

Fall 2019

THE COMMISSIONER

A PUBLICATION FOR COMMISSIONERS AND PROFESSIONALS



www.scouting.org/commissioners

National Commissioner's Minute

My vision for commissioner service is to “ensure a great Scouting experience.” Of course, that is focused on the youth, but it is intended to include adults as well. The best way we, as commissioners, can ensure a great Scouting experience for youth is to support their leaders. As we have direct contact with unit leaders, we help them make the transition from being a “member” of the BSA to being a “Scouter.”

In reality, unit service isn't very complicated. You get introduced to a unit, spend time with them, form a relationship with the leaders, and then seek to help them form plans to make the Scouting experience for the youth of that unit stronger and more vibrant. Not really complicated at all, though it does take time.

As simple as it is, there can be challenges in execution. Perhaps it's simply “bench strength” to provide the kind of unit support you desire. Or maybe it is understanding which comments logged into Commissioner Tools are the most helpful. Whatever the challenges, there are articles in this newsletter that address them. I'm confident there are resources here that will enhance your support of your units.

There is a direct correlation between our support of unit leaders and the impact that support has on the youth of your units. Spend time with your unit leaders. Watch them grow. Watch their units grow and know you made a difference.

Thank you for joining me in this game of Scouting. I am proud to serve alongside you and am deeply grateful for your service and your dedication to commissioner service.



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Action Changes Things

We have discussed a simple process (Assess – Plan – Act) in our last newsletter, in commissioner sessions at the National Annual Meeting, and in conferences during Commissioners Week at Philmont Training Center. It's not new; it's a process that is taught in National Youth Leadership Training, Wood Badge, and commissioner training, and it works.

Using that process enabled your National Commissioner Service Team to identify critical unit service needs, including increasing the number of trained, engaged commissioners; improving support of starting, sustaining, and growing units; increasing technology awareness; improving our support of unit leaders; and increasing the team's bench strength and diversity. During its annual planning session in June, your service team explored those needs in detail and developed plans to address them.

The first two steps of the process are important: Assessment identifies and prioritizes needs; planning lays the foundation for improvement. It's essential not to get bogged down in "analysis paralysis" or allow planning to delay progress. The last step is the one that enables commissioners to have an impact because ***Action Changes Things***. Without it, assessment and planning are meaningless.

There are multiple applications for commissioners:

- Unit commissioners working collaboratively with unit leaders to develop a detailed unit health assessment and a Unit Service Plan that addresses a small number of significant needs
- District commissioners working with their Key 3 to assess district strengths and needs and a plan to address them
- Any unit service team at any level working to ensure that every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience

Throughout this newsletter, you'll learn more about actions your service team is taking—or that you can take—to have a positive impact on the units we serve and the youth those units serve. Scouting is fun; it's a game with a purpose. Unit service should be fun, and it, too, should be a game with a purpose: impact.

Assess needs; make plans; and remember: ***Action Changes Things***.

On the uptrail ...

How Much Is Enough?

It's easy to understand some of the questions your service team receives; sometimes our efforts to communicate create them. A recent question about detailed assessments is an example: Why are there different standards for the number of detailed unit health assessments to be completed annually?

The answer is grounded in concepts fundamental to the Unit Service Plan.

From its inception, a Unit Service Plan was intended to be developed collaboratively by a unit's commissioner and its leaders to address a small number of the unit's greatest needs quickly (three to five needs within six months might be reasonable targets). The objectives were to (1) continually identify opportunities to strengthen units and (2) keep the



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process simple by limiting the number of goals to those that would have the most impact quickly. That process would likely result in a couple of assessments and plans being developed annually.

A plan that's been successfully completed demonstrates planning *and* action. How were the needs identified? The detailed unit health assessment was developed to provide a method to create a snapshot of unit health *and also* to identify (collaboratively with unit leaders) what could be done quickly to ensure that every member of a unit would have a great Scouting experience. We're back to Assess – Plan – Act, the process that's the foundation of all we do as commissioners.



So, how much *is* enough?

- Ideally, an ongoing process, repeated every six months or so, would generate a couple of detailed unit health assessments (and Unit Service Plans) annually. We train commissioners on best practices; participants at our national conferences and impact sessions learn that standard.
- The concept is still relatively new; we're not there yet. Journey to Excellence is a process to enable continuing improvement. As the Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools were implemented, a Journey to Excellence goal for the number of unit contacts logged annually was set first. As councils improved performance in that area, a requirement for a single detailed unit health assessment was added. Completing a single detailed unit health assessment annually for a unit isn't a best practice; it is improvement.

