



## Establishing Support to Exploring Units

By Jeff Schweiger, assistant council commissioner for Exploring, National Capital Area Council

Exploring began as a senior program in early Boy Scout troops. In 1935, senior Scouts were called Explorers for the first time. In 1949, Exploring was revised to include senior Scouts still in troops, separate units called “posts” with an emphasis on outdoor activities, Sea Scout ships, and Air Scout squadrons. In the 1960s, career education posts were added to the Exploring program. In 1998, the posts with traditional Scouting activities were split off from Exploring and became the Venturing program. The remaining Explorer posts moved under the umbrella of Learning for Life, an affiliate of the Boy Scouts of America. Explorer posts continued to be administered by local BSA councils through Learning for Life and Exploring committees and the professional staff. Service was provided by the professional staff and by volunteer Exploring Service Teams.

Chief Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh’s renewed emphasis on growing the Exploring program has resulted in the need to provide service to these units. Where resources permit, the preferred approach is for the dedicated Exploring Service Team model to be utilized. Where this is not feasible, service to Explorer posts and clubs may be provided by utilizing current council and district structures and resources, much as unit service to traditional Scouting units is currently provided.

The National Capital Area Council (NCAC), while having a significant Exploring program, does not have an established Exploring Service Team. Unit service and support has been provided by the professional staff. In 2014, enhancement of the Exploring program, with a particular emphasis on unit service, was made part of the NCAC five-year strategic plan and an Exploring Key 3 was established. This Exploring Key 3 initially was composed of the deputy Scout executive, the vice president for Exploring, and a new commissioner position, the assistant council commissioner for Exploring. As the implementation of the plan progressed, the Exploring staff advisor replaced the deputy Scout executive, and the position of vice president for Exploring moved under the vice president for membership, consistent with the regional and area structure, and the position renamed to Exploring committee chair. Due to the lack of existing Exploring Service Teams, NCAC expanded commissioner service to Exploring units and proceeded with a model of integrating posts and clubs into the districts, the same as traditional units.

There are three basic steps to establishing support to Exploring units using the existing commissioner staff approach:

1. Develop initial governance.
2. Draft a strategic plan.
3. Implement the strategic plan with continuous feedback.
  - Monitor progress and amend as needed.

The third step can be broken down as follows:

- Enhance the service from the council to the Explorer posts and clubs.
  - Train and prepare commissioner staff for support of Exploring program.
  - Establish council-level quality activities to engage all Explorer posts and clubs in order to increase positive perception of service from the council and affiliation with the Exploring program.
- Enhance marketing and sales to improve retention, renewal, and growth.
- Enhance the council’s capacity and capabilities to support Exploring.

The training sub-bullet can be further expanded as:

- Provide Explorer basic training for all council- and district-level commissioners to educate them on the similarities and differences of Exploring and the support needed.
- Prepare an Explorer post renewal handbook to assist existing posts. (The local NCAC handbook is available [here](#).)
- Revise three-party new-unit agreement to include Explorer posts and clubs. (The form that NCAC uses is available [here](#).)
- Include Journey to Excellence for Explorer posts in the commissioner–post relationship to increase awareness of the program and opportunities for improvement.
- Recruit past Exploring Advisors, Explorers, and others with a strong affinity and understanding of the program to serve as commissioners and advocates of the program. They will serve as a voice for the program at traditional Scouting meetings and gatherings. This step is viewed as being critical to helping the commissioners get engaged with Exploring as rapidly as possible.



NCAC has made significant progress establishing service to Exploring units through the district commissioner staffs:

- All districts with Exploring units have assigned commissioners to service those units.
  - Exceptions: One district has only a single Explorer club, which is serviced by the district executive. In the U.S. Virgin Islands District (recently added to NCAC), where we are still organizing the district commissioner staff, the district executive supports the two Exploring units there.
- Commissioners provide unit service similar to traditional units:
  - Annual Exploring unit registration renewal (Note: This is a different, though similar, process from that used by traditional Scouting units.)
  - Journey to Excellence
  - Making contact with units and capturing their strength and needs
  - Linking unit needs to district operating committee resources
- An Exploring service module is included in Commissioner Basic Training and addressed in district commissioner and assistant district commissioner training.
- An Exploring service elective is included in the master's track of the College of Commissioner Science.
- Online Exploring Service Team training modules are now available at [my.Scouting.org](http://my.Scouting.org) (Scouting U), and an orientation module specific to unit commissioners servicing Exploring units is under development and should be available this spring.
- Commissioner Tools is scheduled to provide Exploring support in early 2017. In the interim, NCAC has developed local Explorer Service Tools with limited functionality. See <http://www.ncacbsa.org/exploringtools>.

NCAC began its initiative as a proof of concept. It has evolved into an effective means of providing service to post and clubs. When Explorer posts and clubs are included in Commissioner Tools, we will have completed the people, process, and technology transformation of Exploring unit service.



Winter 2017

# THE COMMISSIONER

A PUBLICATION FOR COMMISSIONERS AND PROFESSIONALS



[www.scouting.org/commissioners](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners)

## National Commissioner's Minute

I express my personal thanks to each of you who has worked diligently to help strengthen and support unit leaders and unit commissioners throughout 2016. It has been a great year for the Boy Scouts of America, and 2017 proves to be even better in terms of growth and opportunities for service. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: "Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year."



As we look forward to 2017, there are many mountains to be climbed, many challenges to be overcome, and much progress to be made. We have an exciting national jamboree, where many of us will be serving the youth of this great country. If you haven't signed up yet to serve on staff, I invite you to do so now. We will have many varied places to serve and a first-ever Commissioner's Corner, where you can come for training, inspiration, a patch, or just something cool to drink. You'll have an opportunity to meet the national Key 3 and other jamboree guests. All in all, you won't want to miss this exciting jamboree. Take a minute and register today; I look forward to seeing you there.

