

Spring 2015

THE COMMISSIONER

A PUBLICATION FOR COMMISSIONERS AND PROFESSIONALS



www.scouting.org/commissioners

Creating Effective Roundtables

by Dan Maxfield, National Commissioner Service
Roundtable Chair

2015–2016 Roundtable Guide Available

The *2015–2016 Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting Roundtable Planning Guide* will be available at the National Annual Meeting in Atlanta in May. Any member of the council Key 3 will be able to come by our booth in the exhibit area and take home a hard copy. It will also be posted online and available for download.

This guide is different from those of previous years. Instead of separate guides for Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting, there is only one roundtable guide this time. It has a common section at the front that includes all the materials used by both programs and then separate sections for Cub Scout– and Boy Scout–specific materials. It is hoped that this will make it easier for all concerned to access and print.

What Is Roundtable?

Roundtable is a form of commissioner service and supplemental training for volunteers at the unit level. The objectives of roundtables are to provide leaders with program ideas; information on policy and events; and training opportunities. It is a forum for sharing experiences and enjoying fun and fellowship with other Scout leaders. When skillfully executed, the roundtable experience will inspire, motivate, and enable unit leaders to provide a stronger program for their Scouts.

How Is Roundtable Organized?

Coordination of all roundtables held in the council is under the jurisdiction of the assistant council commissioner for roundtable. This person reports to the council commissioner and conducts an annual councilwide roundtable planning meeting as well as a midyear review.

The district roundtables fall under the guidance of the assistant district commissioner for roundtable. This individual oversees the district roundtables in all program areas, reports to the district commissioner, and works with the district structure, but also needs to be responsive to and work in cooperation with the assistant council commissioner for roundtable.

The program-specific roundtable commissioners then implement roundtable programs for Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing. These individuals are responsible for coordinating and conducting the various parts of the roundtable meetings.

Assistant roundtable commissioners conduct tasks directly for the program-specific roundtable commissioners to assist in the development and delivery of their monthly meeting agenda and program items. This role replaces the previous position of roundtable staff and allows the assistant roundtable commissioners to pursue the normal roundtable training and awards structure in place for all other roundtable leaders.

Using the Roundtable Planning Guide

Much of how the roundtable team chooses to use this planning guide will depend upon experience, direction of the council, and needs of the individual districts. Being flexible is the key to a successful roundtable, but keep in mind that while the program is flexible, BSA policy is not.

For those who have never planned a roundtable, the program outlines in the *2015–2016 Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting Roundtable Planning Guide* can serve as a great example. Many roundtable commissioners use the outline exactly as written, but each roundtable may be modified to suit the purposes and personalities of the team and the leaders who attend.

It is recommended that districts follow a similar schedule of activities based upon the annual council roundtable planning conference. This provides some continuity in program and information, thus giving unit personnel the ability to attend any roundtable and find similar activities for helping units build strong programs.



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Length and Format of Roundtable

Roundtable commissioners will find that the 2015–2016 roundtable guide allows for a great variety of roundtable configurations. Using these plans, your roundtable may be 60 minutes, 90 minutes, 120 minutes, or 180 minutes based on the district needs and frequency of meetings. The first section of each plan is designed as a preopening where attendees gather, acquire information about upcoming council or district events, greet one another, and sign attendance registers. The second section is a general opening for all program areas to share common interests and concerns in a joint meeting that includes a Big Rock topic. The Big Rock is a mini training topic that covers information relevant to all Scout leaders across BSA programs. The third section separates participants into breakout groups by program areas. There they receive a second mini training opportunity called an Interest Topic that is specifically designed to be relevant to the breakout group and contain all program materials necessary to conduct the next month's unit program.

Many districts choose to offer time after the closing of the meeting (often referred to as "cracker barrel") to allow Scouters to mingle and share experiences, fellowship, and ideas.

Summary

Properly implemented by a motivated team, roundtable can be a primary program and training venue for unit leadership. In addition, it provides a place where unit commissioners and district committee program volunteers can interact with unit leadership on a regular basis. This is a perfect way to be sure that units are connected with district resources that are intended to help them work at maximum efficiency.

For further information, consult the guide available on the Commissioners website under the [Roundtable Support](#) section.



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Linking Needs to Resources



Articles in our last two issues discussed the first two steps of the Unit Service Plan process: (1) working with unit leadership to develop a *collaborative* assessment of unit strengths and needs and (2) developing a plan that focuses on a small number of goals that will improve the quality of the program

the unit delivers to the youth it serves. The third step of the process, *district commitment*, engages additional resources to support the unit and finalizes the plan.

Our *simple and unified* approach to unit service is designed to enable commissioners to have greater focus on the specific needs of the units they serve and work more efficiently. The “annual service plan” that was used in the past included a list of tasks to be completed monthly by every commissioner for every unit, regardless of specific needs. It wasn’t an efficient use of our commissioners’ time and often didn’t help unit leaders better serve youth. The Unit Service Plan, based on a *collaborative* assessment and including a small number of goals that address the unit’s greatest needs, can have greater impact with less effort.

Unit commissioners are dedicated servant leaders. They accepted their commission because of their passion for helping others. Their skills enable them to assess unit strengths and needs, communicate clearly, and serve effectively as a team member, coach, and mentor. But although they often are experienced Scouters, they aren’t experts in every aspect of unit operations.

Our district operating committees are—or should be—comprised of a variety of subject matter experts. That should be where Scouters experienced in camping, advancement, training, planning, budgeting, fundraising, membership development, district activities, and so on can be found. Like commissioners, district operating committee members are also committed to starting and sustaining successful units and are willing to share their expertise to help units better serve more youth through Scouting.



