- A **Strategic Framework built on three core pillars**: (1) recruitment excellence, (2) retention and onboarding, and (3) relationship and infrastructure.
- A strong **Retention and Onboarding Strategy**—because bringing people in and keeping them engaged is critical.
- A strong **Relationship and Cultivation Strategy** ensures we are building meaningful, ongoing connections with families and communities.

Together, these 12 points create a balanced, actionable plan that connects strategy, people, and execution.

OPTIONAL MATERIAL: If you get questions, want to discuss others, or want to discuss all 12, use the following, but note you will need additional time to discuss.

- We begin with **Purpose and Strategic Intent**—defining why this work matters and aligning everyone around a shared vision.
- From there, we ground ourselves in a growth philosophy: the **‘Yes And, Not Or’ mindset**. This means we’re not choosing between growth and retention, or between program and relationships—we are doing both, intentionally and together.
- Next, we establish clear **Membership Objectives** so success is defined and measurable.
- We then organize our efforts through a **Strategic Framework built on three core pillars**:
 - recruitment excellence,
 - retention and onboarding, and
 - relationship and infrastructure.
- The plan then shifts into execution with a focused **Recruitment Strategy** and
- A strong **Retention and Onboarding Strategy**—because bringing people in and keeping them engaged are equally critical.

On the right side, we focus on the systems that sustain success.

- A strong **Relationship and Cultivation Strategy** ensures we are building meaningful, ongoing connections with families and communities.
- **Infrastructure**—roles and accountability—clarifies who is responsible for the work, so nothing falls through the cracks.
- We track progress through **Metrics and a Scoreboard**, keeping everyone informed and aligned.
- An **Annual Timeline** helps us execute at the right moments throughout the year.
- We also leverage **Social Media and Digital Marketing** to extend our reach and meet families where they are.
- And finally, we close with a **Call to Action**—not just for 2026, but for building a culture of continuous growth and improvement moving forward.

Together, these 12 points create a balanced, actionable plan that connects strategy, people, and execution.

Commissioners' Roles – 5 minutes (slides 5-8)

Commissioners' Roles: Strengthening Units

Commissioners are at the heart of the plan—strengthening units where it matters most.

- First, we help ***promote early engagement*** of new Scouts and their families. The first few weeks are critical. When families feel welcomed, informed, and connected right away, they're far more likely to stay. We need to focus on onboarding new Scout parents so they know what to expect and help units confirm that everyone who joined recently is still participating (or why they are not).
- Second, we ***support leaders and program quality***. Strong, confident leaders deliver better programs, and better programs drive both retention and growth.
- We also play a key role in helping to ***activate New Member Coordinators***. These individuals or teams are essential to building relationships with new families and bringing in new ones. Commissioners can ensure they are equipped and engaged.
- Another important responsibility is to ***support smooth Scout transitions***—whether that's moving from rank-to-rank in Cub Scouts or from AOL to Scouts BSA. Gaps in transitions are one of the biggest sources of membership loss, and commissioners need to help close those gaps.
- Finally, we work to ***stabilize new and struggling units***. By identifying challenges early and providing guidance, resources, and encouragement, we help units build a solid foundation for long-term success. Please identify struggling units now and actively support new ones.

Our role is to do whatever it takes to connect with and strengthen units—starting with asking how we can help—so that every Scout has a great experience.

Commissioners' Roles: Build Relationships

We play a vital role in building and strengthening relationships that expand Scouting's reach. We can do this on our own or in conjunction with membership committees and district executives. No matter what, we can help make sure it happens.

District connections with schools, chartered organizations, homeschool networks, and other community partners help create a broader, more connected foundation for unit success. These relationships open doors for membership growth, program opportunities, and long-term sustainability.

We help shape the culture of how that work gets done. By reinforcing a “Yes, and” mindset, we encourage collaboration, openness, and problem-solving across units and across districts. Instead of barriers, we help leaders see possibilities—building on ideas, supporting one another, and moving initiatives forward.

This combination of strong relationships and a positive, solution-oriented approach creates an environment where units and districts can thrive.

Commissioners' Roles: Drive Accountability; Call to Action

Commissioners play a critical role in driving accountability across the Scouting program.

