Title: Unit Commissioner Basic Training

Time allotted	180 minutes
Teaching format	Instructor led discussion with PowerPoint

Resources

Handouts	• Unit level JTE Scorecards • Onboarding Progress Record
Equipment and materials	• Computer and projector • Unit Commissioner Basic Training PowerPoint presentation • Unit Commissioner Basic Training Course plan • Whiteboard or flipchart
Resources for additional participant learning	• National Commissioner Website (https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/

Presentation Outline

Introduction and Course Objectives – 5 minutes

Welcome to unit commissioner basic training!

As commissioners, we strive to help units serve more youth through better Scouting by providing an adequate number of trained commissioners who provide a link to district operating committees in support of a quality unit program.

We appreciate your service in this role to build and maintain healthy units!

During this session, you should develop an understanding of the concept of Unit Service. You should be able to recognize the role of the Unit Commissioner and then, Identify the interrelationships and functions of the District.

- Be able to recognize the role of the unit commissioner.
- Develop an understanding of the concept of Unit Service.
- Be able to identify the interrelationships and functions of the district.

Mission and Vision

Commissioners share the mission of the Boy Scouts of America: To prepare youth to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetime by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. The vision of unit service is to assist units in ensuring every member of the BSA has a great Scouting Experience. To this end, commissioners have five objectives.

Objectives of commissioner service

All Commissioners Share these objectives which are to

1. Support unit growth and retention through the Journey to Excellence

Journey To Excellence measures performance characteristics that unlock the door to a successful unit. As commissioners, we analyze the unit's program and identify Journey To Excellence areas where help is needed to move the unit to a higher level of success. Unit Service Plans help support this objective.

2nd. Make meaningful unit contacts that capture in commissioner tools their strengths, their needs, and a unit service plan that enables continuing improvement. Our core task remains making significant contacts with units over the course of a year. *Commissioner Tools* enables commissioners to develop a customized Unit Service Plan to address identified needs.

3rd. Link unit needs to district operating committee resources.

The concept of linkage is critical to our execution mission. The unit commissioner is a link to the subject matter experts and resources who reside at the district committee level. If certain subject matter expertise does not exist, commissioners should support the efforts of the district Key 3 to recruit and deploy the right resource specialists. The unit Service Plan is used to capture the specifics of the linkages that need to be established.

4th. Support timely charter renewal.

Commissioners are responsible for unit retention. A quality program attracts youth and adults to Scouting and is a key factor in retaining them. To fulfill our aim in helping units better serve more youth through Scouting, we should support the district Operating Committee's efforts to build membership and meet our responsibility to increase unit retention. Effective and timely charter renewal is a key part of retaining units.

Lastly, to Support unit leaders by collecting and distributing information, facilitate program training and provide networking opportunities. One of the methods commissioners provide these opportunities is through monthly roundtables.

Commissioner goals and methods

These goals and methods are universal to all commissioners but how each commissioner achieves these goals and employs the methods is determined by the type of commissioner they are.
The goals of unit service are to facilitate an increased number of units, and the retention of units. Implementation of unit service plans through collaborative detailed assessments and an increased number of unit contacts enables commissioners to meet these goals.

The methods we employ include the steps that are laid out in the *Unit Roadmap*, assisting the units we serve in recruiting and training key unit leaders and new member coordinators, collaborating with the unit Key 3 to develop and implement a unit service plan. We also encourage the use of the Journey to Excellence to guide continuous improvement and use the suite of MyScouting tools to stay abreast of the status of the units we serve. We never have enough commissioners, so we continuously recruit more, and we assign the resources we have to units with the greatest need for support.

District Level Unit Service– 20 minutes

Unit service

A district's commissioner corps is the link between the district and the local units.
It is important to understand how commissioners are organized.

Understanding the structure allows for better service to the units, and when necessary, the organization can be changed at any time to meet the needs of the district.

Types and levels of commissioner support

Commissioners come in all shapes, sizes, and experiences and they can be organized in many ways but there are just three types of commissioners:

- Unit commissioners
- Roundtable commissioners
- Administrative commissioners

Those that are not unit commissioners or roundtable commissioners are *administrative* commissioners.

Role of the unit commissioner

A commissioner plays several roles. To include being a friend, a representative, a unit "doctor" or paramedic, a teacher, and a coach.

The commissioner is a **friend** of the unit. Of all the roles, this one is the most important. Building a great relationship with the unit leadership is key to success. It springs from the attitude, “I care, I am here to help you, what can I do for you?” Caring is the ingredient that makes commissioner service successful. Be an advocate of the unit needs. Commissioners who makes themself known and accepted with the unit leadership will be called on to help in times of trouble.

The commissioner is a **representative**. The average unit leader is totally occupied in working with the scouts. Some scouts have little if any contact with the Boy Scouts of America other than your visits to their meeting. To them, you may be the Boy Scouts of America. Be a good example. Show that you believe in the ideals, the principles, and the policies of the Scouting movement. Represent it well!

The commissioner is a unit “**doctor**”. As “doctor” you know that prevention is better than a cure, so you try to see that your units make good “health practices” a way of life. Sometimes being a doctor and performing triage on a unit to keep its program going or providing support to their leadership is critical. When problems arise, and they will even in the best unit, act quickly. Observe symptoms, diagnose the real ailment, prescribe a remedy, and follow up with the “patient.”

The commissioner is a **teacher**. As a commissioner, you will have a wonderful opportunity to participate in the growth of unit leaders by sharing your knowledge with them. You teach not just in an academic environment, but where it counts most—as an immediate response to a need to know. That is the best adult learning situation since the lesson is instantly reinforced by practical application of the new knowledge.

The commissioner is a **coach**. As a Scouting coach, you will help guide units in solving their own problems. Coaching is the best role for you when unit leaders don’t recognize a problem and where solutions are not clear-cut. Everyone needs coaching or assistance from time to time, even experienced leaders. You provide them with different “plays” that might be the right one for them to move ahead or succeed at solving a problem.

Roundtable Commissioners

Coordination of all roundtables held in the council is the responsibility of the assistant council commissioner for roundtable.
This person reports to the council commissioner and conducts an annual council-wide roundtable planning meeting followed by a midyear review.

