

Winter 2020

THE COMMISSIONER

A PUBLICATION FOR COMMISSIONERS AND PROFESSIONALS



www.scouting.org/commissioners

National Commissioner's Minute

The most important thing we do is make a visit.

You are familiar with the commissioner objectives:

1. Supporting unit growth and retention
2. Contacting units
3. Linking unit needs to resources
4. Supporting timely charter renewal
5. Supporting unit leaders

These things are only possible when you have a relationship with unit leaders. A relationship is built on spending time with them, building communication and trust. That begins with a visit. Or two. Or more. It takes time to build a relationship.

I have often said that commissioner service is the glue and grease of Scouting. We are the glue that helps units stick together and we are the grease that effects change. We have seen a lot of changes in the Boy Scouts of America over the last several years. We are going to see more. It will be commissioners who step into those challenges that change presents, guiding and supporting unit leaders as we, as an organization, adapt and change to new circumstances. We can only assist and support unit leaders if we have a strong relationship with them.

A visit is the beginning of a relationship. A relationship is critical to successful commissioner service.

Thank you for what you are doing to support unit leaders. Thank you for putting on your uniform at the end of a long day and making a visit. Thank you for recording those visits in Commissioner Tools and helping with the creation and execution of a Unit Service Plan. Thank you for assisting with charter renewal. It all begins with a visit.

The most important thing we do is make a visit.



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It Starts With a Relationship

Everything we accomplish as commissioners—regardless of our position—starts with a relationship.

Effective relationships are based on respect, candor, and trust. If any one of those elements is missing, the relationship will be guarded to some degree. Guarded relationships are less effective; they limit our ability to ensure that every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience.

That's an easy concept for unit commissioners: If they don't have an effective relationship with the leaders of the unit(s) they serve, it's hard to have the open discussions about unit strengths and needs that are the foundation of plans to enable the unit to better serve more youth.

Too often what commissioners do is thought of as "unit service," one of Scouting's four functions. That perspective is limiting. It leads to an assumption that operating committees will take care of the other three: finance, membership, and program. In fact, while commissioners are responsible for unit service, they can't fulfill that responsibility without engaging in all four areas. That's a key part of what enables them to be Scouting's "glue and grease" that enables units to stick together and implement change. And that requires that we develop effective personal relationships with unit leaders, volunteers representing each of Scouting's four functions, **and** professionals.

As a result, effective personal relationships are equally important to administrative commissioners. Recruiting commissioners, developing (coaching and mentoring) them, collaborating with membership volunteers and professionals to start units, working together in teams to achieve district and council goals—all of these require effective personal relationships.

Building relationships takes time. That makes it easy to consider it a barrier to more important things, to getting the real work done. In fact, it's step 1.



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Throughout this newsletter you'll hear members of your service team discuss the importance of effective personal relationships in **everything** you do.

Respect. Candor. Trust. We all want that in our personal relationships; we know it makes them richer, more rewarding, and more satisfying. The same is true in our Scouting relationships—taking the time to build them will make it possible for us to ensure that every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience.

On the up trail ...

Jeff Bostwick Joins Service Team



Jeff Bostwick joined your National Commissioner Service Team as recruiting and retention chair effective February 1.

He brings a wealth of Scouting experience and a passion for serving youth, providing unit service, and growing and strengthening volunteer teams that will help address our greatest single challenge: recruiting an adequate number of trained, engaged commissioners.

Jeff is an Eagle Scout and a Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow. A veteran Scouter who has served at local, area, region, and national levels of the Boy Scouts of America, he

chairs the National Merit Badge Subcommittee and is a member of the National Scouts BSA Subcommittee. Jeff will complete his service as the Area 6 commissioner for the Western Region in May. From 2015–2019, he served as a member of the National Wood Badge Update Task Force. Jeff was a Wood Badge course director in 1994 and has staffed numerous Wood Badge courses, including the first national linked troop pilot course held recently at the Summit Bechtel Reserve.

He has received numerous awards and recognition for his service to the BSA, including the Silver Buffalo, Silver Antelope, and Silver Beaver awards, as well as the District Award of Merit, the OA Founder's Award, and the NESA Outstanding Eagle Scout Award. A California Superior Court judge, Jeff is married to Mary, an active Scouter. He and Mary have four daughters, an Eagle Scout son, and 13 grandchildren.

Please join us in welcoming Jeff to your service team!



National Commissioner Service Team Updates and Previews

2019 was a busy year!

We may not all be comfortable with the increasing pace of change yet, but we're certainly learning to expect it and adapt.

Here are a few highlights from 2019:

- Strengthened relationships with multiple BSA national committees and staff members
- Conducted seven national conferences and four regional impact sessions
 - Participant evaluations typically 4.5 or higher (on a 5-point scale)
 - More than eight out of 10 participants would recommend them to other commissioners
- Implemented new Starting and Sustaining Units impact session and national conference
- Implemented new commissioner technology lab at Philmont Training Center
 - Developed new Applying Technology in Unit Service conference
- Established new commissioner training curriculum review team
- Made additions and enhancements to the Commissioners website:
 - New Exploring for Commissioners webpage: www.scouting.org/commissioners/exploring-for-commissioners/
 - New Commissioner Recruiting webpage: www.scouting.org/commissioners/commissioner-recruiting/
 - New commissioner news webpage: www.scouting.org/commissioners/news-for-commissioners/
 - New National Commissioner Service Team webpage: www.scouting.org/commissioners/your-national-service-team/
 - New commissioner webpage feedback functionality
 - New Program Support Resource webpage: www.scouting.org/commissioners/program-support-resources/
 - Commissioner merchandise refreshed and expanded: www.scouting.org/commissioners/commissioner-merchandise/
- Added chairs to the team for Exploring, Program Support, and Starting and Sustaining New Units
- Added over 60 subject matter experts (SMEs) to support service team chairs

- National commissioner faculty
- Curriculum review and development team
- Regional analytics team
- Technology focus group
- Program specialists
- Recruiting specialists
- Social media and communications specialists
- Expanded moderation of multiple social media channels
- Expanded direct email communication
- Expanded commissioner-specific opportunities at the BSA National Annual Meeting, including first Commissioner Strategic Review session
- Held first National Commissioner Service Team planning conference, which is expected to become an annual event

