The role of the unit commissioner is to help every unit be successful. Unit success is defined by the unit achieving Journey to Excellence status and demonstrating an improvement in the retention of its members.

Journey to Excellence Commissioner Feedback and Best Practices

At the National Annual Meeting in May 2011, the National Commissioner Service Task Force collected commissioner feedback and best practices from the field in several breakout sessions that focused on ways commissioners can positively impact our districts and councils using Journey to Excellence.

2011 JTE DISTRICT ITEM NO. 6: UNIT VISITS ARE BEING MADE AND ARE ENTERED INTO THE UNIT VISIT TRACKING SYSTEM

- Create contests among commissioners. The commissioner with the highest number of unit visits wins a prize (e.g., a coffee mug). Develop suspense within the competition by passing out reports at meetings to show how close commissioners are to the target.
- Report to all districts the rankings for visits each month and award the best district ratio for visits per year. This will create competition among districts.
- The council commissioner visits roundtables and meets with unit leaders to discuss the health of unit programs. Enter these visits into UVTS.
- Email dashboard for overview and status of commissioner service.
- Provide commissioners with expectations and action items.
- Emphasize tying UVTS to the mid-year health assessment and service knot.
- Require each council to provide a mechanism for reporting, solving, and then sharing UVTS solutions with the rest of the commissioners.
- Reward unit commissioners with personalized business cards when six unit visits are made to one unit.
- Encourage the council commissioner to focus on UVTS numbers. As a result, district commissioners will focus on them as well.
- Have council commissioners develop a policy of “nothing counts unless it’s in UVTS.” Create a district award for the best UVTS utilization.
- Delegate UVTS 2.0 to an assistant council commissioner and an assistant district commissioner. Both should be trained and can enter visits for individuals without technical expertise.
- Assign “coaches” to unit commissioners who either have difficulty with computer applications or are reluctant to use UVTS. Coaches are usually administrative commissioners (either ADCs or ACCs).
- Work together to ensure visits are tracked. Have commissioners who use UVTS partner with those who do not for one-on-one training support. The commissioner who visits the unit should use his or her membership ID to get credit for visits in UVTS when they go on Scouting.org. Assistant district commissioners should enter the information for those without access. District executives provide training at district commissioner meetings.
- Have a commissioner meeting in a room with a computer and Internet connection for UVTS training, entering visits, and problem solving.
- Provide MyScouting classes and annual UVTS training at College of Commissioner Science.
• Have program assistants multiple as unit commissioners and enter UVTS reports after visits. This practice not only increases visitations but also educates program assistants on ways to identify and address issues.
• Create an interactive training for UVTS at basic training, commissioner college, and commissioner meetings.
• Speed up registration. Prioritize registrations. Unit commissioners should be entered before merit badge counselors.

2011 JTE COUNCIL ITEM NO. 12: MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE THE RATIO OF YOUTH-SERVING EXECUTIVES TO TOTAL AVAILABLE YOUTH

• Ensure that your council exchanges best methods across district boundaries. Effective communication between volunteers and professionals will always be a hallmark of a successful district or division.
• Seek to understand the performance measurements that affect the success and development of your youth-serving executive. Consider assigning a special assistant district commissioner to support the YSE, someone who can effectively become a troubleshooter for unit service.
• Keep in mind that an effective commissioner corps should take the pressure of the rechartering process off of the YSE. Encourage commissioners to double-check recharters for defects before submitting them to the YSE/registrar. Determine the effectiveness of your council in fostering the efficient rechartering of units. Consider holding a rechartering clinic to better train your commissioners on the process.
• Provide great support to your units by following the unit service plan, recording visits in UVTS, and getting the necessary support and assistance to ensure that a quality program is being delivered in your units. If not, raise an early and frequent “help flag” to your YSE and district leadership. Commissioners need to contact the help desk for UVTS 2.0 questions, not the YSE.
• Recognize that the YSE cannot do it all. Are there other volunteer resources available at the district or council that can help solve your unit’s needs? Avoid having volunteers/commissioners pass on their duties to the YSE. If you see this happening, help the YSE identify and empower the right volunteer resources.
• Help your district commissioner, district chairman, and district executive design and execute a plan to recruit more unit commissioners and district volunteers. Make sure all volunteers are appropriately registered with the National Council and coded for their positions.
• Determine if your district committee is sufficiently strong and effective. Consider re-evaluating the district’s size and your service delivery process every five to seven years. Is your district commissioner a functioning member of the district Key 3? Has the district Key 3 been trained to operate as a team, either at the Philmont Training Center or otherwise?
• Identify effective communication shortcuts. Use “placemats” that explain the role of the commissioner in support of unit service.
• Support the unit Key 3 concept, where the unit commissioner serves as a trusted adviser to the unit leader, unit committee chair, and chartered organization representative. Meet regularly.
• Be sure that YSEs have a special place and time at every roundtable. Support their efforts to build a relationship with unit leadership and share information and activities with the leaders.
• Consider the use of a membership committee, which might consist of the vice president of council membership, district membership chairs, district and council commissioners, and district executives.
• Perhaps the best idea collected at the National Annual Meeting was also the most simple: Approach your YSE, say “thank you,” and ask how we can help make him or her successful.