This process brings a level of standardization to district roundtables in terms of content by promoting the use of *Roundtable Support pages on the National website* and other resources while allowing local flexibility for the districts.

In some larger councils, there may be multiple assistant council commissioners for roundtable depending on the local needs.

Roundtable commissioner structure

District roundtables fall under the guidance of the assistant district commissioner for roundtable. This individual oversees the district roundtables in all program areas, reports to the district commissioner, and works with the district structure.

He or she should also work in cooperation with the assistant council commissioner for roundtable to see that annual planning and midyear review programs are well-attended by the district's program specific unit roundtable commissioners.

In addition, the assistant district commissioner should make sure the *Roundtable Support pages* are used so that the units will be getting proper program materials.

District roundtable

Roundtable programs are implemented by the roundtable commissioners for Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, and Venturing crews.

These individuals are responsible for coordinating and conducting the various parts of the roundtable meetings. They make their contributions with guidance and help from the assistant council and district commissioners.

Assistant roundtable commissioners conduct tasks directly to benefit the program-specific unit commissioners, assisting in the development and delivery of the monthly meeting agendas and program items.

Each roundtable commissioner may have as many assistants as needed. For example, Cub Scout roundtables may need several Assistants for their program breakouts while Scouts BSA roundtables may not need as many.

Administrative Commissioners

The district commissioner is recommended by the district nominating committee for approval and appointment by the council executive board with the concurrence of the Scout executive.

The district commissioner works directly with the district chair and the district professional as part of the district Key 3. District commissioners take ownership of the district team of commissioners to ensure that all units are well cared for throughout the year, paying special

attention to new units as these units are the most vulnerable to not renew their charters.

The district commissioner leads the commissioner staff of the district, guiding and measuring the district's unit service function.

Assistant district commissioner

Assistant district commissioners can make or break a district's ability to see that every unit receives competent commissioner service.

Even the best district commissioner in the council cannot personally train and guide all unit commissioners in the district. So, assistant district commissioners are assigned certain units in the district, and they supervise the unit commissioners who serve those units. Assistant district commissioners are appointed by the district commissioners.

Assistant district commissioners work closely with the district commissioner and district executive. This team must have a vision of effective Scouting, and they must communicate that vision—through unit commissioners—to every unit leader in the district.

When a unit commissioner resigns, or cannot adequately fulfill the responsibilities of the position, the assistant district commissioner *temporarily* assumes the vacant position. However, immediate action must be taken to provide a replacement.

Administrative commissioners are *not* unit commissioners. Their responsibility is to *find* unit commissioners and Roundtable commissioners.

District Commissioner Staff Organization

This is a typical organizational structure for a district commissioner staff.
Administrative commissioners are represented in yellow
Unit service commissioners are displayed in green
Roundtable commissioners are displayed in orange

Remember, this is just one possible way that a district commissioner can organize the district commissioner staff. A district commissioner has the latitude to organize unit service to meet the needs of their district.

Council commissioner

The council commissioner leads all commissioner personnel in the council. Their duties are set forth in the bylaws of the local council.

The council commissioner is selected by the council nominating committee and is elected at the annual meeting of the local council and serves as a member of the council Key 3.

The council commissioner also serves as an officer of the local council, a member of the executive board, a member of the council executive committee, and a National Council representative.

Assistant council commissioner

Successful council commissioners know they cannot do their task alone.
Council commissioners appoint the number of assistant council commissioners they think they need, and they can play a variety of roles.

Break – 5 Minutes

Hand out a JTE Form (any unit type) and a blank unit assessment form. These will be used in the next section of training.

Unit Contacts – 20 minutes

Planning your first unit visit

What do you do to prepare for making your first contact with your newly assigned unit? Think of what you would do to prepare for an interview for a new job. You learn as much as you can about the company you are applying to. It's the same here.

Preparation

Before visiting a unit, prior proper planning and preparation is necessary. Do some research on the unit. What can you learn from other scouters in the district?

Review contacts recorded in commissioner tools to determine what issues have been noted, and what has been done to correct prior issues. Review the training status of the adult leaders in the training manager. Review the unit roster in the Roster tool and review the youth member age report. If most of the youth are 16 and 17 years old, this could be an indication of recruiting issues.

Before a visit, you should also seek an introduction to the unit leadership. While a cold call is acceptable, a personal introduction from another scouter can help to establish a relationship and rapport.

Before visiting the unit, the unit leadership should know you are coming to ensure the unit program is compatible with your visit. Over time, your relationship with the unit may develop to the point that no scheduling is required.

Understand your unit.

Keep in touch with the chartered organizations of the units you serve.
a. Meet and encourage the orientation of the chartered organization representative.
b. Meet the head of the organization and explain your role as a help to the units.
c. Help develop a good relationship between the unit's leadership and the chartered organization leadership.
Know the neighborhood in which your units are located.
a. Help graduating members of one program join the next level of Scouting.
b. Identify potential sources for new youth members.
c. Cultivate men and women of good moral character who might become Scouting leaders.
d. Know your chartered organizations and prospective ones.
e. Learn about resources and characteristics of the neighborhood that might impact a unit's program.

Keep your Unit Focus.

Don't fall into the trap of doing everything else in the district except your appointed job—unit service. Because of the many programs and activities of Scouting, unit commissioners might find themselves promoting projects, carrying messages, acting as judges, running Friends of Scouting campaigns, etc. While all these activities are unquestionably important, they are not responsibilities of unit commissioners.
Unit commissioners do cooperate with other Scouting personnel working on specific programs even though they are not responsible for them. Don't feel guilty about occasionally saying "no" to other requests. Serve in the commissioner position only. Some people, of course, may desire to remain affiliated with their home unit—perhaps in their own church. However, understand that being a commissioner is your primary Scouting job. Use your time helping with specific unit needs and helping each unit become effective with its unit program and unit operation.

Perspective

While many commissioners come to that role after serving in a unit, your experience should help inform, but not control how you interact.
Units are different – different sizes, different chartered partners, different leaders.
Chartered partners and even the unit itself can have different expectations and priorities.
Remember that there are 8 Scouting methods, and each unit may interpret the use of those methods differently.

