



# CONNECTION GUIDE

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

### PURPOSE OF A CONNECTION GUIDE

To aid in facilitating conversations between commissioners and unit Scouters, fostering a deeper understanding of unit dynamics and operations, enabling commissioners to better serve and support the unit. This involves identifying and leveraging successes, supporting the unit as they identify areas of improvement, collaborating with the unit on their goals, and providing necessary resources in support of those goals.

### WHY IS THIS UNIT METRIC IMPORTANT?

The essence of Scouting lies in its promise of outdoor adventure to young people upon joining. Youth crave outdoor programs that captivate their imaginations and passions. Moreover, these outdoor activities play a vital role in involving, attracting, and retaining families within the Scouting community.

### STEP 1: COMMISSIONERS REVIEW UNIT KEY METRICS

#### Objective Unit Data for Outdoor Activities

Is the unit currently meeting the metric for outdoor activities?

- Did the unit participate in outdoor activities (pack) or long-term outing (troop) or super activity (crew/ship/post) in the prior 12 months?

### STEP 2: UNIT CONVERSATIONS

#### Celebrate Success for Achievement or Improvement:

- Effective recognition is essential to effective unit service.
- Just say it. A straightforward, face-to-face "well done" is a simple but effective way to celebrate achievement.

#### Things to Consider:

- Is the unit following the BSA [S.A.F.E.](#) checklist when outdoors?
- Different units' outdoor activities may be more or less frequent, or more or less intense, based on the unit's interests, resources, and the experience levels of the Scouts.
- Resistance to outdoor programming often comes from parents, not the Scouts or leaders themselves, especially in programs involving younger youth.
- Cost and time are often major factors driving a unit's outdoor programming (or lack thereof).
- Even one significant outdoor activity can drive the planning of indoor programming throughout the year or season.
- Outdoor activities can require significant adult participation (and training).
- Awards and other recognition can incentivize outdoor programming at the unit level.

**Questions to Facilitate Conversation:** (example questions to help the commissioner engage with unit leaders as each unit is unique and the conversation should be tailored to the unit)

- How did the unit score on the section of (JTE) Journey to Excellence that corresponds to outdoor activity?
- How frequently does the unit conduct outdoor activities?
- If infrequent, what are some barriers to getting outside more often?
- If infrequent, are the youth interested in more outdoor programming? Are the leaders? The parents?

- Does the majority of the unit attend the scheduled outdoor activities?
- If not, are the youth engaged during all steps of the planning, including where to go and when?
- Is communication adequate, including far enough in advance?
- Are safety concerns adequately addressed with parents, and far enough in advance?
- Are indoor elements of the program geared toward outdoor programming throughout the year?
- Does the unit earn any awards for outdoor activities (e.g., National Outdoor Challenge Unit Award)
- Do any individuals in the unit earn awards for outdoor activities (e.g., the 50-Miler Award for Scouts BSA or the Outdoor Activity Award for Cub Scouting)?
- Does the unit participate in outdoor activities at the district, council, or national levels?
- Are any adult leaders in the unit Outdoor Ethics trained?

#### **Resources to Provide:**

- BSA [S.A.F.E.](#) Checklist
- Scouting.org's [Outdoor Programs](#)
- Scouting.org's [Outdoor Programs Awards](#)
- [National High Adventure Bases](#)
- Local Where-to-Go-Camping Guides
- [Conservation and Environment Resources](#)
- [Outdoor Ethics Training in the BSA](#)
- District or Council Camping Committee
- Event calendar for resident/day/family camps, plus council/district activities

#### **STEP 3: HELPING THE UNIT SET GOALS**

The unit can decide its own goals, whether they want detailed, simple, or no goals at all. A commissioner should be available to support them throughout this process.

- Begin incorporating BSA [S.A.F.E.](#) checklist into outdoor activity planning.
- Ensure adequate unit leadership is trained to accompany youth during outdoor activities, especially overnight (e.g., BALOO for Cub Scouting and IOLS for Scouts BSA).
- Increase the number of outdoor activities during the next program year.
- Improve one level within the portion of (JTE) Journey to Excellence relating to “outdoor activity” (see list for corresponding portions for individual BSA programs in “Questions” section above).
- Promote awards aimed at increasing outdoor activities (for the unit or individuals).
- Seek out Outdoor Ethics training, whether for youth and/or leaders (as appropriate).
- Plan a pack fall or spring campout.
- Webelos and AOL dens plan to attend campout with a local troop.
- Select, prepare, and plan a summer camp or high adventure trip.
- Prepare a plan to earn the National Outdoor Challenge Unit Award.

#### **STEP 4: COMMISSIONERS PROVIDING UNIT SUPPORT**

- Follow up with the unit regularly to check in on the status of their goals and provide them with upcoming outdoor opportunities within the district, council, or nation.
- Connect unit Scouters with district- or council-level personnel who can champion outdoor programming at a variety of levels within the BSA.
- Encourage attendance at local outdoor events – tell them you’ll see them there!