2011 JTE COUNCIL ITEM NO. 13: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED UNIT COMMISSIONERS OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR

• Recruit constantly.
• Use a monthly recruitment process to fill unit commissioner vacancies.
• Focus on second-year Webelos leaders between January and March.
• Recruit at large Scouting gatherings, including summer camps (e.g., staff), council events, Scout Sundays, or Eagle Scout courts of honor (e.g., former Scouts or parents in attendance).
• Recruit dads with daughters, as well.
• Recruit from other service groups (Alpha Phi Omega, Lions Clubs, etc.).
• Recruit from the Order of the Arrow (21 years old).
• Utilize alumni connections.
• Recruit merit badge counselors.
• Review unit rosters. Identify a “dropped list” of parents and leaders without current Scouting positions whose boys have moved on. In addition, consider dropped unit lists.
• Recruit from the military.
• Keep in mind that chartered partners often have former Scout members or Webelos leaders or parents who don’t bridge with their sons.
• Keep in mind that large units sometimes have parents who are not involved in the unit.
• Everyone should recruit.
• Challenge each commissioner to bring in a new recruit each year.
• Engage the district nominating committee to assist in recruiting.
• Appoint an assistant council commissioner or assistant district commissioner whose responsibility is recruiting.
• Train ADCs on how to recruit unit commissioners to serve on their team.
• Identify commissioner candidates in training who are under 21. Assigned to a unit commissioner for on-the-job training and registered on district committee until old enough to be registered as a commissioner.
• Include a prerequisite step on leaders who have dropped from charters. Call leaders who have worked with them. Get the right people on the bus—and in the right seat.
• Use a Friendstorming campaign.
• Get out and about. Visit council events and camps, and visit large units and speak with camp assistants about unit service.
• Utilize the National Eagle Scout Association list and add other Eagle Scouts to your prospect list. Invite them to breakfast.
• If a mentor is present at a Wood Badge course, the position on his or her nametag should read Unit Commissioner.
• Develop and distribute a tri-fold brochure with information about commissioner service.
• Conduct a reception for den leaders and talk about commissioner service. Do the same for troop leadership.

There are several key components for recruiting commissioners. The first is providing good commissioner service to units. It is also important to improve the awareness of commissioner service. So many Scouters and others interested in what we do have no idea of the critical role commissioners play. Doing a good job and being visible go a long way toward making recruiting easier. Then all you have to do is ask.

2011 JTE COUNCIL ITEM NO. 14: IMPROVE THE RATE OF VISITATIONS TO UNITS BY COMMISSIONERS

• Promote the Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service.
• Personally meet with the council registrar and check each commissioner registration code and status, especially check for those who cannot access UVTS.
• If unit commissioners cannot meet expectations for visits, have them partner with other unit commissioners and assistant district commissioners who can assist with the number of unit visits.
• Each month, set goals and hold commissioners accountable. Inform them that you are tracking the number of visits as part of their performance.
• Send a monthly email to commissioners with monthly talking points. Visit more often than just at unit meetings. District commissioners and assistant district commissioners should follow up with monthly phone calls. Give positive recognition for those who do. Review the visit notes for trends.
• Delay recognition and awards unless units are visited and entered in UVTS.
• Start an inventory of units visited and not visited every month by district commissioners and hold them responsible for the overall performance of the district.
• Have the district commissioner contact unit commissioners who are not entering units to determine that visits are occurring.
• Hold unit commissioners responsible for their units to log visits in UVTS.
• Council commissioners should create a level of competition among districts for UVTS usage.
• Have a contest for the number of visits logged. A “top gun” contest at the annual barbecue recognizes top commissioners for visits logged into UVTS. Insert accountability into the rewards process.
• Council commissioners should have direct communication with all commissioners about their expectations and/or the expectations of unit leaders.
• Have a unit commissioner who is effective at unit visitations share his or her methods at meetings.
• Set up a mentoring process for new unit commissioners and assign an experienced unit commissioner or assistant district commissioner to go with them on two unit visits. Then document the visits in UVTS.
• Have district commissioners or assistant district commissioners contact the unit leaders to introduce their assigned commissioners and the roles they will play in supporting the unit.

“If you make listening and observing your occupation you will gain much more than you can by talk.”

—Baden-Powell