Larry Chase
National Commissioner Service
Recruitment and Retention Chair
lhc@chasehome.net

Unit commissioners are diagnosticians; they work with unit leaders to identify a unit’s most pressing needs. Often, those needs can be addressed by unit leaders and committee members, and many of the goals included in the Unit Service Plan may be assigned to them. But sometimes other expertise is needed, and it often can be found in a district operating committee member. A member of the district finance committee, for example, may be able to help a unit that doesn’t have an annual budget and lacks experience in developing one. A member of the district camping committee likely can assist a troop without backpacking experience that wants to build that into its annual program plan. District membership committee members may be able to help a pack or crew build a plan to recruit new members; and training committee members can help address unit leader training needs. Once the Unit Service Plan has been completed, the unit commissioner should link unit needs to district operating committee resources to ensure achievement of goals for which unit leaders don’t have the necessary expertise.



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Our *simple and unified* approach to unit service recognizes that unit leaders and unit commissioners can't address every unit need; our *simple and unified* approach to unit service recognizes that ***it takes a district to help units better serve more youth through Scouting.*** And that's why *district commitment* is an essential step of the Unit Service Plan process.

Tying this into our roundtable focus this month, district roundtables offer a venue to share ideas and district resources in the form of subject matter experts, helping the commissioner link the resources to the units. Many times a roundtable topic will help many units with a common need.



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Retention Heroes

"One person can make a difference, and everyone should try."

—John F. Kennedy

Our [Unit Performance Guide](#) provides a better way to start and sustain new units. While it may take longer than the traditional approach to forming a new unit, we know that having all the elements of success in place first significantly increases the probability that new units will grow and prosper. A "new-unit commissioner" is a key element of the Unit Performance Guide process. We know from experience that a unit commissioner dedicated to serving a new unit until it completes its second charter renewal helps ensure its success.

We've all said it: "New-unit commissioner" is an awkward term. It's a bit clearer in writing, but when spoken, does it refer to someone new to the unit commissioner role or to someone assigned to serve new units? Regardless, since we know that dedicating commissioners to serving a single new unit helps it grow and prosper, perhaps the concept has broader application.

Commissioner Tools enables us to readily identify new units as well as those facing challenges that may threaten their existence. The assessment function classifies units using a scale that ranges from 5—"nearly an ideal situation"—to 1—"weak situation; needs immediate attention." Also, the Detailed Assessment function enables identifying specific priority needs. It's important to remember that our goal is for unit commissioners to complete *collaborative* Detailed Assessments—assessments of a unit's strengths and needs that are *done jointly with unit leaders*—at least twice each year. It's likely an assessment at or below 2.5—"needs improvement; watch carefully"—identifies a unit at risk.

If dedicating commissioners to serving a single new unit helps that unit grow and prosper, it's equally likely that dedicating commissioners to serving single units at risk will better help them address the challenges that threaten their existence. **Dedicating commissioners to serving single new units and units at risk can help us increase unit retention, and that's our primary goal as commissioners; we own unit retention.**

Our vision for unit service is to enable units to better serve more youth by providing an adequate number of trained commissioners who provide a link to district committees in support of a quality unit program. Fulfilling that vision demands that we continually recruit and train new members of our corps, and assigning dedicated commissioners to new units and units at risk increases the number of unit commissioners needed. As a practical matter, there may be times when a district simply doesn't have enough commissioners to assign to every unit. At those times, we'll do our best at increasing unit retention by assigning dedicated commissioners to new units and units at risk first while continuing to recruit so that we'll have new members of the corps who can serve stronger units.

It's right that we recognize and celebrate those who help organize new units. **It's time that we recognize and celebrate our retention heroes**—our commissioners who commit themselves to serving a single new unit or unit at risk. Retention heroes will help ensure we meet our unit retention goal and fulfill our mission to better serve more youth through Scouting.



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Tools Tip: A Collaborative Assessment

Earlier articles have discussed the *collaborative assessment* that should be the foundation of a Unit Service Plan. In the past, unit leaders and unit commissioners have been encouraged to complete independent assessments of unit strengths and needs. By working together, they can be more effective and efficient in developing a plan that will help improve unit program quality and better serve more youth.

What's the process for developing a *collaborative assessment*?

1. Discuss developing a *collaborative assessment* and a Unit Service Plan with unit leaders **in advance**. Without their support, chances of success are limited.
2. Agree on a meeting date to complete the assessment and advise unit leaders that they will receive an email with a link to an electronic form that will help them capture their thoughts in advance.
3. Create a Unit Contact in Commissioner Tools for the date of the assessment meeting. Select "Other" for the type of contact and enter "Unit Service Plan" in the available free-format field that appears.
4. Commissioner Tools will automatically enable the Detailed Assessment function for a unit contact with a future date and enable selection of the unit Key 3 to whom the unit assessment form will be sent. Also, any number of additional email addresses can optionally be added in the "Copy To:" line separated by a semicolon. The "Copy To:" line is helpful in situations where a new individual is about to become a member of the Key 3, or if a person has a new or alternate email address. You DO NOT need to add yourself to the "Copy To:" line, as the system will send you a copy of the invitational email as a blind copy.
5. Unit leaders will receive a customized email containing a link that will take them directly to the Detailed Assessment in Commissioner Tools and enable them to enter their input. Once the unit leader has completed his or her input, "unit completed" is displayed on the button when you go into the scheduled contact.
6. Finalize the *collaborative assessment* during the scheduled meeting with unit leaders and enter the results in the Detailed Assessment in Commissioner Tools. Should there be too much material to cover in a single scheduled meeting, you can save what you have completed of the Detailed Assessment, and optionally change the date of the meeting to allow you to continue working with the unit leaders on another date. Remember, after you "complete" the *collaborative assessment*, you have an additional 48 hours to make any edits should they be needed.

The completed *collaborative assessment* is the starting point for the Unit Service Plan, which should include a limited number of SMART goals that over the next six months will address the most significant unit needs identified. The goals can be entered in the Detailed Assessment where they will remain available for review.