And here's a quick look at what's planned for 2020:

- Continued strengthening of relationships with BSA national committees and staff members
- Continuing recruitment of service team SMEs
- Increased support of commissioner recruiting
- First offering of Applying Technology in Unit Service conference (at Sea Base in January)
- Expansion of Commissioners Week at Philmont Training Center to seven conferences, including Serving All Units–Working With Venturing Crews, Sea Scout Ships, and Exploring Posts and Second Century Service–Updates on Unit Service (details and registration: www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/)
- Four regional impact sessions (watch for details: www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/)
- Ongoing updates and revisions to commissioner training (replacing major, periodic revisions)
- New commissioner webpages devoted to Program Support and Starting and Sustaining New Units
- Continuing refresh of commissioner webpage content
- Commissioner-specific sessions at the BSA National Annual Meeting
- Commissioner Corner in the BSA National Annual Meeting exhibit hall
- Continuing direct communication with commissioners via direct email, social media, and commissioner webpages

You can be sure two things won't change in 2020:



- Our vision: To ensure that every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience.
- Our mission: To prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

You can also expect the pace of change will continue to increase, as well as the importance of the work commissioners do.

Success in 2020 will require five things:

- Focus
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Commitment
- An increased number of trained, engaged commissioners

Your service team looks forward to working with you!



BEST Study Update

In our last issue of *The Commissioner*, we provided a [summary of Phase I](#) of the BEST (Building Evidence in Scouting Together) Study that is underway.

The key points to date include:

- Scouting is a positive youth development program; it can be implied that Scouting develops character and leadership.
- Scouting provides the critical conditions to help youth mature in a healthy, functional manner.
- *Those units that execute the program using Scouts BSA's eight methods are likely to deliver positive youth development.*

Those findings are important to commissioners: They confirmed that what we do—work to strengthen units and the program they offer—has a positive impact on the youth Scouting serves.

Commissioners should be aware of the BEST Study, not only because of the good news it has already provided, but also because troops have been randomly selected to participate in its next phase. Commissioners need basic information to respond to comments and questions they may receive from unit leaders.

[An article in Bryan on Scouting](#) provides some additional basic information about the study and the process for randomly selecting troops to be asked to participate in its next phase. This data collection phase is scheduled to last through 2020. Included in the article is a brief introductory video that provides background information of interest to commissioners and leaders of those units that are selected.

Additional information and frequently asked questions are included on the study's [official website](#).

Some new information from Wave 1 of 3 in Phase II is now available. Direct observations of two BSA trainings (Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training and Wood Badge) were completed. Wave 1 and Wave 2 survey and interview data collection have been completed, but analysis of only Wave 1 is available at this time.

The work unearthed important and interesting findings:

- The majority of Scoutmasters in the study have completed Youth Protection training (98%), Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training (98%), and Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills (93%). About half (55%) have completed Wood Badge. Assistant Scoutmasters in the study participate in training but at a lower rate. Of Assistant

Scoutmasters, 97% have completed Youth Protection training, 81% have completed Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training, 71% have completed Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills, and 29% have completed Wood Badge.

- Findings from the observational study of adult trainings noted that fidelity to the syllabus during trainings is strong for Wood Badge, and there were indications of over-adherence to the syllabus. However, for Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training, adherence to the syllabus is not strong. Most notably, the delivery methods prescribed in the syllabus are not typically employed. (For example, the patrol method is to be demonstrated, but in no course were there enough attendees to do so.)
- Based on data from observations and surveys, BSA adult leaders note they value the training but sometimes are not able to attend trainings due to timing or location issues.
- Adult leaders generally found trainings to be useful. 58.3% of adult leaders said that Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training was very useful or extremely useful. Scoutmasters generally found both the in-person and online versions of Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training to be very useful or extremely useful. 60.6% of adult leaders said that Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills was very useful or extremely useful. 86.4% of adult leaders said that Wood Badge was very useful or extremely useful.

Key points for commissioners:

- No action regarding the BEST study is required of commissioners; we're providing this information to you so you can respond to questions and comments you may hear from the leaders of the units you serve.
- Troops are being *randomly* selected to participate in the data collection phase.
- No information other than that included in our previous article on the study and this one is available at this time.

The BEST Study is important to Scouting and to commissioners. It has already confirmed key concepts about Scouting that many of us have long believed and has also confirmed that the time commissioners invest in Scouting has a *direct, positive* impact on youth.

We'll continue to keep you updated on the BEST Study as additional information becomes available.



Is There Anything More Important?

Is there anything more important than having a strong relationship with unit leaders as a commissioner? Whether you already have a strong relationship with your unit leaders or you want a stronger relationship, you should improve your communication because communication is the foundation of any good relationship.

Communication that builds a relationship must include face-to-face communication. Emails and phone calls are great communication tools, but as you are creating and building a relationship, you need to observe all the nonverbal communication that is part of the conversation.

You need communication to start a relationship as well as to build a relationship. A great place to start, as commissioners, is to communicate that we are curious about unit leaders and that we find them interesting. When we do this, we are communicating that they are important. This is the foundation that will build your relationship.

As you build your relationship, communication focused on meeting the needs of others is the next step. Listening to what they are saying and mentoring them as they solve their problems will build trust. And as you build trust, your relationship will continue to grow.

Even when you have a strong relationship and good communication, conflict will arise. Communication helps reduce how often conflict happens and also reduces the chances that the conflict becomes toxic.

Interacting with the other person regularly is necessary for the relationship to grow and reach the next level. You build your relationship with positive, complete two-way communication.

District and council commissioner teams are a collection of individuals. If open communication within these teams is encouraged, a more cohesive and effective team will emerge. Good communication within a team also tends to boost morale. When commissioners feel they are well informed of the district's and council's direction and vision, as well as what is happening in Scouting, they will feel more secure

Take Your Commissioner Team Communication Up a Level

Commissioner teams need to have good relationships and communication, just like commissioners need good relationships and communication with unit leaders.

