

WHY DO A UNIT SERVICE PLAN?

There's a simple answer to that question: a Unit Service Plan enables commissioners to fulfill their mission to help units better serve more youth through Scouting. But as with most things, it probably isn't quite that simple.

A Unit Service Plan provides **focus**. It is built upon a *collaborative* assessment of a unit's strengths and needs. Before attempting a collaborative assessment, a unit commissioner 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. Once completed, a *collaborative* assessment enables unit leaders and their unit commissioner to identify and prioritize specific tasks that will strengthen the unit most quickly. *Collaborative* assessments are a new approach; 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 needs a customized service 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 assessment and plan development.

A Unit Service Plan contains **actionable information**. It includes a limited number (typically, five to seven) SMART goals; goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **R**esource oriented, and **T**ime based. SMART goals identify what is going to be done, who is accountable for the task, and when it is expected to be completed. 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.

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. District membership committee members could be a resource in developing new approaches to growing a unit; district camping committee members could assist a unit interested in developing a high adventure program for its older youth, and so on. Once the need is identified, the unit commissioner can facilitate linkage.

Integrating the Unit Service Plan process and Commissioner Tools' technology provides **efficiency**. The *collaborative* assessment and the resulting plan can both be captured in Commissioner Tools using the Detailed Assessment function. Once completed, that information is easily accessible by the unit commissioner, all members of the district's unit service team, and also district professionals. In addition, members of the council's unit service team and field service professionals can also review the plan if their support is needed. And, the Unit Service Plan offers the opportunity to replace the variety of other, uncoordinated unit assessment and unit service planning tools with a single, coordinated approach to helping our units better serve more youth through Scouting. Finally, the Simple Assessment function in Commissioner Tools provides a quick and easy way 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.

The simple answer to the question remains: a Unit Service Plan enables commissioners to fulfill their mission to help units better serve more youth through Scouting. And in the process, it enables improved retention of traditional units and improves the performance rating of units using Journey to Excellence metrics. It truly is a better way to provide unit service!