CAUTION: Remember, just like the old paper Commissioner Unit Assessments, you DO NOT want to forward your completed commissioner Detailed Contact to the unit. Providing the unit a copy of the commissioner's completed assessment establishes a bad precedent, could inhibit the commissioner from adding frank information that could be viewed negatively by the unit, and might create tension between the commissioner and the unit.

Advance communication with unit leaders: It's the key to a successful *collaborative assessment*.



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Make Roundtable the Place to Be—Get the Scoop

When I was a district commissioner and the lead person for creating a monthly roundtable where leaders wanted to be, I felt I needed a marketing campaign so leaders would know what they would get from roundtable and when it was. I am a collector of useful stuff, so when the little scoops came out in laundry detergent I thought they would be useful for something. And when I was deciding on my marketing campaign for roundtable, they came to mind. I took those little scoops, attached a small card that said, "Get the Scoop," with the date, time, and place where the monthly roundtables were held, and attached it all to a string that hung around the neck. I distributed one to each unit in my district, either myself or via the commissioner staff. I brought a big 5-gallon pail of trail mix that sat at the back of the room (really the entrance to the room), and leaders brought their scoop with them and scooped up some trail mix to munch on while we had our opening general session. New leaders got scoops at the roundtable for them to use as a reminder to come each month or to invite fellow leaders to join them.

Soon our attendance soared. I also noticed many of my little scoops were now rearview mirror ornaments.

Of course, our roundtables had to offer something for everyone to keep them coming back, and our roundtable commissioner staff did just that. They were trained and really put on a good show.

Something so simple worked for me. Why not try it in your district?



Darlene Sprague
National Commissioner Service
Resources Chair
darsprague@roadrunner.com



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New Videos on Commissioners Website

The Commissioner Tools Focus Group has created more than a dozen “Commissioner Tools How-to ...” training videos of approximately five minutes or less in duration, all of which can be accessed from the [Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools page](#) on the Commissioners website.

These include:

- **Accessing Commissioner Tools—** Demonstrates how to access the tools and provides a brief overview.
- **Unit Assessment Scoring Matrix—** Defines the scoring parameters used to complete an assessment.
- **Entering a Unit Contact—**The basic contact information and the entry point for creating either a simple assessment or a detailed assessment.
- **Simple Assessment—**The shortest and simplest entry to report a unit contact.
- **Commissioner Administration Tab (at the Home menu)—**Administrative commissioners will use this tab to assign commissioners to units and monitor unit service within the district or council.
- **Roundtable Tab—**For planning future roundtables and documenting unit roundtable attendance and participation.
- **Reports Button (within the Units tab)—** Commissioners can choose to view and download a variety of district-level reports.
- **Using the Commissioner Profile Tab—** Individualized summary of assigned units, contacts made in the previous four months, and unit contacts made by a specific commissioner.
- **Discussion Tab—**A dialogue capability for collaboration among commissioners at the same organizational level.
- **Units Tab—**This video describes the specifics of the features found on the Units tab and how to navigate this tab and the records of contacts for units.

- **The Collaborative Assessment for the Unit Key 3—**This video describes to the unit Key 3 the steps and procedures involved with the collaborative assessment creation process. It should be reviewed by commissioners and the unit Key 3 PRIOR to beginning the collaborative detailed assessment process.
- **Detailed Assessment—**How, why, and when to complete a detailed assessment and its variations, including a collaborative assessment.

More Videos to Come

- **Why Build a Unit Service Plan?—**This video discusses how Commissioner Tools works with the Unit Service Plan to better support units.
- **Developing a Unit Service Plan—**This video explains how to use the results of a collaborative assessment to develop a Unit Service Plan.
- **Updating a Unit Service Plan—**This video explains how to use a simple assessment to update a Unit Service Plan.
- **Developing a Collaborative Unit Assessment—** This video helps you learn how to use Commissioner Tools and the Unit Service Plan and explains how to develop a collaborative unit assessment.
- **Collaborative Assessment Key Concepts—** This video explains key concepts related to a collaborative unit assessment.



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Questions and Answers

Having an identity crisis?

Are you experiencing a problem with your BSA registration information? First, be certain that your local council has properly registered you in your commissioner position. If you're still having problems, contact the BSA Member Care Contact Center at myscouting@scouting.org.

Where do I find information about Scouting awards?

Information about Scouting awards including the Arrowhead Honor Award and the Distinguished Commissioner Award can be found in chapter 15 of the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*. Information is also available at [Awards Central](#).

How do I contact the help desk?

The help desk for all things BSA is now called the Member Care Contact Center. The email address is myscouting@scouting.org and the phone number is 972-580-2489.

What is Scouting Wire?

Scouting Wire is a new official BSA website offering Scouting news and updates for volunteers and professionals. This site ties together all of the news for volunteers and professionals and lets you sign up for the news you want to read. Check it out and opt in at <http://scoutingwire.org/>.

How do I find commissioner information on social media?

Commissioners are active on the following social media channels.

Facebook

- Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America (the only official BSA commissioners social media website; if you haven't already "liked" this group, please do so): www.facebook.com/CommissionersOfTheBoyScoutsOfAmerica
- Commissioner Service (Boy Scouts of America): www.facebook.com/groups/bsa.commissioners
- BSA Roundtable Commissioners: www.facebook.com/groups/ScoutRTCommish

LinkedIn

- Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America: www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=92833&trk=anetug_hm

Yahoo!

- Scout Commissioner Corner: https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Scout_Commissioner/info



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Commissioner College Schedule

The College of Commissioner Science program is a great way to get additional training. The Commissioners website provides a listing of colleges of commissioner science that we receive information about.

Please check the list, found on the [Commissioner Training page](#), if you would like to experience a college outside of your area or if your council does not currently run a college.

Note: To have your council's college listed, please send information to Darlene Sprague at darsprague@roadrunner.com.