As is the case with unit commissioners, communication with commissioner teams uses the same tools for the same reasons. Therefore, face-to-face meetings and a focus on solving problems and reducing conflict should be used within district and council commissioner teams.

You can usually count on the unit leader to be at a Scout meeting and the committee chair and chartered organization representative to be at a committee meeting. Complete



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within their role. Regular internal communication can also improve commissioner engagement if they are reminded of their achievements and feel that they are working toward a common goal.

As you build your relationships, you need to communicate with unit leaders and commissioner teams in ways that they prefer. Your National Commissioner Service Team uses a number of communication channels when communicating with commissioners. Sometimes we go directly to each commissioner with an email. Other times, we rely on a top-down approach, using a "chain of command" within our commissioner team. Or we use social media and the Commissioners website. We do not rely on one communication method or communicate a point only once.

attendance at commissioner team meetings is tough to get. When commissioners attend a face-to-face meeting, how do you build relationships? Do you have social time before or after your meetings? Any snacks?

Does your council have a commissioner conference or commissioner college? Are there other ways you try to have commissioner face-to-face meetings at the council level?

Face-to-face commissioner meetings are a key way to build relationships and communicate with commissioners on that team. Using an agenda is a great tool to focus the discussion. You may already have an agenda that your team is using.



If not, templates for a commissioner meeting agenda are available in commissioner service training materials.

Do you want to kick it up a notch? If you do, here are some questions for you to consider: Does the agenda include time for solving problems for units or the commissioner team? Do you include the reports that will be presented at the meeting, the roundtable topics, and announcements that are available when the agenda is distributed? Do you ask your team members if there is a topic they would like on the agenda?

How long is your commissioner team meeting? It is said that the length of communication is like the length of a bridge—long enough to cross the river but no longer or shorter.

How do you communicate with team members who do not make it to your meeting? Do you call or email? Or do you send out minutes that give details about the discussions held as well as any decisions made? Do you distribute it to individuals who are not commissioners? District commissioners—do you send a copy to your council commissioner team?

Why not try kicking it up a notch this year?



Relationships Can Be Complicated (Not Really)

Relationships can be complicated. Well, maybe when it comes to dating, but certainly not in commissioner service. When a commissioner is assigned a new unit, it might be natural to wonder how they might be received at the initial meeting. But I recommend the direct approach. Give the unit leader a call and set up an appointment to meet and have coffee or ice cream or do something fun. Spend some time getting to know them—how they got involved in Scouting, what they like to do besides Scouting—and be sure to ask about their family. This breaks the ice. Next you might spend some time telling them what a unit commissioner does for a unit. You might conclude the initial meeting by asking if there is anything they need for their unit. This is called **developing the relationship**.

A couple of conversations and some follow-through about helping the unit with something, and you are probably ready to talk about scheduling a collaborative assessment. This is called **cultivating a relationship**.

It is important to keep reaching out and visiting the unit. Be sure to follow up with any action items that you agree to help with. This is the **maintaining the relationship** part.

There is something about helping the unit solve a problem or make a connection that lets them—and you—feel like you are making a difference in the quality of the Scouting program.



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Questions and Answers

Question: What happens if my unit doesn't renew its charter before the current charter expires?

Answer: Each local council has an established deadline for renewing its units' charters. Unit leaders and professional staff are better able to focus on serving youth when units complete the process no later than that date (sooner is always better). As a practical matter, individual units encounter challenges in completing the process from time to time. The longer the delay, the greater the impact on volunteer access to technology they need.

As technology has been applied to more BSA processes, the ramifications ultimately are significant when charter renewal is delayed. Here is what can happen:

1. Individual registrations expire. As a result, access to most BSA applications that an individual uses enters a grace period known as "extended access" that lasts two months. Examples include the unit's Scoutbook account, Member Manager, Training Manager, Invitation and Application Manager, etc.

- Once the individual's registration becomes active again when the unit charter is posted, their normal access to role-appropriate applications in the BSA's information technology suite will be restored.
- Access to the BSA Learn Center to take training courses such as Youth Protection training is not impacted.
- Leaders in a unit whose charter renewal has not been posted will not have access to that unit in Scoutbook. Scoutbook does not permanently delete records, meaning unit leaders will regain access to their units in Scoutbook automatically once the unit's charter renewal has been posted. Members who

know a Scout's MemberID can pull a history report from their dashboard in Scoutbook at any time.

Usually the next question a person will ask is "How can I check the status of my registration to see if the charter has posted?" As a unit leader, there are four places you can **check on your own** to see the status of your registration (to see if the unit has successfully renewed its charter):

- Member Manager Roster export
- Trained Leaders Status report
- Organization Manager (where you can print the charter)
- Organization Security Manager

Question: As a commissioner, I'm not registered with a unit (or my primary registration is not with a unit). What happens if my district (or council) doesn't complete the reregistration process before my current registration expires?

Answer: Here is what happens (the following also occasionally occurs if an individual's registration in the area, region, or even national is allowed to expire):

1. Much like when a unit's charter lapses every year, some commissioners are surprised when they inexplicably lose access to most of the my.Scouting suite of applications at the start of what they think is some random month.
2. Just like for units, the impact on non-unit volunteers (commissioner, district committee member, merit badge counselor, etc.) ultimately becomes significant if reregistration of a district or council isn't completed in a timely manner.



3. Here, again, the individual's access to most BSA software is lost after the two-month extended grace period expires. Depending on the position and associated role to functional capabilities, this inability to access critical applications includes Commissioner Tools and other tools used to provide unit service such as Member Manager, Training Manager, and Invitation and Application Manager.

- a. Once the individual's registration becomes active again, through the annual reregistration of the district/council/etc., their access to role-appropriate applications in the BSA's information technology suite will be restored.
- b. Access to the BSA Learn Center to take training courses such as Youth Protection training is not impacted.

Usually the next question a person will ask is "How can I check the status of my registration to see if the charter has posted?"

Regardless of commissioner role, there are at least a couple of places where you can **check on your own** to see the status of your registration (to see if the district/council has renewed its charter):

- Member Manager Roster export
- Trained Leaders Status report

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.