- The new Membership Ethics* training mirrors the Journey to Excellence standard: a single detailed unit health assessment annually.

The best answer is simple: Collaboratively assess unit health at least once each year and strive for a consistent, repetitive process of assessing, planning, and acting often enough to ensure units are continually working toward providing a great Scouting experience to every member.

And remember: A detailed unit health assessment alone has limited impact; a collaborative assessment resulting in a Unit Service Plan that is completed will have impact. Assessment and planning are essential for unit health; ***Action Changes Things.***

*Membership Ethics recently replaced the Membership Validation process, which had been in place for a number of years. Membership Ethics training is available through the BSA Learn Center and is required to be completed annually by specified council employees and key council and district volunteers with membership responsibilities. Those required to complete this training should already have received an email about it.

Why We Do What We Do

By the time you read this, you'll probably have already seen references to the BEST (Building Evidence in Scouting Together) Study through a variety of communications channels including our Commissioners website and social media channels. It's worth reading about more than once.

Since 2016, the BSA has been working with the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation to investigate Scouting's impact on positive youth development. The Bechtel Foundation was impressed by the performance of the BSA and the research team during the first phase of the project, resulting in support of a second phase. The external research team from Montclair State University and the American Institutes for Research has real independence in decision-making and research design. The BSA will have access only to anonymized data. Initial findings from the first phase are beginning to be published.

Phase I developed two pathway models that describe:

- What occurs with adult volunteers who become long-term, well-trained volunteers who embrace the larger vision of Scouting
- What happens to Scouts BSA youth who experience the identity development; moral, ethical, and character development; and social and emotional skills development that Scouting enables

Key takeaways from Phase I 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 Scouting BSA's eight methods are likely to deliver positive youth development.*

For long-term Scouting volunteers, the key takeaways aren't news; they've long believed those are Scouting's impact on youth when the program is delivered as intended. The

significance of the BEST Study is that it provides *objective* data confirming that belief.

Why is this important to commissioners?

- Our Simple and Unified approach to unit service is designed to enable commissioners to help units deliver Scouting's program as intended by
 - Eliminating *anything* that prevents commissioners from focusing on five things (supporting unit growth and retention, contacting units, linking unit needs to resources, supporting timely charter renewals, and supporting unit leaders).
 - Recognizing that no volunteer can be an expert in everything; we must unify the efforts of commissioners and district operating committee members to address unit needs.
- The key tools and techniques commissioners use (relationship development, collaboratively assessing unit strengths and needs, and developing Unit Service Plans to address them) are designed to help commissioners help units deliver Scouting's programs as intended.
- Commissioners, just like unit leaders, invest time in Scouting to have an impact on youth—to enable positive youth development. *Our investment in Scouting is a direct investment in youth.*

Why do we do what we do? To have an impact on youth.

The BEST Study is validating your efforts as commissioners. Using our Simple and Unified approach, you help ensure units are delivering Scouting's programs as intended. As a result, you help ensure that Scouting continues to provide positive youth development that develops character and leadership.

Go help some kids!



The Right Tool for the Job: Communicating With Units

In the spring 2019 issue of *The Commissioner*, I mentioned communication tools in an article on communicating with units. Since then, I have learned from a number of commissioners that you want to know more about which tools to use.

Communication has been changing, and this is particularly true since the introduction of the internet. Communication before the wide adoption of the internet involved things like phone calls, newsletters, and flyers. We also got our announcements at roundtable. We should continue to use these options today as part of our communication toolkit.

One of the oldest forms of digital communication is email, and it is still the best way to go. Email is easy for your recipients. Practically everyone already has an account, and some of us have several. It is convenient because Scouters do not need to leave what they are doing in order to take a phone call. Most importantly, there are many studies that show email is effective.

But we should not limit our digital communication to email. The list of additional tools available is huge, and it is changing regularly. According to a Pew Research Center¹ study, Facebook is by far one of the largest social media channels used with 69 percent of adults indicating that they used Facebook in 2019. (YouTube led the survey at 73 percent.)

In third place is Instagram, with 37 percent of adults using this channel. Instagram posts can contain links and a quick preview with an attention-grabbing photo and succinct descriptions. Many younger Scouters regularly scroll through Instagram.

The relative use of these channels by Scout leader-aged adults is the same.

Here are some tips for communicating with unit leaders:

- If you know a leader's communication preference, use it.
- It is important to use more than one channel to communicate your message.
- Be sure to send your communication on different days and at different times.
- Don't wait until the last minute to communicate.
- If it isn't working, find out why.
- If it isn't working on a regular basis, try something different.

There are many things we can do to improve our communication in every communication channel.