Providing guidance

We all want to be understood and perceived as smart and competent but, we want to empower leaders to discover the answers to their problems on their own.

Knowledge expectations

As a commissioner, we have a wealth of knowledge and resources. We don't need to know everything. Better to take questions and deliver correct answers later than give an incorrect answer immediately.
Follow through. Do what you say you are going to do.
Provide information that will help the unit, not just show how much you know.
Provide information and help that can be relied upon to build trust.
We need to be able to identify needs, available resources, and help units succeed.

Focus on relationships.

Our key focus is making sure the unit succeeds. Keep these key points in mind. As you are delivering service, remember that the unit's priorities and goals should be the primary focus.

Importance of Unit Contacts

We've already discussed the roles unit commissioners play, but our main responsibility is providing service to units. We do this with effective monthly contacts.

An important purpose of unit contacts is keeping yourself informed. If you are genuinely concerned about a unit's health, you must always know its condition.

Is the unit fun and challenging for the scouts? Do the leaders find it rewarding?

Is there a membership growth plan, and is it working?

Will the unit reregister on time?

Will they achieve the Journey to Excellence award?

The purpose of your contact is much more that looking for problems to report. Your contacts should strengthen the capabilities of the unit leaders.

Unit Contacts

BSA has defined a **contact** as **"a meaningful exchange between a commissioner and one or more members of the unit."**
Normally you should make a visit to your units monthly. However, unit contacts must be made often enough to accomplish your mission. Only you can say how often that needs to be. You should be close enough to your units to know what is happening and help strengthen their capabilities to deliver a quality program.
When you visit - watch and listen. Don't disrupt the program. You are a guest and observer.
Make note of **attendance:** is it near 75% of registered Scouts?

Planning: Do things move smoothly? **Adult leadership:** Are they actively involved? Do they seem to enjoy the meeting?

Other types of contacts:
Use telephone calls, email, and text messaging to give or receive information, or to follow up.

Visit informally with unit leaders at roundtable. Encourage attendance and participation. Attend a unit event. Visit your unit as they participate in a district or council event.

When you need quick contact, e-mail, or texting works very well but don't let emails and texts substitute for personal interaction.

Don't feel that just because you made contact that you are successful as a commissioner. When your unit is moving toward completion of their *Journey to Excellence* goals and have a good unit program, then you are successful as a commissioner.

Unit Key 3

The Key 3 is the unit leader, committee chair, and charter organization representative. They are the unit leaders with whom you should have the most contact.

The members of an effectively functioning **unit Key 3** interact much the same as the members of any other Key 3, and the youth that the unit serves remain the primary focus of their interactions. A unit commissioner supports the efforts of a unit Key 3.

Developing an effective Key 3 isn't easy but experience has taught us one thing: wherever we have an engaged, effective Key 3, we do a better job of delivering the promise of Scouting.

Unit Assessments – 20 minutes

Unit Assessment

Unit assessments aren't new but, our approach to them should be.
In the past, we've asked unit commissioners to assess units independently based on their observations during visits. We trained them to make recommendations to unit leaders to improve unit performance. Unit leaders were trained to conduct self-assessments and develop ways to improve unit performance.
We've recruited subject matter experts to staff our district committees. There we could find individuals with a passion for advancement, or training, or growing membership, or finance, or camping, or any number of topics about which leaders need to know to help their unit grow and prosper, but we didn't have processes to facilitate coordination of those assessments and sharing of that knowledge.

Types of unit Assessment

These are the primary types of assessments. Detailed assessments and Simple assessments.

Detailed assessments are usually completed twice each year. Detailed collaborative assessments require that unit commissioners and unit leaders communicate and work together openly to identify unit strengths and unit needs. Open communication enables them to prioritize those needs. That helps them focus first on tasks that will have the greatest impact on program quality. It identifies resources from within the unit, its charter organization, the district operating committee or council and is the basis of a unit service plan. It is a tool that assists commissioners in helping units implement a continuous improvement process.

Sometimes, however, the only alternative may be to build a plan based solely on the unit commissioner's assessment of a unit's strengths and needs. Not all unit leaders are going to immediately understand or be receptive to a collaborative detailed assessment. Unit commissioners should do their best to gain their acceptance, but each unit needs a customized service plan. Done well, that can ultimately cause unit leaders to think more highly of Unit Service and increase their acceptance of a *collaborative* approach to assessment and plan development. If done independently of the unit key 3, there is an option when documenting a Detailed Assessment whereby the commissioner chooses not to score each sub-element in an evaluation area. When choosing not to evaluate each sub-element in a Detailed Assessment, the commissioner is consciously deciding to create an Intermediate Assessment which is a subset of the Detailed Assessment.

The other type of assessment is a simple assessment. It is short and to the point. It should contain actionable information that supports and monitors the unit service plan. While it is brief, the significance of the information is important to the continuous improvement of the unit. It should contain relevant information about concerns as well as positives found within the unit. It also serves to ensure that district committee resources that have been linked to unit needs are in fact providing the specialized help the unit requires.

The Assessment Scoring Matrix

A unit assessment doesn't have to be difficult process. Unit leaders and engaged commissioners know, intuitively, a unit's strengths and its opportunities to improve.

Take a look at this unit assessment scoring matrix. It is part of the unit assessment process in commissioner tools. it's really pretty simple…
A unit Key 3 and unit commissioner can use it in conducting the unit assessment that is the foundation of a *Unit Service Plan*. Whether the scale is "Low-Medium-High," "Red-Yellow-Green," or "1-2-3-4-5," the matrix provides a simple approach to assessing a unit's performance in key areas such as finance, membership, program, and leadership & governance. Using the bell curve, you readily see that the normal distribution is a score of 3. Most assessments should

be around this level.

The next logical step in the process, once opportunities for improvement are identified, is to prioritize them. It may not be practical to attack all of them at the same time; prioritizing them will enable the best possible use of available resources to improve unit performance.

Unit assessments should always include the unit's program plan. Our best units, those with the highest retention of youth and adults, invariably create and maintain an annual program plan that ensures the unit's program is relevant to the youth it serves.

The key to using the scoring matrix is to be *consistent* across all your units. Those units scoring a 2.5 or below require greater focus and unit service than those scoring higher.

