

Creating Dynamic Commissioner  
Events to Support Unit Service

# **Organizing Effective Commissioner Events for Scouting America**

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National Commissioner Service Team

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# Summary

## Why This Matters

Commissioners are the bridge between different levels of Scouting leadership. They help Scout units run better programs and solve problems. When we bring commissioners together for events, we give them the training and connections they need to do their jobs well.

## How to Plan Great Events

Before you pick what kind of event to have, decide what you want to accomplish. You might want to:

- Tell commissioners about new Scouting policies and procedures
- Train new commissioners or teach current ones new skills
- Help commissioners work better as a team
- Let commissioners get to know each other better
- Plan how to get more youth to join Scouting
- Share ideas that work well

## Types of Events You Can Hold

**Commissioner Conferences** bring together commissioners and other leaders from different areas. These events help everyone work together and share the best ways to help Scout units.

**Commissioner Workshops** are shorter training sessions that last 90 minutes to one day. You can hold these in person or online to fit busy schedules.

**Commissioner Retreats** are overnight events that give commissioners more time to build relationships and have deeper conversations about helping Scout units.

**National Training Conferences** like Commissioner Week at Philmont Scout Ranch give commissioners advanced training and great networking opportunities.

## How to Host Effective Events

Keep your training sessions short - about 20 to 30 minutes each. Make sure people can participate, not just listen. Use activities that keep everyone interested and awake.

Choose effective locations, preferably Scout camps or council service centers. Plan food that works for everyone. Invite commissioners at all levels, board members, staff, and potential commissioners.

## What These Events Accomplish

Commissioner events help us make the most of our volunteers. When commissioners come together, they learn better ways to help Scout units. They also make connections that help them work together and find new people to join Scouting. These events make commissioners more excited about their work and better at helping Scout units succeed.

# Organizing Effective Commissioner Events

## Introduction

Commissioners are key to making Scout units successful. When we create memorable events just for commissioners, we help them communicate better, improve how they help units, and make the whole Scouting program stronger. This guide shows you how to plan events that make a difference.

## Setting Clear Goals

**First, decide what you want your event to accomplish.** Consider the event goal before choosing the format. Here are common goals for commissioner events:

- Tell commissioners about new Scouting policies and procedures
- Train new commissioners or teach current ones new skills
- Help commissioners work better as a team
- Give commissioners a chance to get to know each other
- Plan how to get more youth to join and stay in Scouting
- Share ideas that work well for helping units

Once you know your goal, pick the event format that will help you reach it.

## Types of Commissioner Events

### Commissioner Conference (Summit)

This is a big meeting for commissioners from a large area. Here's what makes it special:

- **Purpose:** Make big plans for membership, plan strategy for unit service, and craft overall focus for commissioners
- **Who comes:** Commissioners plus people who work on membership, programs, and marketing at different levels
- **Benefits:** Better teamwork, sharing good ideas, building relationships, and working together on membership and keeping youth in Scouting
- **Ways to make it better:**
  - Invite special speakers from Scouting leadership
  - Hold it at the same time as other Scouting events to get more people to come

## Commissioner Workshop

A shorter version of a conference:

- **Size:** Several districts, one council, or nearby councils working together
- **Format:** Video conferences work well (and you can record them) because people are busy
- **How long:** 90 minutes, up to a full day
- **How often:** Each council or district decides

## Commissioner Retreat

An event focused on building relationships:

- **Size:** One council or several councils, depending on location
- **Who comes:** Open to everyone, with special focus on program, membership, and marketing leaders
- **Format:** Consider overnight stays so people can get to know each other
- **Value:** Gives people extended time to build relationships and have important discussions

## National Training Conferences

The best training opportunities for commissioners:

- **Where:** Commissioner Week at Philmont Scout Ranch, Virtual Impact Sessions, or In-Person Impact Sessions
- **Value:** Advanced training and excellent networking opportunities
- **Tip:** Invite program staff, membership coordinators, and District Executives too
- **Money:** Look into council funding or scholarships so more people to attend

## Organizing Content That Works

Good content organization is critical for a successful event:

### Choosing Content

- **Figure out your main parts:**
  - Key message - what people absolutely must learn
  - Supporting ideas - concepts that back up your key message
  - Helpful information - resources and tools people can use
  - What NOT to include - don't overwhelm people or get off topic

- Find commissioner training resources at [scouting.org/commissioners/training/continuing-education](https://scouting.org/commissioners/training/continuing-education)
- **Think about what people expect** - what they hope to learn by coming
- **Consider who's coming:**
  - How much experience do they have
  - What job do they do (unit or district commissioner)
  - Whether they volunteer at the council or district level
  - Different ages
  - Any physical limitations
  - What they already know