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Commissioner Service Training for Non-Traditional or Faith-Based Units

If you are a commissioner serving a non-traditional or faith-based unit, there is a Philmont conference designed just for you! You will learn about the fundamental principles of commissioner service, along with religious and cultural insights, tools, and resources that will aid in your efforts to assist all units in their Journey to Excellence. If you serve in Asian, Hispanic, African American, Native American, Islamic, Jewish, or LDS communities, we encourage you to join us June 14–20 (Week 2) at the Philmont Training Center. Click [here](#) to register for the course. Hope to see you at Philmont!



Joe Domino
National Commissioner Service
Underserved Markets Chair
send2jfd@gmail.com



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Scouting Wire

Scouting Wire is a new BSA website for both volunteers and professionals. For more information, see the [Bryan on Scouting blog post](#).



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Cub Scouting Information

Cub Scouting Program Updates

The Cub Scouting program is changing effective June 1, 2015. Click [here](#) to learn about the program updates.

Updated Cub Scouting Position-Specific In-Person Training Guides Available

The [Den Leader](#), [Cubmaster and Assistant Cubmaster](#), and [Pack Committee \(Pack Committee Challenge\)](#) training guides have been updated to reflect the new Cub Scouting program and are now available on the [adult training page](#).

Online Training for the New Cub Scouting Program

The online training for den leaders, Cubmasters, committee chairs and members, and chartered organization representatives has been updated with the help of volunteers from around the country. The new training will be divided into shorter, more targeted modules so leaders can get the training they need, in the order they want, any time they need it. The new training is organized into time-based sections: the learning needed prior to the first meeting and within the first 30 days, and training needed to be considered position-specific "trained."

The new training will be implemented in conjunction with the BSA's new learning management system. The anticipated timing for launching this new tool is June 30, 2015. Keep an eye on my.scouting.org for more information.

Philmont Training Sessions for Cub Scouting Program

Cub Scout leaders have a chance to visit Scouting paradise and learn more about "Leading the New Cub Scout Adventure." Four sessions are offered by the volunteers who designed the program and wrote the new youth handbooks and leader training materials. Visit the [Philmont Training Center site](#) to learn more.



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Scouting Goes Mobile With the Acquisition of Scoutbook

The BSA has achieved a key milestone in its effort to expand its presence in the digital space with the acquisition of Scoutbook, a Web application designed for mobile devices. Scoutbook expands Scouting's presence in the digital space and helps the organization connect with its leaders and members when, where, and how they prefer.

Scoutbook delivers a suite of easy-to-use Web-based tools that are helpful to both Scouts and unit leaders. It is a unit-management Web application that will become the one-stop shop for Scouts, parents, and unit leaders to record and manage their Scouting experience. This tool will provide an easy way to track advancements, unit activities, and unit communications.

In recent years the BSA has been exploring strategies to better connect with youth in today's highly digital world. At the same time, the organization has continued its focus on providing unit leaders with the tools, training, and support they need to deliver the kind of life-changing experiences Scouting is capable of providing. The acquisition of Scoutbook delivers on both of those strategic imperatives.

"Kids today are always on the go and their communication habits and preferences reflect it," said Chief Scout Executive Wayne Brock. "More than 75 percent of U.S. children now have access to a smartphone or tablet—a statistic that points toward a significant opportunity for the BSA, and one our organization proudly has seized upon. Scoutbook is our latest approach to delivering a more digital experience that is both fun and meaningful for our members."

Shawn Jackson, a parent and active member of the Scouting community, created Scoutbook in 2013, and its membership has grown to nearly 200,000 subscribers since then.



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National Outdoor Awards Program

The National Outdoor Awards were designed for Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Sea Scouts, and Venturers who enjoy the outdoors. Requirements for these awards were updated in January 2015. For more information, see the [National Outdoor Awards Program website](#).



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Learning for Life Affiliate Statement With the Boy Scouts of America

Learning for Life is one of the programs that local Boy Scouts of America councils are authorized to deliver, with local executive board approval. Learning for Life is an affiliate of the Boy Scouts of America that is comprised of both a written character education curriculum for PreK–12th-graders and students with special needs, as well as interactive career Exploring programs for sixth-graders through 20-year-olds. Over 280 local councils deliver these programs to over 532,000 youth across the country. Youth participation is open to any youth in the prescribed age group for that particular program. Adults, 21 years of age and older, are selected by participating organizations for involvement in the Learning for Life programs.

Color, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, disability, economic status, or citizenship is not criteria for participation by youth or adults. Youth and adults involved with Learning for Life programs, including Exploring, are registered with Learning for Life as participants. Learning for Life participants are not members of the Boy Scouts of America. Learning for Life, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation, is a separate 501(c)(3) corporation, with a board of directors that is separate from the Boy Scouts of America.

While they have different policies, there are occasions when local Learning for Life and traditional BSA programs may participate in an event. Both programs will be required to follow the appropriate guidelines, especially regarding safety.

Completion of training, registration, and annual fees are program-specific and not transferable between programs.