Unit Service Plan – 25 minutes

Instructor Note: This section is over a third of the material – give it the time needed to fully understand how, and why, the Unit Service Plan is done.

The *Unit Service Plan*

The *Unit Service Plan* is our primary tool that enables us to link unit needs to district operating committee resources. It is also a key element in the design of *Commissioner Tools.*

The *Unit Service Plan* is a better way to provide unit service. It supports all five objectives of excellent unit service *and* our approach to starting, sustaining and growing high-performing units.

Based upon a collaborative assessment of unit health, commissioners develop a service plan that is customized to respond to a unit's strengths and needs and draws upon resources available within the unit, its charter organization, and through the district operating committee.

Unit assessments

Each of the assessment categories have topics and statements that go into greater detail for each category consistent with the unit's *Journey to Excellence* scorecard

As you work through each of these categories with unit leaders, you will identify areas **where the unit would like to improve.** The *Unit Service Plan* is developed from these identified areas. It will become apparent that some action items will be the responsibility of unit leadership (for example, recruiting new youth members or adult volunteers), some will be the responsibility of the unit's chartered organization (for example, providing additional meeting space or equipment storage), and others will be the responsibility of the unit commissioner to

coordinate by linking unit needs to district resources (for example, delivery of position-specific training for unit leaders or participation in the district's fall membership roundup).
Some action items will fall into multiple responsibility buckets. The unit commissioner coordinates all these efforts to support the unit's youth and adult leader needs.

Collaboration

The Unit Service Plan enables you to fulfill your mission to help units' better serve more youth through Scouting. And in the process, it enables improved retention of units and improves the performance rating of units using *Journey to Excellence* metrics.

A *Unit Service Plan* will have greatest impact when it is built upon a **collaborative assessment** of the unit's strengths and needs.

Developing and executing a *Unit Service Plan* in *Commissioner Tools* touches *every* metric we use to help unit service continually improve and every metric we use to help our units continually improve, too.

Key benefits

The *Unit Service Plan* offers four key benefits to the unit leaders and you:

- Focus
- Actionable Information
- Linkage
- Efficiency

Focus

A Unit Service Plan provides ***focus***.

The most effective *Unit Service Plans* are built upon a collaborative assessment of a unit's strengths and needs. That collaborative assessment enables unit leaders and you to identify and prioritize tasks that will strengthen the unit most quickly. Since collaborative assessments and Unit Service Plans should be updated at least twice each year, the tasks should be sufficiently limited in scope to enable completion within six months. That enables unit leaders and their unit commissioner to remain focused and best supports continuous improvement of the unit.

Before attempting a collaborative assessment, you must establish a solid relationship with a unit's leaders based on mutual respect and an understanding of one another's motivation for involvement in Scouting and vision of future success for the unit. Collaborative assessments are a new approach to unit service; not all unit leaders are going to immediately understand, or perhaps, accept it. Unit commissioners should do their best to gain acceptance (their relationship with unit leaders will be an asset in that), but each unit will be best served through a customized plan.

Sometimes, the only alternative will be to build that plan based on the unit commissioner's assessment of the unit's strengths and needs. Done well, that should ultimately cause unit leaders to think more highly of unit service and increase their acceptance of a collaborative approach to unit assessment and plan development.

Unit Service Plans based on a collaborative assessment will have the greatest impact as they provide the greatest focus to everyone involved.

Actionable information

A *Unit Service Plan* is action-oriented; as a result, it provides ***actionable information***.
It includes a limited number (typically, five to seven) SMART goals; Remember, one of the benefits of a *Unit Service Plan* is the focus it provides to a unit's leaders and unit commissioner. Limiting the scope of the plan – the number of goals it includes and the time in which they will be completed – helps ensure focus.

SMART goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**elevant and **R**esource-oriented, and **T**ime-based. They identify specifically what is going to be done, who is accountable for the task, and when it is expected to be completed.

One example of a SMART goal might be, "All registered unit leaders will be current on Youth Protection training by March 1 of this year." The unit's committee chair, or a designated member of the committee, might be the individual responsible for that task being completed by the established target date.

And remember, *Training Manager* in the my.scouting.org suite of tools will provide the unit commissioner with the *Youth Protection* Training status of each of the unit's registered leaders, so the unit commissioner can provide additional actionable information to help sharpen the focus on the work to be done.

Linkage

A Unit Service Plan enables ***linkage*** to other resources needed to ensure success.
Neither unit leaders nor unit commissioners are experts in every element of Scouting. But unit commissioners can provide access to subject matter experts that serve on our district operating committees:
- If the collaborative assessment identifies, for example, specific needs for training of youth and/or adults, a member of the district training committee would be able to assist in coordinating the delivery of that training.
- District membership committee members could be a resource in developing new approaches to growing the unit.

- District camping committee members could assist a unit interested in developing a high adventure program for its older youth.

Once the need is identified, the unit commissioner can facilitate linkage. Individual districts will have different approaches to the best way to gain operating committee support commitments. Once established, the unit commissioner can coordinate and monitor the efforts of everyone responsible for completion of tasks included in the current plan.

Efficiency

Finally, the *Simple Assessment* function in *Commissioner Tools* provides a quick and easy was to document plan progress.
Simple assessments document regular, monthly contacts by a unit commissioner.
Unit contacts recorded in *Commissioner Tools* should involve substantive interaction with unit leaders that ensure *Unit Service Plan* progress or address some other significant unit need.

Implementation process

An unexecuted plan is of no value. Once a *Unit Service Plan* is developed, the unit commissioner follows up on the progress of the plan through monthly simple assessments that record the achievement of the goals identified in the unit service plan.

The unit commissioner is an essential element of the *Unit Service Plan's* success. An engaged unit commissioner works closely with the unit Key 3 to continually assess progress and help the unit *and* the district operating committee maintain accountability and make course corrections when necessary.

Updating the *Detailed Unit Assessment* at six-month intervals or when unit leadership changes will help ensure the unit continues to grow and provide the best possible program to the youth it serves.

Why do a *Unit Service Plan*?