We have a new and exciting Exploring program that has, even without commissioner support, made great progress in 2016. While we are hopeful that the majority of Exploring units will be supported by Exploring Service Teams, there will be others that will need commissioner support. This edition of *The Commissioner* has some information that will help you provide that support. We also have units with a Lion program that are still functioning as a pilot program that needs support to grow and strengthen each member



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National Commissioner

as we strengthen the unit leaders of those programs. And everywhere there are new unit leaders who need to know they are not alone as they strive to fulfill their assignments in the best way they can—often without a Scouting background or training. And then there are others who know they and their units are in trouble but don't know where to turn for help. That is where we come in.

Years ago, I purchased a life ring from the harbor in Hamburg, Germany. Each time I look at that special possession, it reminds me of the lifesaving work that each of us has—whether in a family, business, community, church, or Scouting unit. This applies particularly to those of us in commissioner service—and especially when we look at the least favorite number of commissioners—2.5. That number (and below) represents those units that are at an increased risk of failure, not only in their ability to exist as viable units but also in the way they touch the lives of the boys in their units. Each of us is given, figuratively, a life ring when we become a commissioner. When there is a unit in trouble, or a leader who is struggling, or a chartered organization that is wavering, commissioners rush to the rescue. And when we do, we bring with us all the resources of the council and the district to help strengthen that unit, their leaders, and their Scouts. We are there to assist and bolster unit growth, to provide on-time charter renewal, and, through our ministering contacts, to help unit leaders know that they are not alone in their great work of strengthening the rising generation.



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Winston Churchill once reminded us that “Continuous effort—not strength or intelligence—is the key to unlocking our potential”—and of giving our best service. Later he reminded us to “Never, never, never give up.” I am hopeful that each time we rush in with our life ring and all the resources that go with that life ring, those unit leaders will come to realize that there is, REALLY, someone who cares about them and their boys. And that by the time we have finished our time as commissioners, whether as a unit commissioner, roundtable commissioner, or administrative commissioner, our life ring will be somewhat water-stained, soiled, and well-used.

Again, I express my heart-felt appreciation for your tireless, unselfish, and focused service as a commissioner. May God bless you richly with health, happiness in your service, and success in 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Dahlquist". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Charles Dahlquist



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## Celebrate Our Retention Success

We are living in an era of increasing change and complexity, but we also live in a time of incredible opportunity. We are bombarded by countless emails and large amounts of data, with human knowledge doubling every year, all in an ever-shrinking world and in a period of rapid societal change. It is easy to lose focus in the midst of all this clutter and distraction. Scouting has a way of grounding us in what matters most, with the Scout Oath and Scout Law reminding us of the core principles for a successful, happy life of duty and service.

From the standpoint of the commissioner corps, it all comes back to unit service. Our mission is to retain more units so we can serve more youth. We have not lost our focus on that mission, and in fact, we finished 2016 with the highest level of unit retention and youth retention in the last three years. A warm congratulations to each and every unit and administrative commissioner who made this achievement possible. All of this success comes at a time when we are seeing membership growth in many segments of the program and the launch of new pilots and programs that are designed to bring the values of Scouting to every American family. In the end, it is about serving youth—those in the program and those who should be invited to join us on the Scouting trail.

The Exploring Explosion is one of those areas where we are changing lives just as surely as we impact the life of a new Cub Scout. I am a product of the Exploring program, and witnessed firsthand the power of career and life exploration opportunities while empowering young men and young women to step forward to lead their unit, council, area, region, and nation. Elsewhere in this issue of *The Commissioner* you will find best practices about unit service techniques for the Exploring program. As our Key 3 indicated late last year, while an effective Exploring Service Team is ultimately our goal in terms of how Scouting provides unit service to Explorer posts, there are many areas of the country that do not yet have service teams. In that gap, the commissioner corps is moving forward to provide unit service. We are developing training and orientation materials so commissioners who serve Exploring units will have a fundamental understanding of how the Exploring program works and how it is different from our Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Venturing programs. In the near term, Commissioner Tools will be populated with Exploring data so you can use that technology to make sure we have the same retention success in Exploring. If you have not experienced the magic of Exploring, I urge you to visit a local police or fire post or one of the many other types of units and witness the incredible passion and talent of these young adults. It will refuel your soul just as much as watching Cub Scouts at the finish line of a pinewood derby.



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In the last eight years, we have completely refreshed every aspect of how we perform our function as commissioners. 2017 brings the commissioner corps to a moment in time when we just need to take a breath, assess where we are, and focus on making more contacts with units. We are going to take a break from new technology developments for a while. But we do need to use the technology we have to identify our units most at risk. If a unit has a composite score of 2.5 or below, Commissioner Tools is telling us that we have a unit in need of immediate attention. It is an opportunity to provide the same type of intensive care that we want to provide to our new units for their first two charter renewal cycles. We drive retention by building relationships with our unit leaders and identifying the needs of those units to the district and council so we can keep our promise of delivering a quality Scouting program. It all comes back to those four things—driving higher Journey to Excellence scores, contacting units, using Commissioner Tools to link unit needs to the district and council, and renewing unit charters on time. If we do these four things, we will continue to enjoy record retention rates in 2017.

Thanks for all you do for Scouting,

Scott Sorrels  
National Commissioner Service Chair



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## Commissioner Service in Diverse Communities

In a previous newsletter article, I indicated that targeting underserved markets has become a national initiative in support of growing the Scouting program in all markets. These markets include various faith-based units as well as non-traditional units. Strong adult leaders are needed to lead these units and trained commissioners are needed to support the leaders of these units. To educate and enhance the skills of commissioners who are assigned to support these leaders, Scouting provides online help in addition to excellent training programs.