- Our work goes beyond support—we provide a call to action. We help units stay focused on what matters most: strong leadership and a fun, high-quality program. These lead to membership retention and growth.
- To do this, we must actively monitor the unit metrics, including retention, youth transitions between programs, BeAScout leads, and overall unit health. When we understand these indicators, we know what to ask about when we say, “How Can I Help?”
- By consistently using key performance indicators, we bring clarity and focus to unit service. These tools help identify trends early, guide meaningful conversations with unit leaders, and ensure that no unit falls through the cracks.
- Importantly, commissioners keep membership growth and retention goals visible throughout the entire year—not just during renewal or peak recruiting seasons. We support year-round recruitment.

Through ongoing engagement, encouragement, and accountability, we help units stay on track and build a stronger, more sustainable Scouting program.

The national goal for 2026 is to have at least a 70% retention rate. This is more than just a number—it represents stability, continuity, and the long-term strength of our units.

Commissioners have said for years that we own retention. While we “own” retention along with units (who really own retention) and others, we are uniquely positioned to do something about it. We connect with unit leaders and other volunteers to help them provide a fun, S.A.F.E. program and to do whatever it takes to support units so they will be strong, which encourages Scouts to keep coming back and more young people to join.

Commissioners’ Roles – 10 minutes including activity (slides 9-11)

Membership Retention Flywheel

We use a flywheel to illustrate how continuous energy is necessary for smooth, sustained forward movement.

Sustained membership growth is driven by two connected flywheels:

- Recruitment, which fills the pipeline
- Retention, which keeps the promise and stabilizes growth

Both are essential. Neither works well without the other.

The idea behind the Membership Retention Flywheel is that growth doesn’t pause or reset—it keeps moving. The moment someone enters Scouting, the retention process is already in motion. There’s no waiting period where interest can fade.

Instead of treating retention as something that happens later, the flywheel illustrates a continuous cycle in which each positive experience immediately feeds into the next. New families are welcomed, quickly engaged, supported, and see value right away. That experience builds satisfaction, which leads to continued participation, stronger relationships, and a higher likelihood of staying—and even inviting others.

Retention results from how effectively every part of the unit experience comes together—from onboarding new families to the quality of leadership to ongoing engagement to the strength of the program itself. When onboarding is effective, unit leaders, volunteers, and parents are prepared and supported; youth stay actively engaged; the program delivers meaningful experiences; units build momentum; and members stay.

This matters because gaps kill momentum. If engagement is delayed, families drift away. But when the flywheel keeps turning smoothly—welcome → engage → deliver value → build connection → repeat—momentum compounds, and growth becomes stable instead of fragile

When any part of that experience falls short, friction shows up. That friction—missed connections, weak leadership, poor onboarding, inadequate communication, low engagement, or inconsistent programming—gradually pushes families away. Reducing friction across the whole experience is essential to improving retention and building a stronger, more sustainable Scouting experience. And, when renewal time comes, a smooth, low-friction process makes it far more likely that families choose to continue.

Our role as commissioners is to help units reduce that friction so every family has a clear, positive path to stay in Scouting.

What Parts Can Commissioners Influence?

Commissioners influence several critical parts of the membership flywheel.

- Let's start with **onboarding**. The question is simple but essential: are units effectively converting interest and sign-ups into registered, engaged members? We can help close this gap by consistently encouraging units to follow up: holding parent orientation meetings within the first few weeks after new families join, and contacting families who stopped attending meetings/activities, or who never attended in the first place.
- **Leader quality** is another area where commissioners have a direct impact. Unit service is, at its core, about supporting unit leaders—equipping them with the tools, training, and confidence they need to succeed. Strong leaders build strong units, and commissioners play a key role in mentoring, guiding, and reinforcing that standard.
- **Program quality** follows closely behind. When we support units, we support the quality of the program delivered to youth. A strong, engaging program is one of the most powerful drivers of retention and growth.

Activity – 5 to 10 minutes

Commissioners influence key points in the membership flywheel that directly impact growth and retention.

Instructor: Handout Membership Activity: – “What Part of the Flywheel Can Commissioners Influence?” – 1 per person

Use this activity to reflect, assess, and identify opportunities to strengthen units and improve outcomes.

Suggestion: Work through the activity during this training session or your meeting breakout sessions.

Note: This is not an assessment or evaluation tool. It is intended solely to support the activity by helping identify opportunities to strengthen your assigned units.

Summary – 1 minute

The intention of the 2026 Membership Plan is to empower every commissioner by strengthening units, supporting leaders, building community partnerships, and tracking progress through visible district and unit goals—all guided by a collaborative “Yes And” mindset.

Questions? – 2 minutes