The simple answer to the question remains: A *Unit Service Plan* enables commissioners to help units better serve more youth through Scouting.
And in the process, it enables improved retention of units and improves the performance rating of units using *Journey to Excellence* metrics.
Think about it: that means developing and executing a *Unit Service Plan* in *Commissioner Tools* touches **every** metric we currently use to help unit service continually improve **and also** every metric we currently use to help our units continually improve, too.

District commitment

Finalizing a *Unit Service Plan* requires commitment from the district operating committee. While the method of gaining commitment may vary from one district to another, the goal is to identify

resources on the district operating committee that can help meet unit needs and complete action items on the *Unit Service Plan* (for example, the district's training committee might supply training needed by unit leaders while its membership committee might coordinate unit participation in the Fall Membership Roundup).

Unit commissioners will find the members of an effective district operating committee willing to offer resources to meet unit needs as they understand no one, including a unit commissioner, can be an expert on everything.

District commitment enables the unit commissioner to link district operating committee resources to unit needs and identify accountability for the related action items on the *Unit Service Plan*. With those commitments, the *Unit Service Plan* can be finalized.

The unit commissioner and the unit Key 3 should monitor the plan throughout the year and identify when adjustments are needed. Unit contacts recorded in commissioner tools will provide valuable information for the next unit assessment.

It's a Cycle.

It's a cycle… as the current Scouting year draws to a close and the charter renewal process begins, it is time for another Unit Assessment.
Things can and do change during the course of a Scouting year and may require that the Unit Service Plan be revised. After all, this is what continuous improvement is all about!

What success looks like.

Using the actionable information in Commissioner Tools, unit commissioners can see:
Their IMPACT on units:

- Through regular contacts with the unit and summaries of those contacts which are recorded in Commissioner Tools
- Units are demonstrating growth through the *Journey to Excellence*
- The strengths and needs (and a *Unit Service Plan* to address them) of the units I serve are captured in *Commissioner Tools*.
- The needs of units served are linked to district operating committee resources, as indicated in their *Unit Service Plans*.
- Units served renew their charters on time.

Collaboration:
Volunteers and professionals to whom I report provide feedback.
The leaders of the units I serve provide feedback and view me as a trusted advisor and call when they have issues.

Break – 5 Minutes

The District – 20 Minutes

District Structure

Let's look at how local Scouting is structured, and how the role of unit commissioner fits in to that structure.
The Boy Scouts of America is organized geographically into local councils. These councils are organized into smaller territories called districts.

For the next few minutes, we will explore how districts operate to support their council and the units they serve.

District purpose

The purpose of a District is to support the units in their communities enabling them to be successful in delivering a quality program to the youth we serve.

District leadership

Another key element is the coordination and mobilization of resources to support the unit, ensuring the growth and success of those units within the district's territory.
These resources include Volunteers, who are our greatest asset. All of the positions shown are volunteer positions except the district executive. Chartered organization representatives are voting members of the district because of their position. Council fiscal resources provide facilities and materials to units and program knowledge, which is most often provided by our volunteers.

Four functions of the district

All Districts are responsible for carrying out four standard functions.
These four functions are the pieces to the puzzle that make up your District:

- Membership
- Fund Development
- Program
- Unit Service

We will discuss each of these functions in detail.

Membership

The first function of the district committee is **membership** growth.
The five sources of membership growth are:
- The establishment of new units
- Recruitment of new youth
- Retention of members

- Webelos to Scouts BSA *and* Scouts BSA to Venturing/Sea Scout transition
- Retention of units

Fund development

The second function of the district committee is Fund Development. The objective is to see that the district provides its share of funds to the total council operating budget.

Funds are raised from a variety of sources including Friends of Scouting, product sales like popcorn, special events and district activity budgets.

Special events are fund raising events like golf tournaments, sporting clays and silent auctions that are usually held at the council level and districts are encouraged to support these events.

District activities include program opportunities for youth and volunteers like camporees, pinewood derbies and district recognition banquets. Specific budgets are developed for these activities to cover the cost of conducting the activity. If there are excess funds, they go to the council, and the council is also responsible for covering any shortfall.

Program

The third function of the district committee is **program**.

This committee function assists Scouting units with camp promotions, activities and civic service, training adult volunteers, youth advancement and recognition.

Unit Service

The fourth function of the district committee is **unit service**.
Unit service provides coaching and consultation for unit adults to help ensure the success of every Scouting unit.

Interrelationships

The order in which the functions are listed is not meant to suggest the order of their importance, but the natural interrelationship and flow of the functions:
- The Scouting movement cannot achieve its purpose without first organizing units and enrolling members.
- The district cannot support its units without the funds to do so.
- Unit programs are supported by the district through its program functions and unit service.

All four functions are equally important and necessary. If one suffers from lack of attention all the work of the district suffers.

As you are progressing through training you will notice that course content will commonly follow these four functional areas with the ever-present emphasis on volunteers.
When you successfully have all four functions working together in your district, outstanding Scouting programs will be the result.

Standard district organization

Each district, regardless of size, has a district committee to coordinate the work of the district. A typical district usually would have an operating committee for each of the four functions, including a commissioner staff for the unit service function. Let's take a moment to identify where each of the four functions fit into our organization chart.

The four functions are:

- Membership
- Finance
- Program
- Unit Service

The exact method of organizing a district is flexible and should be based on the needs and characteristics of the communities in your district.

Working with New Units – 10 Minutes

Commissioner for new units

This is a unit commissioner who is assigned to a new or reorganized unit. This commissioner is assigned very early in the new unit organization process.

This unit commissioner holds a special place in the formation of a new unit. The role begins at the very start of the new unit organization process by working closely with the new unit organizer and the unit-serving executive.

They become a familiar and consistent liaison between the chartered organization representative and the district.

The unit commissioner for new units will be the go-to person serving as a coach, mentor, and consultant by laying a strong foundation around which the new unit can form and continue to be successful for many years.

The roles of “regular” unit commissioners and those for new units are very similar in that they both can be coaches and mentors, but the unit commissioner for new units is involved in the unit organization process. While it is typical and acceptable for most unit commissioners to be assigned several units and have a longer tenure, due to the length and intensity of service given by the new-unit commissioner they are also asked to be assigned to only one unit, at least during the unit’s first year.