Technology Killed Helped My Relationships

When thinking about relationships and technology, I may be showing my age when the first thought that I had was “technology probably destroys more relationships than it helps.” The image that came to my mind as I was thinking about this was the classic image of a group of people sitting next to each other while texting each other.

More accurately, technology has actually **helped** tremendously when it comes to relationships—and when used thoughtfully, we can all benefit. Think about it. When the BSA was formed, how did a Scouter in California communicate with a Scouter in New York without doing it in person? Probably by mail, a process that takes days, if not weeks, to complete a true dialogue. The first U.S. transcontinental telephone call happened in July 1914 and the first public transatlantic telephone call happened in 1927! What a boon it was when you could instantly communicate with a person thousands of miles away. However, for those who remember pay phones, long-distance calls used to be **very** costly. When there were lots of local telephone exchanges, even calling to another exchange could be expensive. Fast forward to 2020—we now can communicate instantly to anywhere on Earth (with the help of technology) at a low cost, and we can also communicate with video. With today’s technology, anyone with internet access can transmit voice and both still and moving images for **free!** (See more below.)

Repeating a fact that is covered elsewhere in this issue of *The Commissioner*, relationships take work. Just like growing a garden, building relationships require nurturing with occasional feeding and weeding. Think in your own life how many friendships have atrophied over time due to lack of attention. As commissioners, how can we perform our responsibilities without relationships? Certainly, face-to-face interaction is the best, but it is not always practical. Some of our geographical areas of responsibility are quite large, but today we have many tools to help build and maintain strong relationships: phones, email, text messaging, and even video chatting. (When my son was living in Italy, we used video chatting often to “see” the grandchildren, which helped build a strong relationship with them.)

Like long-distance telephone calls, video conferencing used to be expensive, but today there are several **free** and low-cost video conferencing options that you can use. Among the most popular free choices that you might want to consider using



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when building relationships with your units and commissioners when you cannot have a face-to-face meeting are [Zoom](#) and [FreeConferenceCall.com](#). Some of the more established applications include Skype, Google Hangouts, and WhatsApp. Even Facebook Messenger is getting into the business! The providers of free video conferencing applications are changing constantly, so a quick internet search might uncover different options. A word of caution: When downloading “free” applications, be careful. As some people say, “Nothing is truly free.” What else might be happening with that “free” application? Are they using your personal information and contacts in a way that is consistent with your desires? While installing the application, did it also give you a “trial” version of an antivirus package that will bog down your computer with unnecessary applications—and possibly interfere with other applications that you are already using? *Caveat emptor!*

One Way to Use Technology in a “Technology-Free” Zone

Are you, like me, dependent on using technology for the communication part of building and maintaining relationships with some Scouters and Scouting families who “don’t do email”? Unfortunately, there still are many adults without email. Where I live, there are large areas where there is no cell phone service nor “practical” internet. According to [statista.com](#), as of November 2017, every state except Delaware had internet users with dial-up connections. Alabama had the greatest percentage of dial-up home internet users at 4.07%!

The lack of an email address means an individual cannot access many websites. For instance, to use Scoutbook, you need to have an email address. Fortunately, there is a work-around for **all** cell phone users, and as of June 2019, 96% of Americans own a cell phone. Did you know that cell phone providers allow you to send an “email to text message” and some can even include pictures, and video and audio attachments? The keys to the process are you need to know the recipient’s phone number and phone service provider.



Use the list below to combine the recipient's phone number with the recipient's provider's email gateway and voilà!—you are now communicating in the 21st century!

AT&T: number@txt.att.net (SMS); number@mms.att.net (MMS)

Boost Mobile: number@sms.myboostmobile.com (SMS);
number@myboostmobile.com (MMS)

Consumer Cellular: number@mailmymobile.net

Cricket: number@sms.cricketwireless.net (SMS); number@
mms.cricketwireless.net (MMS)

C-Spire: number@cspire1.com

Google Fi (Project Fi): number@msg.fi.google.com
(SMS and MMS)

Metro PCS: number@mymetropcs.com (SMS and MMS)

Page Plus: number@vtext.com

Republic Wireless: number@text.republicwireless.com (SMS)

Sprint: number@messaging.sprintpcs.com (SMS);
number@pm.sprint.com (MMS)

Ting: number@message.ting.com

T-Mobile: number@tmomail.net (SMS and MMS)

Tracfone: number@mmst5.tracfone.com (MMS)

U.S. Cellular: number@email.uscc.net (SMS);
number@mms.uscc.net (MMS)

Verizon: number@vtext.com (SMS);
number@vzwpx.com (MMS)

Virgin Mobile: number@vmobl.com (SMS);
number@vmpix.com (MMS)

XFINITY Mobile: number@vtext.com (SMS);
number@mypixmessages.com (MMS)

For example, to send a **short** email to cell phone number 999-999-9999 on the AT&T network, you would address the email to 9999999999@mms.att.net.

Here are some important hints and limitations:

- If you are sending your communication using an email client, the Subject line will not be included.
- SMS stands for Short Message Service, also commonly referred to as a text message. This service is limited to 160 characters. Some cell phones will take longer messages and automatically break them up into multiple texts of 160 characters. Some really old cell phones (think flip phones and the old Nokia “candy bar”-style phone where you had to pull the antenna up) will only send the first 160 characters—so be succinct!
- MMS stands for Multimedia Messaging Service, which can be used to send longer messages and pictures, video, and audio. It is most commonly used to send a photo taken with a camera phone to another phone. Most new cell phones with multimedia capabilities support MMS.



Recruiting Commissioners: Making the Ask

Congratulations; you've found the perfect candidate to add to your team!

To do that, you had to identify the knowledge, experience, and skills that were essential for success in the position you wanted to fill and identify prospects that appeared to have them. (Remember, a servant's heart is the only absolute requirement for a commissioner prospect; we often can provide much of the knowledge and skills needed through training and onboarding.) You also did some homework (talked to some people who know your prospect well) to confirm you'd found a good candidate.

Before going further, you need a plan to ask the candidate to serve. That plan needs to include the specific role you want filled, a clear definition of what success will look like, the time commitment required, why you believe the candidate would be a good fit, who will coach them, and what the next steps will be if your candidate says "yes." (Tools are available; check the [Resources section](#) of the new Commissioner Recruiting webpage where you'll find a sample template for an ask plan and a form you can use to create your own.)