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Updated September 29, 2014

Central Regional Commissioner Reid Christopherson reidchris@alliancecom.net	Southern Regional Commissioner David Rumbarger rum@cdfms.org	Western Regional Commissioner Bob Johnston justrunbob@gmail.com	Northeast Regional Commissioner Randy Cline rkc4@comcast.net
Area 1 Commissioner Abner George ahgeorgejr@gmail.com	Area 1 Commissioner Dr. Thomas Price tpricedds@aol.com	Area 1 Commissioner Bruce Noonan bnoonan@donobi.net	Area 1 Commissioner Jerry Boyle boyleusmc@gmail.com
Area 2 Commissioner Dick Northrup northrup@cass.net	Area 2 and 3 Commissioner Stan Stanley eagle1958@comcast.net	Area 2 Commissioner John Manz diamondback@blackfoot.net	Area 2 Commissioner Ron Hathaway ronaldh@ymail.com
Area 3 Commissioner Carm Walgamott walgamott@aol.com	Area 4 Commissioner Michael Lyster acchm2010@comcast.net	Area 3 Commissioner Rodney Mangus mangusr@comcast.net	Area 3 Commissioner Jeff McKinney jlmckinney@nyseg.com
Area 4 Commissioner Steve Wilder sbw28@aol.com	Area 5 Commissioner Rich Uhrich auhrich@yahoo.com	Area 4 Commissioner Marty Kasman m.kasman@ca.rr.com	Area 4 Commissioner Bill Rosner bill.rosner@me.com
Area 5 Commissioner Kandra Dickerson jwdickerson111@gmail.com	Area 6 Commissioner Timothy Spires tspires@tennam.com	Area 6 Commissioner Jim Libbin jlibbin@nmsu.edu	Area 5 Commissioner Gail Hill gail-m-hill@comcast.net
Area 6 Commissioner Randy Corgan rcorgan@cinci.rr.com	Area 7 Commissioner John McCulla sr7-commissioner@comcast.net		Area 6 Commissioner Charles Morgan cx5morgan@aol.com
Area 7 Commissioner Ernie Froemel ernie.froemel@gmail.com	Area 8 Commissioner Dick Browning dbrowning@arkansasonline.com		
	Area 9 Commissioner Eli Morgan morganeli2@aol.com		



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Commissioner Support Team

Tim Acree	National Commissioner Service Training Chair	tim.acree@comcast.net
Randy Cline	Northeast Region Commissioner	rkc4@comcast.net
Larry Chase	National Commissioner Service Recruitment and Retention Chair	lhc@chasehome.net
Reid Christopherson	Central Region Commissioner	reidchris@alliancecom.net
Joe Domino	National Commissioner Service Underserved Markets Chair	send2jfd@gmail.com
Rick Hillenbrand	National Commissioner Service Communications Chair	rick_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu
Dan Maxfield	National Commissioner Service Roundtable Chair	dbmaxi05@gmail.com
Tico Perez	National Commissioner	ticop@aol.com
Jan Perkins	Western Region Commissioner	jperkins@pmelaw.com
David Rumbarger	Southern Region Commissioner	rum@cdfms.com
Steve Sawyer	Staff Advisor	steve.sawyer@scouting.org
Scott Sorrels	Commissioner Service Chair	scott.sorrels@sutherland.com
Darlene Sprague	National Commissioner Service Resources Chair	darsprague@roadrunner.com



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Coming Events

May–October

May 20–22

National Annual Meeting and National Executive Board and Committee Meetings

Hyatt Regency, Atlanta, Georgia

June 14–20

Commissioner Week

Philmont Training Center

July 26–August 1

Unit Commissioner Conference

Philmont Training Center

July 28–August 8

23rd World Scout Jamboree in Japan with the theme “a Spirit of Unity.” Click [here](#) for more information and click [here](#) to download the brochure.

October 5–7

National Executive Board and Committee Meetings

DFW Marriott North, Irving, Texas (invitation only)



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National Commissioner's Minute

Three great new developments—Commissioner Tools, the updated Cub Scouting program, and the new roundtable guide for the Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting programs—lead the way as we move forward in 2015.

The rollout of Commissioner Tools release 1 is complete and we are pleased with the early feedback. We will provide increased support as the product moves forward through the implementation phase in local councils. You will continue to see new orientation and training materials become available on the Commissioners website, reflecting that the task force is working to integrate all of our commissioner resources with the new world of Commissioner Tools, the updated Cub Scouting program, and our emphasis on more effective roundtables. We hope that you recognize that we crafted a “simple and unified” technology platform to make unit contacts more effective, while eliminating a lot of paperwork and improving the planning process through a coordinated Unit Service Plan. In designing Commissioner Tools, we continually asked about the needs of unit commissioners and how we could make your role easier and more rewarding. It’s pretty good now, but we think you will see even greater utility as you get used to the power brought to you by Tools.

Did you know that the BSA is launching a new Cub Scouting program this summer? The new materials will be available about the time we release this newsletter. The program is designed to emphasize the adventure in Cub Scouting, with the needs of today’s parents and communities in mind. The general structure of the new content is a series of “adventures,” which Cub Scouts (individually and as part of their den) will experience while working on their badge of rank. At each level, once a Cub Scout has completed seven adventures, including one Duty to God adventure, he will have earned his badge of rank. The combination of required adventures and elective adventures varies with the rank being worked on. There are additional elective adventures that members of the den may earn. Each adventure is designed to take roughly three den meetings to earn, one of which may be an outing, ranging from attending a sporting event as a den or taking a hike to visiting a museum or going



*Tico Perez
National Commissioner*

on a campout. At the conclusion of each adventure, a recognition device is awarded. Cub Scouts are our future, so please take the time to familiarize yourself with the new content so we can support our local districts and units.

This edition of *The Commissioner* emphasizes the importance of roundtables. Roundtables are important! The roundtable is a form of commissioner service and supplemental training for volunteers at the unit level, and it is one of our primary communications mediums to reach our unit leadership. Effective roundtables provide leaders with program ideas, information on policy and events, and plenty of different types of training opportunities. When skillfully executed, the roundtable experience will inspire, motivate, and enable unit leaders to provide a stronger program for their Scouts. The launch of the new roundtable guide this May is our next evolution in support for how to plan and execute an effective roundtable. The guide is even more timely because it has a special section devoted to the new Cub Scouting program.

We welcome your feedback on these and many other tools, methods, and resources. I hope that you share my enthusiasm about commissioner service in 2015 and beyond.

God bless.



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Use Tools to Identify Units With Most Critical Needs

Commissioner Tools is our shortcut to analyzing unit health. It is so much more than a place to record a visit like we did in UVTS. All of the data is there for a commissioner to assess and address the health of the unit. We have a place for the unit commissioner to keep a journal of contacts with units and, most importantly, to link priority needs back to the district or council for further support. When coupled with the Unit Service Plan (the cycle of assessing a unit, creating a unit service plan, and working with the unit leaders and the district volunteers on a collaborative basis to provide guidance and resources), Commissioner Tools provides raw information that we did not have before. In order to realize the value of Commissioner Tools, the question is what are we going to do with the information that Tools provides to the commissioner corps.

