



The Unit Service Plan

By Larry Chase, Recruitment and Retention chair

The Unit Service Plan is a tool to strengthen a unit and enable it to offer the best possible program to the youth it serves. A collaborative effort between the unit's leaders, its chartered organization, the unit commissioner, and the district operating committee, it establishes a customized annual plan that is periodically reviewed and updated to provide continuing improvement.

In addition, the Unit Service Plan enables commissioners to focus on their four primary responsibilities:

1. Supporting unit growth in the Journey to Excellence
2. Linking district operating committee resources to the unit
3. Visiting units and logging visits in the Commissioner Tools
4. Supporting on-time charter renewal

Engagement of the unit Key 3 is essential to the development and execution of an effective Unit Service Plan. The unit Key 3 (unit leader, committee chair, and chartered organization representative) may be a new concept for many units. It was developed as a best practice for new units following the [Unit Performance Guide](#) methodology. Its use has shown that all units employing the unit Key 3 concept are stronger and have an easier time making decisions. Examples of a unit leader include a Cubmaster, Scoutmaster, or Crew Advisor. Note that the unit commissioner is not a member of the unit Key 3 but serves as an advisor to the Key 3.

Unit Assessment

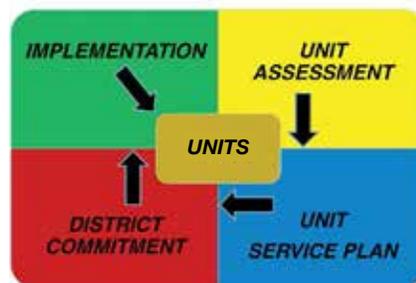
A unit assessment can be a first step in supporting unit growth on the Journey to Excellence.

The Process

Units benefit from assessments at least twice each year at six-month intervals. Around charter renewal is a great option as that often occurs at about the same time units are reviewing JTE achievements for the current year. A third assessment may be valuable when there is a change in unit leadership.

It may be helpful for the unit commissioner to coordinate a unit assessment meeting with the unit Key 3 and other unit leaders who can add value to the planning process. Possible agenda items could include:

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- Review of the unit's JTE performance for the current year
- Review of the unit's most recent Voice of the Scout feedback (if available)
- Completion of a unit assessment
- Identification of key opportunities to strengthen the unit and the program it offers during the coming year

The information developed during the unit assessment meeting is the foundation of the Unit Service Plan, which will be captured in the Commissioner Tools and available for ongoing reference by the unit commissioner.

Resources

1. The unit assessment is based upon JTE objectives (for example, Advancement, Retention, Trained Leadership, etc.). JTE scores will help identify the unit's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Journey to Excellence standards are updated each year in August and are posted at <http://www.scouting.org/jte.aspx>. Units that are successful in the JTE objectives areas attract and retain more kids. Familiarity with current JTE standards will provide a common perspective for everyone involved in developing and executing a Unit Service Plan.
2. If available, Voice of the Scout feedback can be another valuable resource when completing a unit assessment as it can provide a deeper understanding of why opportunities for improvement exist and help prioritize them.
3. Unit visits made by the unit commissioner and logged in the Commissioner Tools can also provide valuable perspective in the assessment process.



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Unit Service Plan

The Process

Using the results of the unit assessment meeting, the unit Key 3 and unit commissioner should work together to develop the Unit Service Plan, a list of action items that will strengthen the unit and the program it offers to the youth it serves. In addition, they should establish completion target dates and assign responsibility for each. Finally, resources needed to accomplish specific action items should be identified (some resource needs, such as funding or training, might result in the identification of other action items).

The Unit Service Plan should be based upon the unit assessment.

As the Unit Service Plan is developed, it will become apparent that some action items will be the responsibility of unit leadership (for example, recruiting new youth members or adult volunteers), some will be the responsibility of the unit's chartered organization (for example, providing additional meeting space or equipment storage), and others will be the responsibility of the unit commissioner to coordinate by linking unit needs to district resources (for example, delivery of position-specific training for unit leaders or participation in the district's fall membership roundup).

Resources

1. The Unit Service Plan may help identify unit needs and action items (for example, Scouts wanting high adventure who belong to a troop with little backpacking experience may need support from the district camping committee).
2. The district schedule and plans for charter renewal can help in developing action items that support on-time unit charter renewal.

District Commitment

The Process

Finalizing a Unit Service Plan requires commitment from the district operating committee. While the method of gaining commitment may vary from one district to another, the goal is to identify resources on the district operating committee that can help meet unit needs and complete action items on the Unit Service Plan (for example, the district's training committee might supply training needed by unit leaders while its membership committee might coordinate unit participation in the fall membership roundup). Unit commissioners will find the members of effective district operating committees willing to

offer resources to meet unit needs as they understand no one, including a unit commissioner, can be an expert on everything.

District commitment enables the unit commissioner to link district operating committee resources to unit needs and identify accountability for the related action items on the Unit Service Plan. With those commitments, the Unit Service Plan can be finalized.

The unit commissioner and the unit Key 3 should monitor the plan throughout the year and identify when adjustments are needed. Unit visits will provide an opportunity to monitor progress, too, and visit reports in the Commissioner Tools will provide valuable information for the next unit assessment.

Resources

1. A district committee organizational chart, including contact information, may be useful in accessing resources to help meet unit needs.

Implementation

The Process

An unexecuted plan is of no value.

The unit commissioner is an essential element of the Unit Service Plan's success. An engaged unit commissioner works closely with the unit Key 3 to continually assess progress and help the unit *and the district operating committee* maintain accountability and make course corrections when necessary.

Updating the unit assessment at six-month intervals (or when unit leadership changes) will help ensure the unit continues to grow and provide the best possible program to the youth it serves.

Resources

1. The Unit Service Plan (available in the Commissioner Tools)
2. Unit visit reports (available in the Commissioner Tools)

And remember ...

... it's a cycle—as the current Scouting year draws to a close and the charter renewal process begins, it is time for another unit assessment.

... and things can and do change during the course of the Scouting year and may require that the Unit Service Plan be revised.



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