Why we need a unit commissioner for new units.

Only one out of every three new units makes it to their third charter renewal. Units are starting, but they are also dropping as fast, if not faster, than we can start them.

The plan is to involve the commissioner corps earlier in the process because It gives new units extra attention, so they can become high-performing units.

When a new unit is organized the BSA has made a promise to those families that their sons and daughters would have a top-quality Scouting experience that they cannot get anywhere else. It is a promise that really needs to be kept!

So, a new-unit commissioner can derive even greater satisfaction from their new role than other unit commissioners simply because they can take pride in the creation process and watch the unit grow and be sustained over many years.

New unit organizer

The new unit organizer is part of the district membership team and works closely with the institutional head and/or executive officer of the potential chartered organization to put together an organizing team that “creates” the new unit.

The unit commissioner for the new unit is part of the district unit service team and supports that effort and strives to become a familiar face to the new unit team, taking the lead in helping the team complete some aspects of its responsibilities.

Responsibilities of the new unit organizer

The responsibilities of the new unit organizer and the unit commissioner for new units are:
To **s**upport the idea that at least 10 youth and five adults are recruited for membership in the new unit.
They encourage the unit to participate in training both during this organization phase and into the future.
Together, they will present the charter at a full meeting of the chartered organization and they attend the first meeting.

From this point on, the new-unit commissioner takes the leading role in mentoring the unit for the next 36 months.

New member coordinator

As a new unit forms, and the new unit organizing team recruits unit leaders, a key person to add to the unit leadership along with the unit Key 3, is a new member coordinator.

Starting and sustaining strong membership in a new unit depends not only on having members join the unit but also on engaging youth and their families in the unit experience so that they stay.

The role of the new member coordinator is to ensure that both of these keys to success take place.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the New Member Coordinator are to serve as welcoming ambassadors for the unit and work with the unit committee in developing and implementing the unit membership plan.
They also participate in new member coordinator training and collaborate with the district membership team.
As a new unit forms, the new member coordinator can become a key person in insuring that at least ten youth and five adults are recruited to start the unit and then help it grow.
Each of the following three action elements are important parts of a new unit membership plan under the leadership of a new member coordinator:

As a new unit forms, the new member coordinator can become a key person in insuring that at least ten youth and five adults are recruited to start the unit and then help it grow.

Each of the following three action elements are important parts of a new unit membership plan under the leadership of a new member coordinator:
First, they share the benefits of Scouting.
by developing and sharing their Scouting story and showing the impact of Scouting on their family.

They Identify and access research data and local examples confirming the fun and value of Scouting to youth, families, and the community.

The New Member Coordinator Promotes Scouting benefits through social media and other avenues of communication so they can showcase Scouting through engagement in local community events and service.

Secondly, they coordinate unit recruitment.
New Member Coordinators oversee unit recruitment efforts such as joining events, informational presentations, and peer-to-peer initiatives.

They make appeals to potential youth members and their families through well-designed and widely distributed invitations shared through electronic media, handouts, and personal contacts.

New Member Coordinators collaborate with local school representatives and community leaders, particularly in the chartered organization, to foster promotion of Scouting opportunities**.**

Lastly, they guide the joining and welcoming process for youth and their families.
by greeting newcomers warmly and establishing friendly, enjoyable relationships so that new members develop a strong sense of belonging.

The New Member Coordinator should develop a unit welcome packet, electronically and/or in print, to answer frequently asked questions and to provide resource and contact information. They ensure that youth and adult applications, and payments are promptly submitted to the council service center.

They build fun and excitement about the unit program and encourage youth and their families to take pride in Scouting accomplishments.

They also ask for feedback and the sharing of ideas through customer satisfaction surveys and other means.

Youth Protection and Unit Resources – 5 Minutes

Youth Protection and the commissioner

As every Scouter must do, make yourself familiar with BSA's policies regarding youth protection. Monitor the status of YPT training for the adult leaders of the units you serve. Make sure they are renewing their training every two years. The *Training Manager* tool in ***my.Scouting.org*** gives you real time information on the training status of your unit leaders - especially as it relates to YPT.

Help your units follow the policies and submit registration applications for background checks.
No one can register/re-register with expired *Youth Protection Training*.
All volunteers are required to submit a one-time signed *Background Check Authorization* form authorizing periodic background rechecks.

Know who to contact when a Youth Protection violation event is reported.

Unit resources

Helping our units understand the importance of having a solid program is a key element of our *Unit Service Plan*. The national BSA website provides great resources to units to help them build programs that attracts and retains Scouts and Scouters.
Be current on program content for the units you serve, whether at the pack, troop, crew, or ship level of Scouting.
The *BSA Learn Center* is a great training resource to familiarize yourself with Scouting's programs. Commissioners are encouraged to take leader specific training relevant to the units they serve.

Journey to Excellence

The ***Journey to Excellence*** is the performance measurement and recognition program for units to measure their performance against the BSA's standards of excellence.

The goal is to assist units in maximizing their results in key performance areas that are directly related to producing a successful growing and sustainable Scouting program. (i.e., membership retention and growth, financial strength, camping, advancement, etc.).

What is its Purpose?

The Journey to Excellence encourages continuous improvement by using performance measures vs. process measures. It rewards unit success and achieves the goal of serving more youth through a higher quality program while helping unit leaders understand the key factors that improve program.

What's in it for me?

When unit leaders ask why they should participate in the *Journey to Excellence*, tell them that it provides a framework for **planning** the year. The *Journey to Excellence* standards are based on what successful units do to continually improve and If your unit works to achieve a Gold, Silver or Bronze *Journey to Excellence* rating, you'll have a strong and active program.

Let them know that it is a method for them to **evaluate** their unit. The *Journey to Excellence* provides tangible measurements based on things they are likely already tracking, such as how many campouts they have, how many youths are advancing, etc., and uses simple ways to calculate performance.

The JTE also provides **guidance** in areas where the unit might do better. As they track their performance against the Journey to Excellence standards, they can easily see where they could do better.

JTE establishes specific **guidelines and standards** of what is considered good performance. The *Journey to Excellence* has specific, simple measures to help them. They can easily compare what they are doing against the standards.