A wonderful and excellent opportunity for commissioners to learn more about these units is to attend a weeklong training course being held June 11–17 at the Philmont Training Center. This year's course is titled "Serving Diverse Communities" and will provide information that will help improve your skills as a commissioner.

Last year's course was titled "Delivering Commissioner Service to Changing Communities." The course was well-received, garnering the following comments from some of the participants:

*"I just want to again express my appreciation for your effort in providing a highly informative and well-organized meeting on Delivering Commissioner Service to Changing Communities. I do thank you."*

*"Thanks very much for everything that you have done to promote diversity in Scouting. I really learned a lot at Philmont and will continue to learn."*

*"Tico's and Maria's session on diversity was outstanding, but all sessions were great."*

Participants will find that the course provides the opportunity for discussions as well as interaction between participants and the faculty to provide a rich atmosphere for learning. To find the registration link and additional information, click [here](#).

The Philmont Training Center is nestled in the foothills of northeastern New Mexico and provides an excellent learning atmosphere with access to a knowledgeable faculty. The fee for the course is reasonable and, if needed, scholarships are available. Philmont even provides a fun program for the entire family. Free time is built into the curriculum so you will have an opportunity to enjoy Philmont along with your family during your week of training.



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## Questions and Answers

### Looking for past articles in *The Commissioner*?

Are you aware that you can find articles in past issues of *The Commissioner* by clicking on the gray and blue title bar of each section on the [newsletter page](#)? For example, by clicking on the gray and blue bar that says “National Commissioner’s Minute” above Charles Dahlquist’s picture, you can find the Commissioner’s Minutes from previous issues of the newsletter. This works for all of the blue and gray title bars!

### Don’t like to click everything to read the newsletter?

Just under the banner on the [newsletter page](#) you will find the phrase “Click here to print a copy of *The Commissioner* newsletter.” Clicking on this link brings up a PDF document, which makes the newsletter read like a newspaper. You can read it online, or you may choose to print it.

### Where can I find information on how to conduct a commissioner college?

While well hidden, the “General” folder on the College of Commissioner Science webpage contains a backdater spreadsheet, templates for college certificates, a sample budget, and a sample one-day course schedule. You will also find a number of guides to make it easier for the dean and staff to conduct a college. Go to <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/commissioner/zip/general.zip>.

### Can a commissioner college create its own courses?

Yes. See <http://www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/college.aspx> for more information.

### Is commissioner training tracked at the national level?

The training codes can be found at [http://www.scouting.org/filestore/commissioner/pdf/Training\\_Codes%20for\\_Commissioners.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/commissioner/pdf/Training_Codes%20for_Commissioners.pdf). However, these codes must be entered using Training Manager or the training record will not be complete. There are training codes for completing Basic Training, for each college degree, and for attendance at a national training facility such as Sea Base, Philmont, or The Summit. Codes are not offered for individual college courses. Those should be tracked personally or by your college registrar. As a reminder, commissioners have been entrusted with the ability to add training in the *my.Scouting* Training Manager (except for themselves).

### Is Trainer’s EDGE or Train the Trainer required to teach commissioner courses?

No. The course materials are complete with teaching guides so that with some preparation the course should be successful. Some councils may require Trainer’s EDGE or Train the Trainer,



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but that would be a local requirement. Commissioner courses should be taught by commissioners.

### Is commissioner recognition tracked at the national level?

Yes. The following codes are available and can be entered by the council registrar:

- 827—Commissioner Award of Excellence for Unit Service
- 2400—Doctorate of Commissioner Science
- 2401—Arrowhead Honor Award
- 2402—Commissioner’s Key: District Commissioner
- 2403—Commissioner’s Key: Unit Commissioner
- 2404—Commissioner’s Key: Roundtable Commissioner
- 2407—Commissioner’s Key: Council Commissioner
- 2408 —Distinguished Commissioner Service Award

Note: These codes have to be entered by the council registrar, as District Tools does not yet have this capability.



**If I change positions in commissioner service, do I have to remove the Trained patch from my uniform until I am trained in my new position?**

No. But you should complete Basic Training for your new position as soon as possible.

**I just completed a course at my University of Scouting called “The Camp Commissioner.” Now that I have completed the course, how do I register as a commissioner?**

There is no official registration code available for the camp commissioner. The camp commissioner is a camp staff member, 18 years of age or older, who has a working knowledge of the Boy Scouts of America. The commissioner is directly responsible to the camp program director. Thus, a camp commissioner is not a registered commissioner position. Unfortunately, the name tends to cause confusion as many people think the camp commissioner is a component of commissioner service. It is a temporary staff assignment to support a long-term camp.





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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 [Upcoming Commissioner Colleges 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](mailto:darsprague@roadrunner.com).





## BSA Technology Update for Commissioners

If you have yet to look at the BSA's Information Technology Roadmap, it and lots of other information can be found at [ITroadmap.scouting.org](http://ITroadmap.scouting.org). Additionally, the Information Technology Group is constantly making progress in developing new applications, as well as revising, updating, and adding enhancements to existing products. As a simple example, each year there are a number of revisions that have to be made just to make sure that the current year IS the current year. Presented below is a quick BSA technology update that many commissioners will find helpful:

**Exploring**—By now you should be well-acquainted with Chief Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh's Exploring Explosion. Elsewhere in this issue of *The Commissioner* you will find an article about establishing support for Exploring units. During the first quarter of 2017, the BSA's Exploring-specific IT enhancements will include the ability to access Exploring units and the ability for any commissioner to log Exploring unit contacts in Commissioner Tools. As a reminder, Exploring unit contacts are integral to district and council [Journey to Excellence scorecards](#), thus the ability for administrative commissioners to monitor and manage Exploring units and commissioner service to them will be a critical success factor.