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/>



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Commissioners Website—the Place to Go

The National Commissioner Service Team will be updating the Commissioners website in the coming months to make sure it has the most up-to-date information for commissioners in the field. The site is located at www.scouting.org/commissioners.

All of the commissioner “manuals” are now modules on the **Commissioner Manuals and Resources** page at www.scouting.org/commissioners/manuals. Clicking on the little triangle to the left of a topic will expand the topic so you can see the subtopics that are included.

Commissioner Merchandise information is located at www.scouting.org/commissioners/commissioner-merchandise/. Commissioner items are also available at www.scoutshop.org under Shop by Scout. Select Commissioner Items below Special Collections. This fall we will be adding some jackets, a padfolio, and a belt buckle, as well as a shirt that lets you customize where you put the commissioner logo.

We will be revising the **Awards and Recognition** page to add some updated language.

The **Commissioner Recruitment and Retention** page will be changing to Commissioner Recruiting and will be chock-full of recruitment information.

We will be launching a new page for Exploring commissioners.

Another new page will be called **How Do I ...**, which will feature frequently asked questions about performing commissioner duties and functions. Step-by-step instructions will guide commissioners.

Be sure to stop in and check the Commissioners website frequently.



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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.



Questions and Answers

Question: I am a district commissioner. How can I find out if my commissioners are trained?

Answer: Here are the steps to follow to get a trained commissioners list:

1. From your District menu in My.Scouting, select **Training Manager**.
2. In the Training Manager window, click **Staff** (since all your commissioners are registered at the district level).
3. Immediately above the Trained Leaders pie chart, you will see two icons. The one that looks like a piece of paper is the Trained Leaders Report; click on that icon.
4. A new tab will open, and you will see the Trained Leaders Report for all the registered Scouters at the district level.
5. Click the **Filter** button, and in the Position Name Includes field, type the word **commissioner** and then click **Submit**.
6. You now have a complete roster of all the registered commissioners in your district, with their registration expiration date, email address, and trained status.
7. Click the blue **CSV (Details)** button. You can download your roster to your computer to a file that can be opened by Excel, Google Sheets, Apple Numbers, OpenOffice Spreadsheet, LibreOffice Calc, or any other spreadsheet or database tool.



(Technology) Changes are Constant

Here are some new features in Commissioner Tools and Scoutbook that may be helpful in your role as a commissioner.

New Commissioner Tools Report

A new report, available only in the web version, has been created to help in the recruitment of commissioners. The **Newly Registered Commissioner Report** provides a list of commissioners who have newly registered (either for the first time or because they haven't been registered as a commissioner in the last three calendar years).

Please note the following about this report:

- The date range **will not** be applied since the report is **only looking at current registrations**.
- The report displays any registered commissioner currently active or with a registration that expired within the last 60 days.
- Commissioners may appear on the report twice if they are in lapsed status from one registration (e.g., 07/2018–07/2019) but have already reregistered (e.g., 07/2019–07/2020). This is an intentional feature to provide confirmation that the commissioner was successfully reregistered.
- This report can be run at any level of the organization from the national level on down. (I have personally run it at the national level.) It provides the names of newly registered commissioners in any council-level commissioner position (i.e., from unit commissioner to council commissioner) with their effective registration date.

Scoutbook and Scoutbook Den Leader Experience (Beta)

Remembering that Scoutbook is a unit management software tool, commissioners might find it valuable to make sure their units using Scoutbook are aware of the rapid pace at which changes take place in Scoutbook—which really is good news. The BSA's Scoutbook development team made as many as two or three improvements a week over the summer, which may mean that for some users Scoutbook has changed in some way almost every time they log in—which some leaders might not find helpful. Savvy commissioners can help their units find out what has changed in Scoutbook by recommending that they sign up for the [Scoutbook forums](#) and subscribe to the Scoutbook Change Log. (In the same Scoutbook forums area, Scouters can also sign up for communications about the Scouting app and Den Leader Experience information.)



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2020 Journey to Excellence Scorecard Changes

The 2020 Journey to Excellence scorecards, along with historical items, are now available online at www.scouting.org/awards/journey-to-excellence.

Commissioners focused primarily on service DIRECTLY to their units will be pleased to note that for 2020 there are no notable changes. The only change I found in my review was a minor wording change to the traditional units' **Planning and Budget** item #1. It has been changed from "and it follows BSA policies ..." to "following BSA policies ..."

There are some less subtle changes to council and district scorecards. (A BIG tip of the hat to National Capital Area Assistant Council Commissioner Garry Lewis.)