With a great candidate and a plan for an ask, all that's needed is a conversation, right?

Step back; you need one more thing: a **relationship**.

All of us got our current role in Scouting because someone asked us to serve. Sometimes, somebody who didn't know us well was lucky: They asked us to take on an assignment that was immediately interesting and attractive. Who was asking wasn't important; the opportunity did it all. That's not the norm.

People are busy. They have families, careers, personal interests, and commitments. That doesn't mean they don't want to volunteer, but it does mean they choose carefully where and when to invest their time. Chances are greater for a positive response if they are asked by someone with whom they have a relationship based on respect, candor, and trust.

Before you make an ask—before you even make an appointment—find someone who has a relationship with your candidate; someone your candidate respects, can talk openly with, and trusts. Better yet, have that person with the relationship make the call and set up the appointment.



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Every experienced Scouting volunteer knows a Scouter they can't say "no" to. We trust that person; we know they won't ask us to do something that isn't a good fit for us or doesn't offer an opportunity to have a real impact, and we know they will tell us about both the opportunities and the challenges we'll face. You need someone like that at the table when you make your ask. Your chances of success will be far greater.

Not every commissioner is a great recruiter. Council and district commissioners who know that isn't a personal strength should recruit someone with that skill. It doesn't matter who does the work; it matters whether it gets done.

Recruiting commissioners takes work. Often it seems easier to do things ourselves than to undertake the work needed to identify and recruit new team members. That's not in the best interests of the kids we serve. There are too many opportunities; plan to find and ask great candidates to share them!



Development Activities Should Include Relationship Building

Commissioners should always be striving to develop themselves to become more effective. We do this through attending training courses, attending Colleges of Commissioner Science, and attending commissioner conferences, both local and national. You can also use these events to work on your relationship building skills.

Weekend Impact Sessions and weeklong national conferences deliberately build in time for networking and informal conversation. We do this to allow participants and faculty to establish and grow relationships. Relationships take time on the part of all involved.

You have a choice to make every time you are in a group of people. You can reach out to new people, you can connect with close friends and acquaintances, or you can stay on the sidelines.

If you want to increase your effectiveness as a commissioner, make sure that you proactively develop new relationships and maintain existing ones.



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Introducing the Curriculum Review Team

In previous editions of *The Commissioner*, we introduced the concept of ongoing updates to the commissioner development curriculum, which includes Basic Training for all commissioners (both online and faculty led) and the courses for the College of Commissioner Science.

We have established the key leadership group for the team and would like to introduce them to you:

Anna Tuohy, Team Leader—Anna serves as the council commissioner for the Three Fires Council in the Central Region. She has extensive experience in curriculum development and project management.

Kresha Alvarado, College of Commissioner Science Curriculum—Kresha serves as an assistant council commissioner and council training chair for the Circle Ten Council in the Southern Region. She has been actively involved in the

development of the current College of Commissioner Science curriculum and has served on national faculty at Florida Sea Base and Philmont Training Center.

Dave Fornadel, Commissioner Basic Training—Dave serves as an assistant area commissioner in Area 2 of the Southern Region. He had been actively involved in the development and update of Commissioner Tools and Basic Training.

Roberta Hudson, Quality Assurance—Roberta is a unit commissioner in the William D. Boyce Council in the Central Region. She has experience in training development and delivery, including service on the Wood Badge Update Task Force.

Work is underway to establish a review schedule and begin the ongoing process of updating our training curriculum. We expect to add additional subject matter experts to this team throughout the year.

Curriculum Feedback Process

The National Commissioner Service Team is responsible for providing curriculum for Commissioner Basic Training and material for the College of Commissioner Science. This year we are implementing a feedback process. A dedicated email account has been created for you to submit feedback:
Commissionerdevelopment@scouting.org.

Commissioners are welcome to submit any feedback on the supported curriculum that they deem appropriate, including error corrections, suggestions for new topics, etc. Members of the Curriculum Review Team will monitor this email account and determine what changes will be implemented.



Applying Technology in Unit Service Conference

More than two dozen commissioners from across the country assembled at the Florida Sea Base January 12–18 to attend the new commissioner conference titled Applying Technology in Unit Service. Commissioners had the opportunity to explore many of the tools that are in use within the BSA. Attendees had this to say about the conference:

What was the best thing that happened at this conference?

- Discussions and questions with the staff and attendees during class and offline.
- Everyone sharing issues and how to resolve them. Also, best practices.
- There was a lot cooperative learning that took place among the attendees.
- Meeting other commissioners from around the country.



Philmont Training Center — Commissioners Week

Make plans to attend Commissioners Week at the Philmont Training Center June 7–13. The national commissioner and the National Commissioner Service Team will be on hand for the week. We will have seven conferences for commissioners:

- Empowering the District Commissioner Team
- Empowering the Council Commissioner Team
- Recruiting and Engaging Commissioners

- Second Century Service – Updates on Unit Service
- Serving All Units – Working With Venturing Crews, Sea Scout Ships, and Exploring Posts
- Starting, Sustaining, and Growing Units
- A Strong Unit Commissioner

See www.philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/2020-conferences/ for conference descriptions and registration.



Coming Together

“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success.”

—Henry Ford

The relationships that commissioners develop with all volunteers is essential to the progress and success of our units, districts, and councils. Building relationships with other volunteers and staff takes time and effort. Remember that we are building respect, candor, and trust. So how do we build these relationships? And what are we doing to monitor whether the relationships are effective? Whether you are an administrative commissioner or a unit commissioner, the relationships we forge with district and unit volunteers is essential to success.

Let’s take a look at this scenario: The district commissioner or assistant district commissioner has assigned a unit commissioner to their first unit. The unit commissioner has completed all online training and the onboarding process and is very excited to start. The unit commissioner is assigned to Pack 001, which has not had a unit commissioner in over a year but appears to be doing OK. The unit commissioner is not familiar with any of the leadership in the unit.

What’s next?