JTE is a great tool that provides **early warning** of potential problem areas. They can track any areas where the unit is not performing as they might like and have plenty of time to make corrections.

The *Journey to Excellence* is a **recognition** for good Scouting. They can proudly receive their Bronze, Silver, or Gold recognition for their Scouting unit for the year.

The *Journey to Excellence* is a great **benchmarking tool** to get ideas and tips from other good units. They can receive help and best practices in areas where other units have met the Gold standard. In the areas where they are doing well, they can give help and ideas to other units.

Journey to Excellence website

On the National Council's Commissioner's website, you will find much more information on the *Journey to Excellence* and can download the latest scorecards for the units you serve. Check out this page and all the other pages on the national website as often as you can so that you have the latest information at your disposal.
And as we'll see in later modules, the *Unit Service Plan* and *Commissioner Tools* were both designed to support continuous improvement and the *Journey to Excellence* process.

Unit Assessment process

A *Unit Assessment* is a first step in supporting unit growth on the *Journey to Excellence*.
It may be helpful for the unit commissioner to coordinate a unit assessment meeting with the unit Key 3 and other unit leaders who can add value to the planning process. Possible agenda items would include:
- Review of the unit's JTE performance for the current year
- Completion of a Unit Assessment
- Identification of key opportunities to strengthen the unit and the program it offers during the coming year

Units benefit from assessments at least twice each year at six-month intervals. Around charter renewal time is a great option as that often occurs at about the same time units are reviewing JTE achievements for the current year.
A third assessment may be valuable when there is a change in unit leadership.

Instructor Note: Review the *Unit Assessment* categories for familiarity. Do not go into detail as you can get behind on time.

Charter Renewal – 10 Minutes

Support on-time renewal

The commissioner's focus is the retention of the unit, though we should be especially mindful of supporting new youth membership efforts as we move more toward a volunteer led, professionally guided, approach to increasing membership.

Phases 1 & 2: prepare

At Least 90 days before unit renewal date.

The district executive visits the head of the chartered organization to renew the Scouting relationship.

This visit is a critical opportunity to connect, face-to-face with our chartered organizations. In districts where many units have the same renewal date, district executives will be very busy during this time. These meetings are central to our mutual long-term success.

If problems are anticipated in the reregistering of the unit or there are other sensitive issues to be discussed, the visit should be held earlier so that any action may take place prior to the renewal date.

Sixty days before unit renewal date.

The unit commissioner and unit committee conduct a membership inventory of currently registered youth and adults. All inactive members are listed and assigned to various persons who will visit or contact them to attempt to reactivate them. Be sure to brief the visitors/callers on what to say when they make their calls. Every effort should be made to recruit additional youth and adults so that the unit can reregister with no loss in membership.

Also, be sure to register any youth who are participating but are not yet registered.

Internet Charter Renewal

Units choosing to renew their charters online (internet rechartering) will select a person as their renewal processor. He/she will LOG IN to the local council's website, complete the steps through the submittal process, and print a revised charter renewal application to be brought to the unit's charter renewal meeting for review, discussion, and authorized signatures.

(To assist districts in this process, there is a report available to council employees with membership reporting capabilities titled *Commissioner's Status Report*. This report provides commissioners of each unit's electronic renewal status, including the date of first login, the current stage of the process completed, and date submitted. It will only show the electronic process.

Two other reports that are available are the *New Members Added Report* and the *Members Not Renewed Report.* Both of these reports are designed to provide information to the district in an effort to follow up with new youth and dropped youth identified through the renewal

process.)The unit commissioner can run a *Unit Roster Report* at any time through my.Scouting.org.

Use the tutorial, view the Frequently Asked Questions

Tips:

- Reorganize before charter expiration
- Multiple registration is in the Update Fee section
- To make changes, after final transmission, you must make pen changes
- Must have signatures and money
- Fee computation does **not** include insurance
- With 2 or more units, don't transmit until all done
- Complete a Journey to Excellence form for units

Phase 3: Review and submit

The charter review date is set and officials of the chartered organization, the unit committee, unit leaders, and the unit commissioner or other district or council representative are urged to attend.

Phase 4: Charter presentation

On the Commissioner Web Page, under Internet Charter Renewal, the Charter Certificate "FAQ/How To" shows you how to customize for your units and print out the Charter certificate for presentation.

Stage the presentation under the auspices of, and at a regular meeting or activity of, the chartered organization. This serves to accentuate the character of the relationship, puts the chartered organization in a better position to recognize its unit leaders, and assures attendance of the largest possible number of the chartered organization's members.

The charter presentation should be directed to the chartered organization rather than the unit itself.

There are members of the chartered organization who will attend an organizational affair but will not be motivated to attend a meeting put on by the unit. It is important to capture the interest of as many members of the chartered organization as possible. Parents of youth members will be just as likely to attend in either case.

Each occasion must be considered individually, and circumstances will color the decision as to location of the ceremony. A unit consisting of youth of different religious faiths will require careful consideration if the organization is a religious one. Other things to consider are personalities involved, available facilities, and community attitudes.

The charter should be presented to the head of the chartered organization unless that person directs otherwise.

Commissioner Development – 10 Minutes

Monthly commissioner staff meeting

Commissioners need to meet monthly to plan and review all the needed unit service tasks to ensure good unit program and stable unit operation. Anything less loses momentum, shortchanges the ongoing training required, and prevents you and your district commissioner from ensuring that dynamic unit service is happening.
You, as a unit commissioner, should come prepared to discuss with your assistant district commissioner observations you have made from recent visits with your units along with your *Unit Service Plans*, so that you can link the needs of your units to district resources.

This meeting sets the stage for how you as a unit commissioner perform your duties in service to your units.

Commissioner Tools

Our second major objective as commissioners is to contact units and capture their strengths and needs in *Commissioner Tools.*
Commissioner Tools was designed to help commissioners fulfill this objective by providing benefits in four areas:

1. Enabling easy access to actionable information

Commissioners, in real time, will use dashboards to view summary information about a unit's membership, the status of its leaders' youth protection and position-specific training, their participation in district roundtables and the unit's current needs and opportunities to improve performance. As additional *my*.Scouting tools come online (such as advancement and charter renewal), commissioners will also have direct access to that information.