## Presentation Best Practices

- **Keep training sessions short** - aim for 20-30 minutes to keep people's attention.
- **Use PowerPoint slides as outlines ONLY** - don't read paragraphs of information.
- **Get people involved** - have discussions and activities
- **Stay focused** - respect commissioners' time by sticking to relevant information
- **Add fun activities** that support your message and keep energy high

## Planning Your Event

### Choosing a Location

- **Scouting Properties:** Scout camps or council service centers work best because they have the proper facilities and meeting spaces
- **Important Note:** For single-night, adults-only events, you may need a Short-Term Camp Administrator (check current National Camp Accreditation Program requirements)
- **Facilities:** Confirm access to bathroom facilities and areas for eating as a group and fellowship

### Planning Food

- **Creative Options:** Consider food trucks for unique meals, themed potlucks, cooking competitions
- **Basic Needs:** Provide snacks or continental breakfast with fruit and juice
- **Drinks:** Make sure coffee and water are available throughout the event
- **Evening Social:** Consider cracker barrel (pre-bedtime snack and social) gatherings for evening fun
- **Consider Special Needs:** Think about food allergies, dietary restrictions, whether to use mess kits or paper plates, and practical details for cooking and serving

## Who to Invite

An effective commissioner event should include:

- Unit, district, and council commissioners
- Advisory executive board members
- At-large board members
- Program, marketing, and membership leaders
- District leadership
- Professional staff
- Potential commissioners (21 years old or older)
- Unit committee chairs who would benefit from understanding how commissioners help

## What to Wear

- Consider a flexible approach to uniform requirements
  - Business casual (commissioner polo shirts) or clothes appropriate for camping
  - Benefits of Field vs. Activity uniforms
  - Focus on comfort while staying professional

## Building Relationships and Getting People Involved

- **Encourage sharing and relationship building** - Commissioners are the heart of unit service, and time for them to connect is time well spent
- **Plan specific networking time** - Include social hours at roundtables, monthly meetings, and seminars
- **Create opportunities for open discussion** - Let commissioners share challenges and solutions
- **Balance structured content with informal interaction** - Both are essential for a well-rounded event
- **Combine with existing events** - after-hours opportunities for social gatherings (like after roundtables instead of parking lot discussions)

## How to Make It Happen

### Use Events to Make the Most of Limited Commissioner Resources

- Develop new strategies for assigning unit commissioners based on unit size, strength, and leadership ability
- Work together to determine tiered service models, focusing on units that need the most help
- Use surveys like "Organizing Commissioner Teams" and "Understanding Your District" (found at [scouting.org/commissioners/engagement](https://scouting.org/commissioners/engagement))

## Partner for Recruitment Opportunities

- Reach out to charter organizations and other volunteer groups (Masonic groups, Lions, Knights of Columbus)
- Connect with church leaders and faith organizations
- Build relationships with other youth organizations (Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA)
- Invite potential new leaders through existing networks
- Use strategies found in "Growing & Strengthening Our Unit Service Teams" ([scouting.org/commissioners/engagement](https://scouting.org/commissioners/engagement))

## Sharing Resources

- Provide take-home materials via email, roundtables, and commissioner visits (like Job Descriptions at [scouting.org/commissioners/engagement](https://scouting.org/commissioners/engagement) or Unit Connections at [scouting.org/commissioners/connections](https://scouting.org/commissioners/connections))
- Create digital resources people can access anytime
- Develop action plans with clear next steps

## Conclusion

Commissioner events play a crucial role in strengthening Scouting by improving skills, building community, and making service better. By starting with clear goals, planning content thoughtfully, and using effective ways to get people involved, Scouting America can make sure commissioners have the tools, relationships, and motivation they need to support units and advance the Scouting mission.

*This document was developed based on commissioner event best practices within Scouting America. Councils should adapt these recommendations to meet local needs while keeping focus on the main goals of unit service.*

# Commissioner Event Schedule Examples

## 90-Minute Commissioner Workshop (Virtual or In-Person)

**Format:** Focused training session

**Goal:** Share new policies and provide targeted skill development

### Schedule

| Time           | Activity                                          | Duration |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 9:00-9:03 AM   | Safety Moment                                     | 3 min    |
| 9:03-9:05 AM   | Welcome & Introductions                           | 2 min    |
| 9:05-9:30 AM   | Key Message: New Unit Service Methods             | 25 min   |
| 9:30-9:35 AM   | Energizer Activity                                | 5 min    |
| 9:35-10:00 AM  | Interactive Discussion: Implementation Challenges | 25 min   |
| 10:00-10:20 AM | Best Practices Sharing (Small Groups)             | 20 min   |
| 10:20-10:25 AM | Resource Distribution & Next Steps                | 5 min    |
| 10:25-10:30 AM | Closing & Evaluation                              | 5 min    |

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## Half-Day Commissioner Conference (4 Hours)