The unit commissioner needs to be introduced to the unit leadership to begin building their relationship. I would like to introduce you to “The Relationship Pyramid,” which defines the six stages all relationships pass through. This document (reproduced on the following page) can help you to be proactive and effective in beginning this relationship.

Here are some ideas for introductions:

- Introduce the unit commissioner at roundtable or have the district commissioner or assistant district commissioner set up an introduction at some other event.
- Have the district commissioner or assistant district commissioner send an email to the unit Key 3 with a bio of the unit commissioner, asking them to be welcoming.
- Find another volunteer who has a relationship with the unit leadership and ask them to introduce the unit commissioner.
- Assign a seasoned commissioner to help.

So the introduction has been made. Do we stop? No, of course not. How do we monitor the relationship and whether it is moving through the other stages? In the last issue of *The Commissioner*, I wrote about “meaningful contacts” in Commissioner Tools. This is the perfect place for the unit commissioner to enter a note about how things are going. Administrative commissioners should be reviewing the comments unit commissioners make. The monthly district commissioner meeting is another opportunity for monitoring how the relationship is developing and whether more assistance is needed. We know in the beginning that more opportunities to make contact will help build the relationship.



Sue Simmons
National Commissioner Service
Starting and Sustaining Units Chair
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Before going to a meeting, the unit commissioner should ask if the unit needs anything. Once at the meeting, the unit commissioner should make sure to:

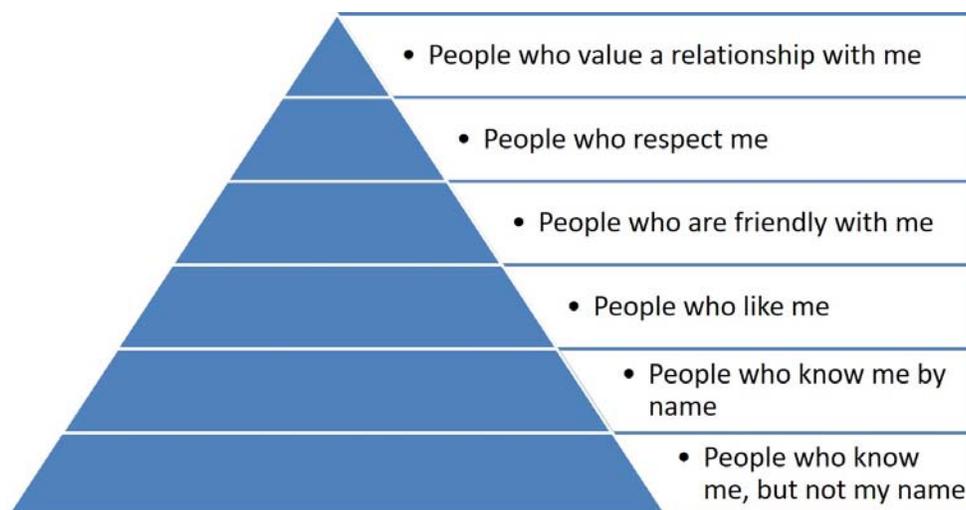
- Pass out a Scouting business card (if they have one) and introduce themselves to the parents and other volunteers.
- Meet the new member coordinator and get their contact information.
- Bring something: Trained Leader reports, membership cards, or anything the unit leader might have requested. This builds trust.
- Ask to attend the next committee/parent meeting, pack night, or another event before leaving.

It appears this unit commissioner is on the way to building a relationship with the leadership in Pack 001. Someday they will be able to assist this unit with a detailed assessment and help the unit achieve its goals. Our units depend on their unit commissioner to bring them resources from the district committee, which is another important relationship to have and make stronger.

The above scenario seems to be moving in the right direction, but we all know not every unit commissioner and unit leadership relationship is that easy. We must continually **Assess, Plan, and Act** how we as commissioners can build strong relationships when we are **Starting, Sustaining, and Growing Units**.



The Relationship Pyramid



Based on Acuff, Jerry with Wood, Wally. (2011) *The Relationship Edge: The Key to Strategic Influence and Selling Success*, 3rd Edition, Wiley. Also presented as part of *Advanced Leadership Skills for Administrative Commissioners*, Philmont Training Center, 2015.

In order to effectively perform their functions, Unit Commissioners need to develop relationships with unit leaders. To do that, commissioners need to be proactive and take the initiative. All relationships pass through six stages that are described in a pyramid.

People who know me, but not my name: The largest group of people. These are the parents who see you at a unit meeting; these are the unit leaders who see you at a roundtable. They know you by your position patch and epaulet tabs; and, are influenced by what they've been told about those positions.

People who know me by name: These are people who learn your name as you present the unit charter, or as you present a topic at a roundtable. You can bring more people into this group by taking the initiative and introducing yourself.

People who like me: This means that they don't avoid you when you approach them about Scouting issues. You add to this group in the way you conduct your job. Your leadership style is servant leadership, not authoritarian; and, you conduct yourself in a humble, helpful, and friendly manner.

People who are friendly with me: Here are people that engage with you in non-Scouting interactions. You have conversations about family, sports, movies, and other social topics. You have both learned what you have in common besides Scouting. You develop this group by initiating informal contacts where social conversation is expected – invite them to meet over a cup of coffee, offer to drive them to the roundtable, speak with them during breaks at roundtables or other Scouting events, join them for meals at campouts.

People who respect me: They have a positive opinion of your knowledge, integrity, and character. The only way they will have that positive opinion is if you demonstrate it. You bring information to the unit, and when you don't know something, you find out for them. You keep your word. You are an example of the Scout Oath and Law.

People who value a relationship with me: People know you are willing and able to help them. They trust that you will treat them with integrity. And, because they value the connection with you, they will reciprocate and help you do your job.

So, which level of the pyramid is needed for you to be an effective unit commissioner and to fulfill the four main purposes of a commissioner:

1. Support unit growth through the Journey to Excellence.
2. Contact units and capture their strengths and needs in Commissioner Tools.
3. Link unit needs to district operating committee resources.
4. Support timely charter renewal.



It All Starts With a Cup of Coffee

“Hey, John, how are you doing? I understand you are going to be the new Cubmaster for the pack! Congratulations! I was wondering if you have some time to meet up for coffee to talk about the new year in the pack and how I can be of service to you. I know there are going to be some challenges coming in, but let’s spend time to talk about it. I look forward to our gathering soon!”