The real value of Commissioner Tools should be that it helps us retain units and renew their charter. If a unit has a composite score of 2.5 or below, Tools is telling us that we have a unit in need of immediate attention. It is a red light telling us that we are in danger of losing those young people. This same red light presents a service challenge. Should we consider reallocating our unit commissioner resources to make sure that a unit with a 2.5 score or below gets the same type of one-on-one intensive commissioner service that we want to provide to our new units for their first two charter renewal cycles? Doesn't every unit at 2.5 or below deserve intensive assistance from the district and council to improve that unit's performance and likelihood of charter renewal? I submit the answer is yes, but that answer presents a management opportunity for the commissioner corps. The need for more intensive service for units at 2.5 or below may mean that we need to recruit and train more unit commissioners. It might also mean that we reallocate some of our unit commissioner time away from the mega-troop that has been around for 20 years and by all indications is doing well to the unit that our health indicator is telling us needs our help today. The allocation of limited resources, in this case our trained unit



Scott Sorrels
National Commissioner Service Chair
scott.sorrels@sutherland.com

commissioners, is fundamentally a function of district and council administrative commissioner leadership. Each council's needs and solutions may be different.

In the near term, we will be going through a ramp-up phase where the Tools fields are being populated with all kinds of information. If we focus on what that information is telling us about the health of each unit and design our own plan to serve the needs of that unit, we stand a much better chance of realizing the dream of using Commissioner Tools as a key means of improving unit retention. We invite you to think about how you and your district or council can best utilize the information provided by Tools, and hope that you will share your best practices with us in the coming months.



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New College of Commissioner Science Roundtable Courses

The Training Committee of the National Commissioner Support Staff has been very active in support of roundtables as a form of unit service. We now have seven brand-new bachelor courses in the College of Commissioner Science! With these new courses, a college will have the option of offering an entire curriculum in roundtable science.

BCS 150—The Roundtable in Commissioner Service

The course discusses how roundtable is designed to help units succeed by providing useful program ideas, information on policy, and current information on council and district events and training opportunities.

BCS 151—The Roundtable Commissioner Team

During this course we review the duties and responsibilities of each member of the roundtable commissioner team.

BCS 152—Using the Roundtable Program Guides

During this course we review the 2015–2016 *Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting Roundtable Planning Guide* for Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts (including Varsity teams) and the *Venturing Monthly Program Forum*. We will do this by looking at the roundtable guide for each program and understanding the parts of each. We will also cover the importance of using the planning guides.

BCS 153—Promoting Roundtable

Without proper and consistent promotion you may find yourself frustrated at the lack of participation in your district and council. A quality and consistent roundtable and a strong marketing campaign will attract and retain participants over time and impact their overall ability to lead their Scouting units.

BCS 154—The Cub Scout Roundtable

The objectives of Cub Scout roundtables are to provide leaders with program ideas, information on policy and events, and training opportunities. It is a forum for sharing experiences and enjoying fun and fellowship with other Cub Scout leaders.



Tim Acree
National Commissioner Service Training Chair
tim.acree@comcast.net

BCS 155—The Boy Scout Roundtable

The objectives of Boy Scout roundtables are to provide leaders with program ideas, information on policy and events, and training opportunities. It is a forum for sharing experiences and enjoying fun and fellowship with other Boy Scout leaders. When skillfully executed, the roundtable experience will inspire, motivate, and enable unit leaders to provide a stronger program for their Scouts.

BCS 156—Recruiting, Training, and Recognizing the Roundtable Team

Potential roundtable staff members are everywhere—all you have to do is look. In recruiting your roundtable staff, be sure to look for people who are creative and innovative, and who have a “can do” attitude. Roundtable commissioners and assistants should all be trained so they will be fully qualified to present material and teach skills at roundtables in an interesting way. All roundtable commissioners are eligible to work toward commissioner service awards.



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All of these courses are part of the bachelor curriculum and are available for download from www.scouting.org/Commissioners/training/BachelorsCourses.aspx.

Note that BCS 108—Effective Roundtables I, BCS 109—Effective Roundtables II, and MCS 314—Administration of Roundtable Staff are now obsolete and have been replaced by these seven new courses.

The new courses were developed by Emily Campbell, Meg (Margaret) Eacker, Carla Jones, Jimmy Jones, Daniel Grummert, Robert Takacs, and Dan Maxfield. Dan and his team have reviewed and approved the courses. Thanks to the developers and reviewers for their hard work and support of roundtable commissioner service.

The roundtable team led by Dan Maxfield has some ideas about creating a master-level curriculum as well. The training committee and roundtable team are in discussion.



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Commissioner Training Update

Basic Training

All seven of the Basic Training courses have been updated and are posted at www.scouting.org/Commissioners/training/basic_training.aspx. These updated courses incorporate Commissioner Tools and the new Unit Service Plan as well as program updates. Please use these new courses when conducting Basic Training.

College Courses

All 68 commissioner college courses as well as the supporting materials in the General folder have been updated by the team listed below:

- Dick Kroll—Continuing Education courses
- Peter Matrow—Doctorate courses
- Craig Donais—Master courses
- Bill Kropa—Bachelor courses
- Suzanne Windisch—Materials in the General folder

This team has been working since the beginning of the year to update the courses. I hope you find them easy to use when conducting college courses. All course materials are contained in the ZIP files that you can download. It was a monumental task to get all 68 courses updated, and I appreciate the support of those listed above as well as those they recruited to assist in the updates.

Note: There are now seven additional courses as support for roundtable commissioners. Thus, a college can now offer a bachelor degree in roundtable science. These courses are posted at the Bachelor Courses link on the [Commissioner Training page](#). More information about the courses is available in the “New College of Commissioner Science Roundtable Courses” article.