**Online Registration**—(To avoid confusion, in this discussion, “apps” refers to computer applications, and “applications” refers to the way an individual registers with the unit.) More than perhaps any other *my.Scouting* computer app, the processing of online registration applications is integrated with, and relies upon, several other *my.Scouting* apps. As an update to the fall issue of *The Commissioner*, invitations have been sent to every council allowing them to choose in which “wave” the Online Registration apps will be deployed locally, either late March, May, or late June/early July of 2017. The processing of membership applications includes the following two *my.Scouting* computer apps: **Invitation Manager** and **Application Manager**, which will only show up in your *my.Scouting* menu once the council goes live. Depending on local council and individual unit decisions, the full launch will allow the processing of registrations either with or without payment of the national fees including *Boys' Life*. If a unit decides to allow applications to be processed with payment, it WILL NOT include unit fees. Additionally, units can decide whether to accept either only youth applications or both youth and adult applications. To be prepared, commissioners and their units should do the following things:



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- Use the *my.Scouting* **Member Manager** to make sure that the unit's Key 3 contact information and BSA member ID are accurate.
- Optionally, use the *my.Scouting* **Organizational Security Manager** to assign the unit functional role as the unit membership chair. If assigned, the unit membership chair will have read-only access to the online membership application, but he or she can help the unit's Key 3 in the management and administration of applications.
- Review and update the unit's [BeAScout](#) pin information.
- Educate your units on this process and the associated *my.Scouting* applications.
- Go to the **Organization Manager** Settings tab (only visible after units are able to process online membership applications) where units can configure their own unit's online membership preferences including payment options and a personal “welcome” email message that is sent to new applicants, which could include information such as unit fees; meeting dates, times, and locations; and unit leadership.
- Train! Review the applicable preparation checklists, how-to files, training videos, and FAQs at <http://www.scouting.org/onlineregistration.aspx>.



**Online Charter Renewal**—Decisions on how to proceed are planned for 2017. Currently the BSA is considering whether to revise the current online registration process or to incorporate it elsewhere such as in a version of ScoutBook “lite.”

**Manage Member ID tool**—Some adult leaders, particularly new leaders, might end up with a new member ID number, which may cause “dual identity” issues such as one identity showing you have some training and the other showing you do not. To remedy this situation, when adults get their new membership card and membership ID number, they should go into the *my.Scouting* Manager Member ID (under Legacy Web Tools), add the newly received membership number to their profile, and change the Primary Membership ID to the new membership ID number that they just entered. Then, the following week, after the weekly Sunday training synchronization batch job is run at the BSA’s national office, all the training should be synched up, at which point you can “remove” (delete) your old membership ID number from your available membership ID numbers.

**MyScouting Tools**—An Android operating system–based version of the hugely successful MyScouting Tools app (which currently runs only on Apple devices with iOS 9.0+) is in development right now and planned to be available for most popular Android OS devices in the first half of 2017. Additionally, there will be some updates to the iOS version to improve existing functionality. MyScouting Tools provides access to: Commissioner Tools; view Training information (both your own and for your organization); Your Profile (to manage and update your contact information); Roster Profile (for the management of the roster and profile information of every member in your organization, including member search and the creation of email lists, and a “council-wide” search, which allows the ability to filter and contact leaders based on position); and Resources, which provides links to [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org) and PDF manuals such as the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*.

Over the next several months and further out, the BSA will be making updates and rewrites to the underlying IT architecture and code to improve stability, performance, and reliability of existing applications.



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## BSA IT Basics for New Commissioners

Congratulations! You've decided you want to help other Scouts, their leaders, and their units. Your new Scouter best friend, your district commissioner, shook your hand and in what seemed like 30 seconds ran down a whole litany of things you should do, how to get help, and some new technology stuff that will happen once your registration reflects that you are a commissioner. If you are like most people, not five minutes later most of what you heard will be a mental blur. So here is a summary of some BSA information technology basics for new commissioners, which might also serve as a good review for other commissioners.

Get trained! Even before your registration reflects that you are a commissioner you can log in to your *my.Scouting* account, go to the BSA's learning management system (BSA Learn Center), and start taking commissioner-specific training such as Commissioner Fast Start and viewing the series of Commissioner Tools videos. While Basic Training is not yet available online, our goal is to make it available by the 2017 National Annual Meeting.

Bookmark this page on your browser: <http://www.scouting.org/Commissioners.aspx>. This is the definitive source for many resources that will help you as a commissioner.

To keep up with breaking news and other information, join one or more of the commissioner social media sites. On Facebook there are three sites: the official BSA site, [Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America](#), which every commissioner should join; an unofficial [Commissioner Service \(Boy Scouts of America\)](#) site that has frequent dialogues; and [BSA Roundtable Commissioners](#), which is dedicated to roundtable commissioners. Additionally there is a LinkedIn group, [Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America](#), and a Yahoo Group called [Scout Commissioner Corner](#). (More complete information can be found on page 25 of the [Fall 2014 issue of The Commissioner](#).)

Once your registration as a commissioner is effective, you will notice that the home page pull-down menu at *my.Scouting* has some new options. As a commissioner, you can now use the **Member Manager** and **Training Manager** apps to view and manage some information. For example, in **Member Manager**, in addition to getting various unit-level reports, you can assist other members by editing some of their contact information. In **Training Manager**, in addition to viewing an individual's training and generating reports, you can add member training (except for yourself). The ability to add training to a member's record must be used judiciously and ideally with the concurrence of the local training chair.