2. *Enabling improved focus on their primary objectives*

Commissioners will be able to work together with a unit's Key 3 to develop a *Unit Service Plan*: an assessment of the unit's strengths and needs and a prioritized list of action items, including accountability and target dates for completion. Completion of those tasks will enable continuous improvement in planning and budget, membership, program, and volunteer leadership. Through ongoing unit contacts, commissioners will be able to identify unit needs and capture periodic updates of the collaborative assessment of unit health and ensure the plan for improvement is moving forward.

3. Supporting roundtable administration and promotion

Roundtable commissioners will be able to publish dates of upcoming roundtables, agendas, unit participation information, and note key developments. That will enable unit commissioners to effectively promote participation.

4. Supporting commissioner administration

Administrative commissioners will be able to assign unit commissioners and identify their training needs and identify units that need a commissioner assigned to help them.

They will also be able to identify newly formed units so they can be assigned a dedicated commissioner. Reports will be available on-line and can be downloaded in MS-Excel format.

All of *Commissioner Tools'* benefits are available to all district and council commissioned professionals. They, too, are encouraged to become familiar with it and use it to support volunteers more effectively.

Scouting U

To learn the mechanics of *Commissioner Tools*, review the *Commissioner Tools* training that is available on the technology for commissioners page on the BSA commissioners website and in the BSA Learn Center for Commissioners.
You can also discuss with your council's commissioner tools champion.

Commissioners development continuum and resources

Learning is a lifetime activity.
As commissioners, we must continually adjust our skills to provide a more valuable service to our units.
Commissioners should view learning as an important part of their Scouting lives—every month, every year.
These are the tenure requirements to earn each of these recognitions. See the awards and recognitions section of the commissioner's website for the remaining reqirements.
Some recognitions and awards available to commissioners are:
Arrowhead Honor – 1 year
Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service – 2 years (consecutive) in the same unit
Commissioner Key – 3 years (in a 5-year period) as a registered commissioner
Doctorate of Commissioner Science Knot Award – 5 years of commissioner service (non-consecutive)

Additional training

These are training opportunities that you should take advantage of whenever you can.
The BSA learning management system provides orientation modules that are designed for new commissioners to become familiar with the various Scouting programs. They also familiarize new commissioners with the BSA organizational structure and the aims and methods of the Scouting program. It is recommended that you view the modules that relate to the types of units you will be serving.

Make every effort to attend your district commissioner's monthly meeting. He or she will usually include a short training topic that will help you serve your units better.

Check to see that your council hosts a College of Commissioner Science. During the College you will receive advanced commissioner training as you progress from your bachelor's degree to the

Doctorate of Commissioner Science. The courses offered at a College will cover a wide range of topics that will help you with most any situation you face as you serve your units.

Commissioners are first and foremost leaders. If you have not already done so, please attend Wood badge. It is the highest level of leadership training that the BSA provides to its leaders.

Training at the national level is available at the Philmont Training Center. During Commissioners' Week at PTC, the conferences feature the latest tools and techniques, discussions, and idea sharing led by a faculty of experienced commissioners.

Sea Base also provides an opportunity for training at the National level. Conferences here, focus on the impact commissioners have on units. This conference has something for every commissioner regardless of your specific commissioner role.

Commissioner training is also provided at The Summit. These courses cover a range of commissioner topics applicable to all commissioners.

Impact sessions are weekend training events that are conducted across the country in person and virtually.

Remember that training is continuous, and you can always get help when you need it.

Commissioner manuals and resources

The previous commissioner manuals have been replaced with a series of PDF documents, outlined on this page. Each manual module has several subtopics within the document. There is no provision for printing the information in book form. This format provides commissioners the opportunity to create their own hard copy book, or an e-book for tablet, phone or another digital device. At a minimum, a unit commissioner should read the "Providing Unit Service" document along with "Linking District" resources and the "Charter Renewal" documents.

One of the primary tools we use as commissioners is the ***Unit Roadmap***.
The purpose of the *Unit Roadmap* is to help simplify the tasks for having successful units. BSA professionals, charter organizations and volunteers work together to foster the unit through different phases a Scout unit might be experiencing. The *Unit Roadmap* should be laid out to address the 3 phases of long-term unit success: starting, sustaining and growing.
This guide is intended to be a centralized source that will be found in an online version for quick reference for both BSA professionals and volunteers to access. Many resources are already available to support units and can be referenced through links to these documents. The guide should serve as easy, overarching tips to start, sustain and grow units.
The most current edition is always available at www.Scouting.org/commissioners/manuals.

The *Guide to Safe Scouting* is available for download from the National website. This is a resource that also should be in a commissioner's library.

Commissioner website

This is the Commissioner page on the BSA website.
You can scroll down the left-hand column and view all the topics that are there to help you perform your duties as a unit commissioner.
Some of the topics include News for Commissioners, Commissioner Recruiting, Awards and Recognition, The Commissioner Newsletter, Technology for commissioners, Commissioner Manuals and Resources, just to name a few.
You are encouraged to visit this site frequently and just check out all the information that is available to you on this site.

Your commitment

As a commissioner, you have made a personal commitment to Scouting.
It's a commitment of time, effort, and knowledge.
It's a commitment of patience and understanding.
It's a commitment to be a living example for unit leaders, and to lend a helping hand to fellow Scouters.

Commissioner onboarding

Now that you have completed the classroom portion of *Unit Commissioner Basic Training*, it's time to begin the application phase.
Over the next 30 days, review the *Unit Commissioner Onboarding Progress Record* with your coach. If you do not know who your coach is, ask your assistant district commissioner or district commissioner to connect you with someone who will guide you through the onboarding process.
Once you have completed the steps outlined in the *Progress Record*, your coach will enter your training in *Training Manager,* and you will receive your "Trained" patch and your commission as a unit commissioner.

Wreath of Service

BSA commissioners and professional staff members share the wreath of service in the design of their badges of office to signify their shared responsibility for providing unit service. They also share something else unique in Scouting: a commission. The issuance of a commission represents the formal empowerment by the BSA to perform the duties and undertake the responsibilities of a unit commissioner and your acceptance of that obligation.

Questions? – 5 minutes