Dean's Retreat

August 28–30, 2015, is the College of Commissioner Science Dean's Retreat, hosted by the Commissioner Training team. The faculty for the retreat is Peter Matrow, first dean of the Commissioner College at Philmont, and Terry Chapman, faculty member for the Commissioner

College at Philmont for two years. Both Peter and Terry, who have also been dean of the commissioner colleges in their respective councils, will share their experiences.

This first College of Commissioner Science Dean's Retreat will be held at the Scouting University Westlake Campus, which is located 10 miles from DFW Airport in Westlake, Texas. This is the same facility where professional Scouters attend their training classes and are commissioned.

During our weekend retreat we will share best practices from commissioner colleges across the nation and have a number of guest speakers. We plan to tour the National Scouting Museum, the national headquarters, and other local attractions in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. If you are the dean of a commissioner college, this conference is for you! You don't want to miss it. We also encourage associate deans, doctorate deans, and degree deans to attend the conference.

Register at <http://ScoutingU.Kintera.org/COCSDeansRetreat>. The conference fee of \$75 covers meals and tours (travel and housing not included).

LDS Commissioner Orientation Course

Articles for *The Commissioner* have to be submitted a month in advance of publication of the newsletter. When the article for the Winter 2015 edition was written, we were on track to complete and post the training for LDS commissioners. Unfortunately, the church leadership has not approved the final version of the training, and without approval it could not be posted. While those who worked very hard on the training are disappointed, we need to make sure that the training is approved. With the change in the Young Men's Presidency at the end of April, the course approval will probably be extended. This course is needed and the church leadership is supportive, but we have not received the necessary approvals. I do apologize for any inconvenience.



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Commissioner Week 2015

Commissioner Week at the Philmont Training Center for 2015 will be Week 2: June 14–20. If you have not been to Commissioner Week before, this is the year to go. Last year we received our highest ratings yet from the feedback, and we plan to further enhance the experience.

A new conference titled Advanced Leadership Skills for Administrative Commissioners is being offered this year. Conference topics will include the significance of leaders, how to build better relationships, aspirations of leaders, mentoring and coaching, and how to leave a legacy of leadership.

If you serve faith-based or non-traditional units, consider attending the Commissioner Service for Non-Traditional or Faith-Based Units conference to better understand how to improve your service to those units as well as be exposed to the many resources available from the BSA for reaching multicultural and underserved markets.

All of the position-specific conferences offered last year will be offered again this year.

Note: An additional Unit Commissioner conference will be offered during Week 8: July 26–August 1. If you are a unit commissioner and cannot attend Week 2, please sign up for Week 8.

See the [Philmont flier](#) for more information or go to the Philmont Conferences page. Please consider making a personal commitment to attend one of the conferences offered this year. You will not be disappointed!

If you have any questions about commissioner training, please contact Tim Acree, national commissioner service training chair, at tim.acree@comcast.net.



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Effective Roundtables Course at Philmont

by George Costigan, faculty, Effective Roundtables

Once again, the Effective Roundtables course will be offered during Commissioner Week at Philmont Training Center this summer. For most Scouters, roundtable is the only time they interact with unit service and so it becomes critical that we help unit leaders get “the will to do” and “the skill to do” every time they attend. For many districts and councils, there is still confusion about how to implement the assistant district commissioner for roundtable and assistant council commissioner for roundtable positions, and this course will help explain and demonstrate how those positions work back home.

As one of the instructors, I can—and will—talk about roundtables and unit service all day long. But to convince you how important and useful attending the Effective Roundtables course is, let me have some of the attendees tell about their experiences:

“Whether you are new to roundtable or a seasoned commissioner, the Effective Roundtables session at Philmont will open your eyes to the things you don’t know, but will show you how to easily add those things to your program. Most importantly, the staff will teach you great ways to make your roundtable the best program around.”

—Jeffrey Werner, Old Colony Council

“Hands down I give credit to the Effective Roundtables training for helping us take our roundtable to the next level. I don’t care how long you have been doing it, you can’t leave this training and not learn something new or fresh to perk up your roundtables.”

—Erin Zeek, Occoneechee Council

“Roundtables are a key component to the health, vitality, and growth of a district. There is really no other venue that offers the opportunity for the sharing of ideas, training, communication, networking, and, yes, fellowship, that a well-planned roundtable does. At the time that I attended Effective Roundtables, I had been a Cub Scout roundtable commissioner for about three years. I felt that I had a pretty good grasp on the roundtable situation ... then along came (the instructors). They reinforced what I have always believed ... that we are never too old or too experienced to learn new ideas ... ideas and info that helped take a quality roundtable program to the next level. I cannot recommend this training session enough. I don’t care how much you know (or think you know), you and your district will benefit highly from attending Effective Roundtables at the Philmont Training Center!”

—G.W. Bell, Longhorn Council



Daniel B. Maxfield
National Commissioner Service Roundtable Chair
dbmaxi05@gmail.com

I look forward to seeing you and other roundtable commissioners June 14–20, 2015, at Philmont. Register now to attend the most important course about the most important part of unit service.



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Tools Tip: What's Up at Roundtable?

Commissioner Tools enables the collection of **actionable information**. Previous articles have focused on how that can be done by unit commissioners developing a Unit Service Plan. The same capability exists for roundtable commissioners.

Roundtable "contacts" can be created for future dates. It's also possible to customize roundtable contacts so that they apply to specific or multiple programs. For example, a single contact might apply specifically to a Cub Scouting roundtable, or it might apply to a roundtable that will also serve Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Venturing, and/or Sea Scout leaders.

If roundtable contacts are created for future dates, it's then possible for roundtable leaders to publish the agenda and other valuable information in free-format fields for the Meeting Notes and Comments and Needs sections. Because roundtable contacts can be viewed by all commissioners in the district, others can see in advance what topics will be covered and can use that information to promote attendance by leaders of the units they serve.