Of course, all commissioners can add contacts for any unit under their purview using the Commissioner Tools app, which is also used to log roundtable attendance. Additionally, administrative commissioners (those who are not exclusively unit commissioners or assistant roundtable commissioners) have a tool called Commissioner Administration for the management of commissioners and units in Commissioner Tools. The Commissioner Tools training found in the BSA Learn Center will help all commissioner users, and may be helpful when reviewed as an occasional district commissioner meeting training topic. However, there are a few business rules pertaining to Commissioner Tools that are important for all commissioners to understand, such as the 60-day window for making unit contact entries, the 48-hour contact editing capability, and the 60-day roundtable entry editing capability.

As a commissioner, you may find when you talk with other Scouters that you are the most knowledgeable person about using the BSA's IT support, and it won't be long before you find yourself on the receiving end of some Scouter who is not having a good experience using the *my.Scouting* suite of applications. Typically when users are having problems, they are not too receptive to the possibility that the problem may be at their end, so use your people skills that were discussed in your commissioner training. True story: I had a leader in 2016 who could not get their computer to run the online Youth Protection Training. It turns out they were still using Internet Explorer 4 (IE4); IE5 had been released on March 18, 1999.

The problems that Scouters report are always real, and often the problems they are experiencing are neither their fault nor unique to themselves. Here is a quick checklist of things to try to solve the IT problems locally, sort of like checking the level in your gas tank when trying to figure out why your car won't start.

- Do not click the hyperlink or the button more than once. Patience! Wait on the system to catch up. If you click on a link more than once, you may confuse the system and get weird behaviors.
- Wait for your browser to catch up. The slowness can be at the BSA end, or even in your own house (do you have a house full of visitors all sitting around on the couch streaming videos?), plus the many, many nodes in between.



- If things aren't behaving correctly, try the following three things:
  - Close the browser, count to 10 (seriously), and try again.
  - Use a different browser. Browsers and operating systems are constantly being updated. What worked yesterday may not work today. Don't blame the BSA or Commissioner Tools for this issue—it happens across the board. With my personal banking, I'm constantly having to switch browsers because of software security updates.
  - **CLEAR YOUR CACHE.** I'm not exaggerating when I say that more than half of our issues when it comes to complaints about *my.Scouting* and Commissioner Tools would be resolved if the individual had tried clearing their cache. If you don't know what a cache is or how to clear your browser's cache, go to page 6 of the [Commissioner Tools Troubleshooting Guide](#).

There is a 60-day grace period after a charter expires without being renewed during which those on the expired charter will retain access to the *my.Scouting* suite of apps. However, that access will no longer continue after day 60 unless the charter renewal has been "posted." This nuance is especially important to commissioners who have their primary registration with a unit whose charter lapses for more than 60 days, as this will also affect their access to Commissioner Tools, etc.

Who do you call for help? Of course your first line of attack when you need BSA IT help is to ask your "BSA IT expert" buddy, but when that fails, try the following steps to get the help you need:

- Ask your commissioner "boss," i.e., your (assistant) district or council commissioner.
- Contact your district and/or council Commissioner Tools champion\*. There is a good chance that you are not the first person to approach them with your question. (\*Note: If your council's or district's Commissioner Tools champion has changed or you need to update or confirm that information, please send a note to [CommissionerTools@scouting.org](mailto:CommissionerTools@scouting.org) with the name and contact information of your new champion, along with your district and council information.)
- If the problem is a generic or systemic *my.Scouting* question, contact the BSA's Member Care Contact Center at [myscouting@scouting.org](mailto:myscouting@scouting.org) or 972-580-2489.

If the problem is specific to Commissioner Tools, send an email to [CommissionerTools@scouting.org](mailto:CommissionerTools@scouting.org). There are also some pinned discussions on the [Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America](#) LinkedIn group and the [Commissioner Service \(Boy Scouts of America\)](#) Facebook site, which may be useful. If you think you have found a bug in Commissioner Tools, please also log an incident with Member Care at [myscouting@scouting.org](mailto:myscouting@scouting.org) or 972-580-2489.





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## Commissioner Recognition Update

Effective May 1, 2016, revisions to commissioner recognitions were implemented. The team that worked on that project had three simple goals:

1. Establish recognition opportunities for **all** commissioners (including roundtable, area, and regional commissioners).
2. Create consistent requirements that incorporate the contemporary tools and techniques commissioners use.
3. Provide easy access to recognition information, including opportunities, requirements, progress records, certificates, and available recognition items.

Commissioners who had *already started* working toward earning an award had the option of completing their efforts under its **existing** requirements. Except for the Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service, which has requirements that take at least two years to complete, it should have been possible to convert to the new requirements by January 1, 2017. With that single exception, our commissioners should now be using the revised requirements for all recognitions.

PDF forms for recognition certificates have been well-received, and that concept is being expanded to include all commissioner training certificates. The following certificates have been added to the commissioner [Awards and Recognition webpage](#):

- Trained Commissioner
- Bachelor of Commissioner Science
- Master of Commissioner Science
- Doctorate of Commissioner Science
- Commissioner Science Continuing Education

The expanded use of PDF forms for our training certificates makes it easier to recognize training achievements and provides a consistent design for all commissioner recognition certificates.



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National Commissioner Service  
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## It All Begins With a Vision

There's a key element to successfully recruiting commissioners: answering a simple question.

Whether or not a candidate asks the question directly, it hangs in the air throughout the conversation: What does success look like?