This was a real email conversation I recently had with a new Cubmaster coming into the pack I serve as unit commissioner. I know the pack leadership fairly well because of my entry as a Scouter with this pack and becoming their unit commissioner after my son’s transition to a troop. At the same time, they have contacted me for guidance on every national program change like the Lion program, new member coordinator, girl membership, Scoutbook, and more recently the membership fee increase.

Starting and maintaining relationships with unit leadership is essential to the welfare and longevity of the pack, troop, crew, or ship. How many times have we heard a unit bemoaning the fact they have never seen their unit commissioner or that their visits are so infrequent as to be ineffective? I grant this may be highlighting a different set of issues with the lack of a unit commissioner for a given program or area. However, in your typical situation, commissioner service starts with effective and regular **communication** with the unit leadership to ensure that all aspects of the program are running smoothly. This is our first and primary commitment in building a relationship.

Our second commitment is being an agent of change to help shape and enhance program. I shared in a previous article that national program committees are making changes each time they meet. This part takes a little more effort as you will need to stay on top of changes through various BSA channels and online training and presentation materials on the BSA website. Being an **effective enabler** of program changes requires mastery of the details and/or knowing the proper resources (whether a person or digital). For example, when the unit commissioner attends a



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troop committee meeting and the subject of linked units comes up for discussion, all eyes will turn to the commissioner for help and guidance. This is where the unit commissioner will earn his or her keep by helping the troop navigate uncharted territory.

The third commitment is **servant leadership** in heart, attitude, and action in all that we do. We are there to help units thrive and to make sure Scouts are benefiting from the program. However, another aspect of service is working with our district and council commissioners. They are part of the home team and they will be our guide and resource to navigating change. Last time I checked, they also enjoy spending one-on-one time at coffee shops.



Program Updates for Commissioners

Here are the winter updates within each of the BSA program communities in order to help our commissioners stay on top of current news, training, and program changes. In cases where BSA programs have their own update website, we will point you to those sites.

Cub Scouting

- Encourage your den leaders to use [Scoutbook](#) to run their den meetings with ease. When logging in, choose Login as Den Leader (Beta). This option puts the leader in the digital den delivery application. After you answer a few questions, a program year calendar with required adventures is automatically created. Elective adventures are added using a selection process. Adventures can be easily moved around on the calendar, and automatically created meetings with separate dates can be combined.

Den meetings are laid out from the beginning to the end. A leader can see a list of items needed, what should be done prior to the meeting, and a list of activities to complete the adventure. Tips and tricks for activities are available, with more being added in the near future. Taking attendance after the meeting automatically updates advancement in Scoutbook. Youth who did not complete the adventure are sent an email listing what needs to be completed at home.

For those of us who are not den leaders and would like to see what Scoutbook for den leaders is all about, check out this “[sandbox](#).” Choose one of the test users in the upper left corner. You can then experience how the meeting calendar is created, how meetings can be moved around, what an actual meeting plan looks like, and how advancement is updated.

This is Scoutbook for den leaders!

Scouts BSA

- Philmont Training Center Week 8 July 26–August 1, 2020 (Northeast Region Week)

The plan is to hold two conference sessions during the week. During session I, Scouters will have the option of attending the Scouts BSA, Sea Scouting, or Venturing conference. Participants will have the option of attending the Delivering the Promise to Older Youth conference during session II.

During the conference week, the Mountain Trek program (which runs all week) will include Kodiak training. It is anticipated that, as a part of the session II conference, the class will meet up with the Kodiak participants in the Philmont backcountry. Participants will have the option of bringing older youth from their units to attend this trek.

- Check out the Scouts BSA update website for more information: [Scouts BSA Program Updates](#)

Venturing

- The second edition of the [Venturing Newsletter](#) is available. Learn more about what has happened in the last three months and what is upcoming in the Venturing world.

- The [Venturing Leadership Award](#) is available to recognize Venturers and Venturing Advisors who have made exceptional contributions to Venturing and who exemplify the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Councils, areas, regions, and the BSA National Council may present individuals with the Venturing Leadership Award.
- The [Council Venturing Journey to Excellence](#), previously known as the Council Standards of Venturing Excellence (CSVE) Award, is presented by the BSA National Council to councils that complete the requirements during the previous calendar year. It is designed to measure a council's Venturing program through analyzing various aspects of their growth in categories such as membership, trainings, events, and awards. Councils that earn the JTE Award will be presented a dated, framed certificate at the National Annual Meeting.
- [VenturingFest 2020](#), the third national gathering of Venturers at the Summit Bechtel Reserve, is scheduled for June 28–July 3! VenturingFest—an experience unlike any other—is a special Scouting event at the Summit that's open to registered Venturers, Scouts, and adult leaders. This six-day high-adventure festival invites participants to explore the best the Summit has to offer. We're talking rock climbing, skateboarding, BMX biking, water sports, shooting sports, zip lines, challenge courses, and so much more! As if the adrenaline-pumping activities weren't enough, festival-goers will also get to jam out at concerts and meet new friends in Venturing at the event. What more could a Venturer want?

Sea Scouts

- Sea Scouting thrives year-round! Even through the colder months, Sea Scout ships continue to bring the program to Scouts. There are almost 800 Sea Scout ships across the BSA and, in fact, Sea Scout Ship 1791 in Westford, Massachusetts, just unfurled its flag as the newest ship to join their fellow Sea Scouts in this amazing program. Sea Scouting continues to grow as a program and bring the love of water-related activities to youth!
- The current print edition of the Sea Scout Manual came out in 2016. There have been many changes and updates to the Sea Scout Manual since then and, although Supply still sells the 2016 edition, the updated sections can be replaced by going to <https://seascout.org/manual-resource-center/> and printing out those sections. Also available on the website is a fully updated PDF of the Sea Scout Manual that can be downloaded. There are several additional valuable resources available on the page.
- Many Sea Scouters and commissioners have been awaiting the nationwide rollout of the AUXSCOUT program—the Coast Guard's name for our partnership with the Coast Guard Auxiliary—and that moment has finally arrived! As of November 1, 2019, AUXSCOUT is open for business across all Coast Guard Auxiliary districts. If you haven't been keeping up, this program represents a significant deepening of our long-standing relationship with the Coast Guard Auxiliary. You can learn more by visiting seascout.org/cgaux.