Once a roundtable has been held, roundtable staff can record attendance. Commissioner Tools provides the option of simply entering the total number of unit leaders, commissioners, district committee members, and guests present, or entering the number of leaders from each unit. If the latter option is used, the contact will display the percentage of units in the district represented at the roundtable. The roundtable function even provides the flexibility to account for leaders representing multiple units if the roundtable staff elects to collect that level of detail. Remember, after you "complete" the roundtable contact, you have an additional 60 days to make any edits should they be needed. This feature is especially helpful for districts that conduct multiple roundtable sessions each month.

Finally, a roundtable contact also enables commissioners to provide feedback. Free-format Roundtable Comments fields can be used to evaluate program content and offer suggestions for future programs. Using this capability, commissioners are able to share input received from unit leaders to help develop roundtables that are more responsive to their needs.

Actionable information: It's a key characteristic of Commissioner Tools and one that enables commissioners to be more effective and efficient in serving units.



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Farewell to UVTS

At the 2014 National Annual Meeting, many commissioners had the chance to preview the new Commissioner Tools while it was still being tested. At the 2015 National Annual Meeting, we will celebrate both the successful transition of all councils to Commissioner Tools and the retirement of the Unit Visit Tracking System (UVTS).

Some of you may recall that prior to the initial launch of UVTS in 2007 we did not have a national method for logging and monitoring commissioner–unit interactions. While some councils had local solutions for tracking commissioner unit “visits,” most estimates of how well commissioners were doing on unit visits were widely overstated. As the council commissioner for one of the largest councils in the BSA, I can recall telling my then-Area Commissioner Fran Hensen in one of her monthly conference calls that by my estimate 80 percent of the council’s units had been visited by a commissioner in the previous month. Wow, was that an unintentional exaggeration! At the end of 2014, our collective national UVTS visitation rate was only 17.8 percent—and that was not based on the goal of visiting our units at least monthly as I was taught long ago in Commissioner Basic training; that 17.8 percent value is based on a visit every other month.

While UVTS had its limitations—as does any computer program of its size—one of the first things UVTS demonstrated was to prove the adage that “What gets measured is what gets done.” Another thing UVTS did for many of us was to force us to learn how to operate in a changing technological world, one in which some of our commissioners have home Internet service providing 50 to 500 Mbps of data while other commissioners still don’t have a home computer. Additionally, UVTS taught us how to discriminate between a “significant contact that results in actionable information” and a social interaction, and what are some of the things that commissioners need to focus on when meeting with their units.

With the transition of all councils to Commissioner Tools, the legacy Unit Visit Tracking System is no longer required for logging entries and will be shut down. The Commissioner Tools Focus Group was aware of the fact



Rick Hillenbrand
National Commissioner Service
Communications Chair
rick_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu

that in some cases, commissioners have logged dozens and dozens of UVTS entries for individual units, and it would be a shame if we were not able to access that information in Commissioner Tools. Within Commissioner Tools, you can access any of the historical UVTS entries made for a unit by navigating to the Units tab. Click on the Archive Contacts button to the right of any individual unit’s header block to access all the historical UVTS entries that were made for that particular unit.



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More and more commissioners are becoming familiar with Commissioner Tools and its current capabilities, and as a community of commissioners, we continue to make progress in two major areas: training and future enhancements and functionality. Under the leadership of Bob Hoffmeyer and Dave Fornadel, the Commissioner Tools Focus Group has created more than a dozen “Commissioner Tools How-to ...” training videos of approximately five minutes or less in duration, all of which can be accessed from either the [Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools page](#) on the Commissioners website or from the [Commissioners Training ScoutingMultiMedia YouTube playlist](#). These videos will be a great training aid as we add new commissioners to our ranks. Additionally, working as part of Tim Acree’s Commissioner Training Team, Dave Fornadel has already created and posted new Commissioner Basic Training material, including updates to incorporate Commissioner Tools and the Unit Service Plan, on the [Commissioner Basic Training page](#).

The focus group is also actively working on future enhancements and functionality for Commissioner Tools. Since Commissioner Tools was first deployed to the pilot councils, we have been collecting and evaluating your recommendations and we want to encourage you to continue to submit your ideas via your council commissioner tools champion. Because we just transitioned the last councils to Commissioner Tools, it will be a while before we have a completely new release of Commissioner Tools available. However, that hasn’t stopped us from making important fixes and enhancements in the interim, with our immediate focus on improving system response time and expanding the reporting features. The Commissioner Tools Status Reports are sent regularly to your council commissioner and council commissioner tools champion, and are also available on the [Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools page](#). Those Status Reports provide timely information about the maintenance and enhancement updates that are actively being worked on by the Commissioner Tools team.



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Tools Tip: UVTS Entries Not Lost

You can access your old UVTS entries from within Commissioner Tools by going to the appropriate unit and clicking on the Archive Contacts button. Additionally, note that if your council has recently transitioned to Commissioner Tools, you do NOT need to re-enter the contacts that you had logged in UVTS. The system will automatically combine the entries for both systems for JTE purposes.



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Tools Tip: Identifying Priority Needs Units

The Commissioner Tools Focus Group is working on additional reporting capabilities that will simplify this process, but in the meantime one of the most efficient ways to find the needle(s) in the haystack is for administrative commissioners to EMPHASIZE and INSIST that their reporting commissioners use the Priority Needs checkboxes in the Detailed Assessment. Through the use of existing (and future) reports, leadership can then quickly identify which units need attention and what type of help they need. Remember, commissioners do not need to complete the entire Detailed Assessment to use the Priority Needs section. It is completely acceptable to just make high-level scores for each of the four evaluation areas, and then add comments in the Step 6 – Unit Priorities and Other Comments section. It is important that administrative commissioners monitor the local threshold for designating a unit as a “priority needs unit,” because if too many units are so designated the entire haystack will be needles and the task will then change to finding specific individual needles.



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JTE Key Performance Indicators

The Journey to Excellence Key Performance Indicators from April 2015 can be accessed [here](#).



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