**Format:** District or council-level gathering

**Goal:** Strategic planning and relationship building

### Schedule

| Time              | Activity                                | Duration |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------|
| 8:00-8:30 AM      | Registration & Continental Breakfast    | 30 min   |
| 8:30-8:33 AM      | Safety Moment                           | 3 min    |
| 8:33-8:45 AM      | Welcome & Opening Ceremony              | 12 min   |
| 8:45-9:15 AM      | Keynote: Successes in Recruiting        | 30 min   |
| 9:15-9:45 AM      | Session 1: Membership Growth Strategies | 30 min   |
| 9:45-10:00 AM     | Break & Networking                      | 15 min   |
| 10:00-10:30 AM    | Session 2: Unit Service Excellence      | 30 min   |
| 10:30-11:15 AM    | Roundtable Discussions by District      | 45 min   |
| 11:15-11:45 AM    | Best Practices Panel                    | 30 min   |
| 11:45 AM-12:00 PM | Action Planning & Resource Distribution | 15 min   |

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## Full-Day Commissioner Event (8 Hours)

**Format:** Comprehensive council or multi-council conference

**Goal:** Training, strategic planning, and team building

### Schedule

| Time              | Activity                                       | Duration |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 8:00-8:30 AM      | Registration & Coffee                          | 30 min   |
| 8:30-8:33 AM      | Safety Moment                                  | 3 min    |
| 8:33-9:00 AM      | Opening Ceremony & Welcome                     | 27 min   |
| 9:00-9:30 AM      | Keynote: Future of Unit Service                | 30 min   |
| 9:30-10:00 AM     | Session 1: New Training for Commissioners      | 30 min   |
| 10:00-10:15 AM    | Break                                          | 15 min   |
| 10:15-10:45 AM    | Session 2: Advanced Unit Problem-Solving       | 30 min   |
| 10:45-11:30 AM    | Interactive Workshop: Difficult Conversations  | 45 min   |
| 11:30 AM-12:00 PM | Scouting Updates & Policy Changes              | 30 min   |
| 12:00-1:00 PM     | Lunch & Networking                             | 60 min   |
| 1:00-1:30 PM      | Session 3: Safeguarding Youth/ Risk Management | 30 min   |
| 1:30-2:15 PM      | Breakout Sessions (Choose 1 of 3 topics)       | 45 min   |
| 2:15-2:30 PM      | Break                                          | 15 min   |
| 2:30-3:15 PM      | Strategic Planning Session                     | 45 min   |
| 3:15-3:45 PM      | Resource Fair & Vendor Displays                | 30 min   |
| 3:45-4:15 PM      | Closing Ceremony & Recognition                 | 30 min   |
| 4:15-5:00 PM      | Optional Social Hour                           | 45 min   |

## 2-Day Commissioner Retreat (Weekend Format)

**Format:** Intensive development and relationship-building retreat

**Goal:** Deep strategic planning, advanced training, and strong relationship building

### Day 1 - Friday

| Time         | Activity                                  | Duration |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| 4:00-5:00 PM | Registration & Check-in                   | 60 min   |
| 5:00-6:00 PM | Welcome & Networking                      | 60 min   |
| 6:00-7:00 PM | Dinner                                    | 60 min   |
| 7:00-7:03 PM | Safety Moment                             | 3 min    |
| 7:03-7:30 PM | Opening & Introductions                   | 27 min   |
| 7:30-8:30 PM | Keynote: Visionary Leadership in Scouting | 60 min   |
| 8:30-9:30 PM | Evening Social & Cracker Barrel           | 60 min   |

### Day 2 - Saturday

| Time           | Activity                                        | Duration |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 7:00-8:00 AM   | Breakfast                                       | 60 min   |
| 8:00-8:03 AM   | Safety Moment                                   | 3 min    |
| 8:03-8:15 AM   | Morning Motivation & Overview                   | 12 min   |
| 8:15-9:00 AM   | Session 1: Advanced Commissioner Skills         | 45 min   |
| 9:00-9:45 AM   | Session 2: Building High-Performing Teams       | 45 min   |
| 9:45-10:00 AM  | Break                                           | 15 min   |
| 10:00-11:00 AM | Strategic Planning Workshop                     | 60 min   |
| 11:00-12:00 PM | Collaborative Problem-Solving Exercise          | 60 min   |
| 12:00-1:00 PM  | Lunch                                           | 60 min   |
| 1:00-2:00 PM   | Session 3: Recruitment & Development Strategies | 60 min   |
| 2:00-2:45 PM   | Technology Tools for Commissioners              | 45 min   |
| 2:45-3:00 PM   | Break                                           | 15 min   |
| 3:00-4:00 PM   | Action Planning & Commissioning Ceremony        | 60 min   |
| 4:00-4:30 PM   | Closing & Evaluation                            | 30 min   |
| 4:30-5:30 PM   | Optional: Leadership Meeting                    | 60 min   |

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