The answer, and successful recruiting, begins with a vision. So, too, does [building a team of commissioners](#). From that vision flows a clear definition of mission and objectives. Together, they enable developing a clear answer to the question.

All Scouting is local. The focus of a council or district unit service team will reflect local strengths and needs and that will impact its vision. Regardless, the local focus should support our national vision and mission for unit service:

- Our vision: Unit service will 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.
- Our mission: The mission of unit service is to help units better serve more youth through Scouting.

To support those, we ask our unit commissioners to focus on just four things (objectives):

1. Supporting unit growth through the Journey to Excellence
2. Contacting units and capturing in Commissioner Tools their strengths, needs, and a Unit Service Plan that enables continuing improvement
3. Linking unit needs to district operating committee resources
4. Supporting timely charter renewal

And we ask our roundtable commissioners to focus on developing and delivering roundtables that provide program ideas and communications on policy, events, and training opportunities to our unit leaders.

Our administrative commissioners are responsible for creating and communicating the local vision; recruiting volunteers to serve on the local unit service team; and training, orienting, and coaching them to achieve objectives and fulfill our vision and mission.

But at the end of the day, *it all begins with a vision.*



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## Tools to Help Fulfill Our Mission

The “It All Begins With a Vision” article in this issue looked at how our vision, mission, and objectives for unit service can support recruiting commissioners. Now commissioners have a new tool to help fulfill our mission and achieve our objectives.

The mission of unit service is to help units better serve more youth through Scouting. One of the four objectives on which we ask unit commissioners to focus is contacting units and capturing in Commissioner Tools their strengths, needs, and a Unit Service Plan that enables continuing improvement.

Scouting’s Journey to Excellence is also designed to enable continuing improvement of the units we serve. Recently, a Unit Finish Line report was added to *my.Scouting* that provides useful information about a unit’s progress on key elements of its Journey to Excellence. That information can help unit commissioners and leaders collaboratively develop an assessment of unit strengths and needs. From that, they can work together to develop a Unit Service Plan that addresses three to five key needs over the next several months.

Unit commissioners and unit Key 3 members can download the Unit Finish Line report from *my.Scouting*. The report provides data unit leaders have had to compile and track independently in the past. The data, which are updated daily, come from information collected by our National Council from a variety of sources. While the Unit Finish Line report doesn’t provide data related to every component of Journey to Excellence, it does capture data on a significant number of them.

When combined with another tool—a unit Journey to Excellence Tracking Workbook—unit commissioners and leaders have tools to more easily and efficiently capture and track progress on all elements of a unit’s Journey to Excellence. Click [here](#) to download tracking workbooks.

Using both tools, there’s now a complete process unit commissioners can use to help units serve more youth better through Scouting:

1. As the Scouting year begins:
  - a. Share with the Unit Key 3:
    - i. The latest Journey to Excellence Scorecard; identify and discuss any changes.
    - ii. The current Unit Finish Line report; identify and discuss any questions.
    - iii. The current Journey to Excellence Tracking Workbook; identify data sources.
  - b. Discuss how these tools can be used to develop plans to ensure continuing unit success.
  - c. Discuss the collaborative development of a Unit Service Plan using these tools to begin identifying unit strengths and needs.
2. Schedule a meeting with the unit Key 3 (and other key unit leaders) to develop a collaborative assessment of unit strengths and needs.
3. Enter a future Contact in Commissioner Tools for the date of the scheduled meeting.
4. Begin completion of a Journey to Excellence Tracking Workbook for the unit.
  - a. Download a tracking workbook from [http://www.scouting.org/Awards/JourneyToExcellence/Tracking\\_Workbooks](http://www.scouting.org/Awards/JourneyToExcellence/Tracking_Workbooks).
  - b. Download the current Unit Finish Line report from *my.Scouting*.
  - c. Enter data from the Unit Finish Line report into the tracking workbook.
5. Participate in the Collaborative Assessment of unit strengths and needs.
  - a. Review and update the tracking workbook with local data.
  - b. Identify key unit strengths and needs.
  - c. Identify SMART goals to be completed over the next six months to address the three to five greatest needs.
6. Using the Detailed Assessment function, update the Contact in Commissioner Tools to establish a Unit Service Plan.
  - a. Enter Collaborative Assessment results.
  - b. Enter SMART goals.
  - c. Complete other applicable elements of the Detailed Assessment.
7. In ongoing contacts with the unit Key 3:
  - a. Update the tracking workbook.
  - b. Update the Unit Service Plan in Commissioner Tools.
8. Renew the assessment and planning process at six-month intervals.





## Commissioner Training Update

### LDS Unit Commissioner Orientation

The LDS Commissioner Orientation course has been removed from the BSA Learn Center and a new version is now available on the Commissioner Training page. This project is now complete.

### Online Basic Training

Commissioner training and Scouting U are continuing their collaborative work to create online Basic Training with a focus of on-boarding new commissioners. We are now in Phase 3 of the plan and are making excellent progress. Our goal is to have the Unit Commissioner Basic Training modules available in the BSA Learn Center by mid-February.

Phase 3 involves the creation of new courses that are needed to complete the full complement of commissioner training. The development team members have been creating outlines and storyboards that will be used to develop the remaining 14 courses. The review team has done a great job in providing timely feedback. We are still on track to have all online Basic Training available in the BSA Learn Center by the 2017 National Annual Meeting.

There have been several minor changes to the original learning plan. First, the LDS Commissioner Orientation has been removed from the BSA Learn Center and made available on the Commissioner Training page as noted above. Second, there will now be an additional orientation module for unit commissioners supporting Exploring units. Please see the "Establishing Support to Exploring Units" article elsewhere in this newsletter for more information. Third, the Sea Scout orientation module has been rewritten by Scouting U since the program is now a stand-alone program, rather than a part of Venturing.