Here are a few of the key features:

- Coast Guard Auxiliary flotillas and divisions are now able to charter Sea Scout ships and are encouraged to do so.
- Youth Sea Scouts are the only people under 17 allowed to join the Coast Guard Auxiliary.
- Sea Scouting is designated as the official youth program of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.
- Sea Badge courses are open to any Scout or Scouter who is 18 or older. Participants do not have to be registered Sea Scouts. Here are some upcoming courses:
 - March 6–8: SB-49-CA-2020 at Long Beach Sea Base Aquatics Center—<https://www.longbeachbsa.org/training/sea-scouts/seabadge/>

– March 13–15: SB-44-ME-2020 at the campus of Maine Maritime Academy

– March 20–22: SB-52-MI-2020 at Camp Rotary, Clare, Michigan

- Learn more about Sea Scouting activities through the Sea Scouting [Facebook page](#) and on the web at <https://seascout.org/> and www.scouting.org/programs/sea-scouts/.

National Disability Awareness

- The most recent brochure for working with Scouts with special needs and disabilities is available [here](#).
- The BSA Disability Awareness Committee maintains a separate webpage of its own with recent updates: [Disabilities Awareness](#).



Commissioner Relationships Critical to Exploring Units Too

As you read through this newsletter, you likely have realized that this issue's theme is **relationships** and the need to develop, cultivate, and maintain relationships at all levels throughout our Scouting, Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring units. And, of course, that's what unit service—whether it's provided by traditional Scouting commissioners or Exploring service team members—is all about. I am preaching to the choir when I say those unit service relationships are crucial to helping all of our units succeed in providing the promise of Scouting, Venturing, and Exploring to our youth.

Unfortunately, we are not doing a very good job when it comes to unit service and developing, cultivating, and maintaining relationships with our Exploring clubs and posts. When I talk to Exploring unit advisors at every national, regional, area, council, and district meeting that I attend, a common theme that I hear is that the only time they see anyone from their home councils and/or districts is during the annual unit renewal process. This was driven home when I attended the National Exploring Leadership Conference at Ohio University in July 2019. I asked our 25 attending Exploring post advisors, who were from across the country, if they saw anyone from their councils and/or districts more than once a year and **not one of them** said yes. Now I realize that this was a very small sample size, but their universal response was still disheartening.

I am not naïve to the fact that we have a shortage of commissioners and Exploring service team members nationwide, but, as much as possible, we need to develop, cultivate, and maintain reliable relationships with our Exploring units too. As council and district commissioners, let's make that one of our unit service New Year's resolutions for 2020.

Become an Exploring SME

Subject matter experts are needed to support the National Commissioner Service Team's Exploring chair.

Issue: We are not providing consistent or, in many cases, any unit service to our over 4,100 Exploring clubs and posts nationwide.

SME need: To assist the Exploring chair in the following areas:

- Develop and maintain strategies, plans, tools, and techniques to enable commissioners to support Exploring posts and clubs and integrate the local efforts of commissioners and Exploring service team members.
 - Recommendations for changes to unit service that will enable better support of Exploring posts and clubs
 - Team updates on new initiatives or changes to Exploring
 - Recommended changes to commissioner training
 - Summaries of meetings attended (Exploring committee and other national committees)
 - Social media content



Craig Martin
National Commissioner Service
Exploring Chair
bruin1967@aol.com

As I have mentioned in previous editions of *The Commissioner*, members of your National Commissioner Service Team will be working with Tim Anderson, the national director of Learning for Life and Exploring, to develop and launch a new nationwide approach to recruiting additional unit commissioners and Exploring service team members to serve Exploring posts and clubs.

- Website content
- Newsletter articles
- Educate BSA regional and area commissioners, with assistance from regional and area Exploring chairs, on
 - The value of and need for unit service to Exploring units
 - Embracing Exploring service team members as part of their commissioner cadre
 - Engaging commissioners and Exploring service team members to provide service and support to Exploring units
- In collaboration with the National Exploring Office and National Commissioner Service Team, develop new campaign to recruit additional Exploring service team members and/or BSA commissioners.
 - Collaborating with regional and area Exploring chairs and regional and area BSA commissioners on ways to recruit Exploring commissioners and service team members.



- Developing and distributing a template council recruitment plan for Exploring service team members and/or commissioners (October 2019).
- Identify pilot councils to implement campaign.
- In collaboration with the National Exploring Office and National Commissioner Service Team, initiate campaign to recruit additional Exploring service team members and/or commissioners at the council and district levels.
 - Deploy campaign to pilot councils.
 - Train new Exploring service team members and/or commissioners.
 - Onboard new Exploring service team members and/or commissioners.

Time commitment: 8 to 10 hours per month on average

Next step if interested: Contact Craig Martin, the National Commissioner Service Team's Exploring chair, at bruin1967@aol.com.



Regional and Area Commissioners

Updated August 2019

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Area 1 Commissioner Greg Nygren nygren5154@gmail.com	Area 1 Commissioner Diogo Tavares diogo.pf.tavares@gmail.com	Area 1 Commissioner Dave Murphy murphy@pcinv.com	Area 1 Commissioner Craig Donais craig.donais@nhscouter.com
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Craig Martin	Exploring Chair	Bruin1967@aol.com	Colorado Springs, CO
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Susan Simmons	Starting and Sustaining Units Chair	susan.simmons1@comcast.net	Chicago, IL
Darlene Sprague	Resources Chair	darsprague@roadrunner.com	Niagara Falls, NY



JTE Key Performance Indicators

The Journey to Excellence Key Performance Indicators from December 2019 can be accessed [here](#).

Coming Events

2020

May 20–22

National Annual Meeting and National Executive Board and Committee Meetings

Gaylord National, National Harbor, Maryland

June 7–13

Commissioners Week

Philmont Training Center

Click [here](#) for information.