### College of Commissioner Science Course Update

With the help of Dan Warren, a survey was conducted to determine which of the 75 Commissioner College courses are being used and which are not. Julia Farr, assistant council commissioner from the National Capital Area Council, will be leading a team of commissioners with representatives from each region to evaluate our current College of Commissioner Science course offerings. This team will update the courses that will continue on, retire the courses that are not being used, and determine what new courses should be offered.



**Tim Acree**  
National Commissioner Service Training Chair  
[tim.acree@comcast.net](mailto:tim.acree@comcast.net)

### A Year of National-Level Commissioner Training

The following commissioner training opportunities are offered for 2017:

- January 8–14, Florida Sea Base: "Key Concepts of Commissioner Service in Scouting's Second Century"
- March 24–26, Westlake Training Center: "Developing Commissioners – What You Need to Know!"
- June 11–17, Philmont Training Center: Commissioners Week
- June 23–25, The Summit—Commissioner Weekend Courses
- August 18–20, Westlake Training Center—Commissioner College Dean's Retreat

#### Florida Sea Base 2017

"Key Concepts of Commissioner Service in Scouting's Second Century" commissioner training was held at Sea Base on January 8–14, led by Kresha Alvarado and Burt Marsh. The course was open to all commissioner roles and the mission was to help units serve more youth through Scouting and to convince unit leaders that their participation in the development and implementation of a Unit Service Plan is vital to helping them build a program that retains and helps recruit Scouts. Thanks to Kresha and Burt for serving as faculty.



### **Westlake Training Center—“Developing Commissioners – What You Need to Know!”**

The first “Developing Commissioners – What You Need to Know!” course will be held at the Scouting University Westlake Campus on March 24–26. This conference will be facilitated by David Fornadel and Scott McKenzie of the National Commissioner Training Team. If you are involved in training commissioners, please consider attending this course.

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Philmont—Commissioners Week 2017**

Commissioners Week will be Week 1: June 11–17. Faculty has been selected. The following conferences will be offered:

- Advanced Leadership Skills for Administrative Commissioners
- The Council Commissioner
- Delivering Commissioner Service to Changing Communities
- District Commissioner and Assistant District Commissioner Training
- Effective Roundtables
- The Unit Commissioner

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **The Summit—Commissioner Weekend Courses**

The following commissioner courses will be held June 23–25 at the John D. Tickle National Training and Leadership Center at the Summit Bechtel Reserve:

- Council Commissioner Retreat
- Commissioner Recruiting Workshop
- Commissioning in Diverse Neighborhoods

These are weekend courses that start on Friday afternoon and finish late Sunday.

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Westlake Training Center—Commissioner College Dean’s Retreat**

The third annual Dean’s Retreat will be August 18–20 at the Scouting University Westlake Campus.

Click [here](#) for more information.

If you have any questions about commissioner training, please contact Tim Acree, national commissioner support staff training chair, at [tim.acree@comcast.net](mailto:tim.acree@comcast.net).





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## Unit Commissioners Supporting Exploring Units Orientation

In November 2016, a memo was issued by the national Key 3 on commissioner support of Exploring units. Exploring units are normally serviced by an Exploring Service Team. However not all councils have sufficient resources to support Exploring units, especially at their current growth rate.

Here is the text of the memo:

*“The first and most preferred model would be to recruit and grow Exploring at the council level through an Exploring Service Team. This service team would provide all necessary resources to grow and support all Exploring units. These positions will count in your Journey to Excellence criteria in the same manner as unit-serving commissioners.*

*If a council doesn’t have the resources to develop a full Exploring Service Team, the alternate model should include utilizing current council and district structures and resources in order to provide service to Exploring units. This model could include integration of Exploring into the current district committee and commissioner structure. However, it should also include an aggressive volunteer recruitment and training plan in order to ensure continuous support to unit service and growth.”*

Because Exploring units are a bit different in structure from Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, and Venturing crews, a new module is being created to assist commissioners who service Exploring units. This orientation module will be available in the BSA Learn Center. This module can be used by both unit commissioners and administrative commissioners.

The national commissioner training staff is working with Brooke Parkinson, senior project manager, Learning for Life and Exploring; Tim Anderson, senior director of Exploring/senior team leader; and Tim Rogers, team leader, instructional design. The module should be available by March 1.



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## What Training Should Roundtable Commissioners Take and What Awards Can They Earn?

The premise of the roundtable experience is that, if skillfully executed, it should inspire, motivate, and enable unit leaders to provide a stronger program for their Scouts and increase the unit's Journey to Excellence scores annually.

In last February's newsletter, I laid the groundwork for a sequence of articles to address making sure that we are targeting the premise above most effectively. The May article addressed what makes an effective roundtable experience. The August article discussed the unit commissioner's relationship to roundtable. This article deals with roundtable commissioner training and awards.

Roundtable is where Scouters in the district have an opportunity to interact with each other, learn about BSA policies and procedures, and obtain program materials. The roundtable commissioners **must** present a program that will make the Scout leaders want to return. This requires trained and organized roundtable commissioners. So, what training should they take and what awards can they receive?

Training for all commissioners is outlined in a chart on the Commissioner Training page of the Commissioners website. For roundtable it outlines the following:

1. An orientation that includes Youth Protection, Unit Commissioner Fast Start, and Commissioner Tools video modules
2. Roundtable Basic
3. College of Commissioner Science Bachelors in Roundtable (BCS 150-156)
4. Continuing Ed courses (these are general in nature to increase commissioner knowledge and not necessarily specific to roundtable)
5. National conferences at Philmont, the Sea Base, and the Summit

Awards available for commissioners are outlined on the Awards and Recognition page of the Commissioners website. For roundtable it outlines these:

- For the Trained patch to be received, Nos. 1 and 2 above must be completed.
- The Arrowhead Honor can be earned by roundtable commissioners and assistant roundtable commissioners.



*Daniel B. Maxfield*  
*National Commissioner Service Roundtable Chair*  
[dbmaxi05@gmail.com](mailto:dbmaxi05@gmail.com)

- A certificate of commendation can be awarded by councils or districts for commendable service that doesn't yet rise to the level of a distinguished commissioner.
- The Commissioners Key can be earned by roundtable commissioners and assistant roundtable commissioners.
- The Distinguished Commissioner Service Award is the highest recognition that can be given to a commissioner.
- The Doctorate of Commissioner Science recognizes completion of a standardized training program that includes a thesis or project.

More detailed information about all of the above is available at: [www.scouting.org/Commissioners.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Commissioners.aspx). Click on the Commissioner Training or Awards and Recognition links.

Our Scouts deserve the best program that can be provided. Take the training you need and receive the awards you are eligible for. These steps make you a better Scouter and set a great example for our youth!

Those of you interested in engaging in ongoing conversation with other roundtable commissioners can do so at [www.facebook.com/groups/ScoutRTCommish](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ScoutRTCommish).



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## Steps to Improve Roundtable Attendance and Effectiveness

By Karen Kircher, council commissioner of North Florida Council in Jacksonville, Florida

*Karen Kircher submitted this article about steps her council is taking to improve roundtable.*

In order to improve the effectiveness of our units, promote the health of our units, and increase unit retention and membership growth, we determined that our roundtable attendance was not ideal. Our unit contact rate as recorded in the Journey to Excellence system was below 12 percent.

During the Council Commissioners Conference at Philmont Training Center in June 2016, Dan Maxfield, national commissioner service roundtable chair, laid out a challenge. He asked several council commissioners to determine the effectiveness of the use of the Roundtable Planning Guide in assisting roundtable teams in developing and conducting roundtables. One way to assess the effectiveness might be through checking roundtable attendance by units and comparing their attendance to their unit health.

We have frequently presented the Roundtable Planning Guide as the primary tool for planning and conducting roundtables. All district roundtable teams have been repeatedly encouraged to use these guides.

In order to determine the impact of the use of the Roundtable Planning Guide, we needed to ensure that accurate records were being kept on roundtable attendance. Attendance data collection is already a part of the Commissioner Tools. However, we determined that very few of our districts were recording attendance using Commissioner Tools.

A review of Commissioner Tools shows that for each program element, such as Cub Scouting, you enter the total number in attendance for all unit adults, commissioners, district committee members, and guests/visitors. Then for each unit, you enter the exact number of unit adults present. Because a number will be entered for each unit that is represented at the roundtable, a percentage of units present will be calculated. There is additional room to type in a summary of the roundtable activity in the "Meeting Notes" field. This will allow those reviewing the roundtables for the district to see what topics were covered and how that compares to the Roundtable Planning Guide and attendance.

To aid in data collection, our director of field service provided all districts with a roundtable check-in procedure and a roundtable roster template to develop an easy check-in format that attendees just need to mark. Both of these forms, along with our Roundtable Plan for 2017, are available for review by contacting me at [k.kircher@comcast.net](mailto:k.kircher@comcast.net).

We are implementing this process for 2017. We will follow up with a report on the results of our process at the end of 2017.

If others of you out there are taking such positive steps to improve roundtables in your council, please email Dan Maxfield at [dbmaxi05@gmail.com](mailto:dbmaxi05@gmail.com). Your story may end up in the newsletter.



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## Connect to Scouting Through Scouting Wire

[Scouting Wire](#), the official blog of Scouting, is a great source of information. Among the resources available are tools to help volunteers strengthen units. Sign up for the weekly Scouting Wire email to keep up on what's happening around the organization.

## BSA Addresses Gender Identity

Please visit <http://scoutingnewsroom.org/press-releases/bsa-addresses-gender-identity/> for the BSA's announcement on gender identity.



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Updated May 2016

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## Commissioner Support Team

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## JTE Key Performance Indicators

The Journey to Excellence Key Performance Indicators from December 2016 can be accessed [here](#).



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## Coming Events

### 2017

#### February 13–15

National Executive Board and Committee Meetings  
DFW Marriott North, Irving, Texas (invitation only)

#### March 24–26

“Developing Commissioners – What You Need to Know!”  
Westlake Training Center, Texas

#### May 24–26

National Annual Meeting and National Executive Board and Committee Meetings  
Marriott Orlando World Center, Orlando, Florida

#### June 11–17

Commissioners Week  
Philmont Training Center

#### June 23–25

Commissioner Training: Council Commissioner Retreat,  
Commissioner Recruiting Workshop, Commissioning in  
Diverse Neighborhoods  
Summit Bechtel Reserve

#### July 19–28

National Scout Jamboree  
Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve, West Virginia

#### August 18–20

Commissioner College Dean’s Retreat  
Westlake Training Center, Texas

#### October 9–11

National Executive Board and Committee Meetings  
DFW Marriott North, Irving, Texas (invitation only)

### 2018

#### February 12–14

National Executive Board and Committee Meetings  
DFW Marriott North, Irving, Texas (invitation only)

#### May 23–25

National Annual Meeting and National Executive Board and Committee Meetings  
Sheraton, Dallas, Texas

#### October 29–30

National Executive Board and Committee Meetings  
DFW Marriott North, Irving, Texas (invitation only)

### 2019

#### July 22–August 2

World Scout Jamboree  
Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve, West Virginia



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