- For councils, districts, and Exploring districts:
 - There have been some specific criteria and point value changes for Bronze, Silver, and Gold. For example, in #16 Unit Leadership on the district scorecard, the minimum absolute percentage option has increased in each of the Bronze, Silver, and Gold categories.
 - Some criteria have moved to a different JTE category, which combined with the previous changes has changed the maximum point values of some categories.
- Councils:
 - New way to establish minimum standards for Gold level: MUST get a minimum of BRONZE in items 1, 4, 8, 14, and 17.
 - Added new **Membership** item #7—"Membership Inclusion: Serve a diverse representation of the population in the council's territory."
 - Moved **Youth Retention** (2019 #7) from **Membership** to the top of **Program** (2020 #8).

- Under **Membership**: Switched the order of **Membership Growth** and **Community Impact**.
- Under **Unit Service**: Switched the order of **Unit Growth/Retention** and **Youth-serving Executives**.
- Eliminated 2019 #17 **District Leadership** under **Leadership and Governance**.
- Districts:
 - New way to establish minimum standards for Gold level: MUST get a minimum of BRONZE in items 1, 3, 6, 12, and 15.
 - Switched the order of **Membership Growth** and **Community Impact**.
 - Moved **Youth Retention** (2019 #6) from **Membership** to top of **Program** (2020 #6).
 - Note an editing mistake on the scorecard. "Membership Growth – Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold" appears on the form twice: once with Membership where it belongs and also with Program. Program should instead read "Youth Retention – Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold."
 - Note that the back of the 2020 District scorecard omits the stars on the items as was done on the 2020 Council card.
- Exploring districts:
 - New way to establish minimum standards for Gold level: MUST get a minimum of BRONZE in items 1, 6, 7, 11, and 14.
 - Moved **Youth Leadership** (2019 #10) from **Program** to **Leadership & Governance** (2020 #14).
 - Eliminated **Trained Adults** (2019 #15).

Item	Objective	Bronze-2019	Bronze-2020	Silver-2019	Silver-2020	Gold-2019	Gold-2020	
Finance								
#1	Fiscal Management	Fiscal Management - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold						No Changes
#2	Fundraising	Fundraising - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold						No Changes
#3	Endowment	No Changes						New endowment gifts of at least 1% of expenses or earn "Major Gifts Award" in 2019
Membership								
Membership Growth - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#4	Membership Impact	No Changes						8% density or 5% density and 1% growth
#5	Community Impact	No Changes						2% growth in density
#6	New member recruiting	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 3% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts by 1%	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 3% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA by 1%	Achieve Bronze, plus have an increase in new Scouts BSA or an increase in new young adults (Venturers/Sea Scout/Explorers)	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 5% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA by 3%	Achieve Bronze, plus have an increase in new Boy Scouts and an increase in new young adults (Venturers/Sea Scout/Explorers)	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 8% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA by 5%	
#7	Membership Inclusion: Serve a diverse representation of the population in the council's territory level	Achieve diversity with inclusive membership at least 40% of the general population level						Achieve diversity with inclusive membership at least 60% of the general population level
Program								
Youth Retention - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#8	Youth retention	No Changes						72% or 60% and 2 percentage points increase
#9	Cub Scout Advancement	No Changes						70% or 60% and 2 percentage points increase
#10	Scouts BSA Advancement	No Changes						No Changes
#11	Cub Scout Camping	No Changes						No Changes
#12	Scouts BSA Camping	No Changes						No Changes
#13	Community Service	No Changes						No Changes
Unit Service								
Unit Growth/Retention - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#14	Unit growth/retention	Increase the number of new units organized or retain 90% of existing units.	Increase the number of new units organized or retain at least 90% of non-LDS units.	Increase the number of new units organized and have at least one female troop for every 10 non-LDS male troops (or portion thereof)	Increase the number of new units organized and retain at least 90% of non-LDS units.	Increase the number of new units organized by at least 10% and have at least one female troop for every 10 non-LDS male troops (or portion thereof)	Increase the number of new units organized by at least 10% and retain at least 90% of non-LDS units	
#15	Youth-serving executives	No Changes						1 YSE per 14,000 TAY
#16	Unit Contacts	No Changes						1 YSE per 15,000 TAY
Leadership and Governance								
Council Leadership - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#17	Engaged Council Leadership	Council has a current strategic plan that drives its annual priorities and budget. Board selects five JTE criteria to target for improvement in support of its strategic goals.	(1) Council has a current strategic plan and a written strategy addressing inclusion/diversity AND (2) All board members are registered with the BSA and meet minimums in the bylaws	Achieve bronze requirements, plus show improvement in three of five targeted JTE criteria.	Achieve bronze requirements, plus recruit three new executive board members with diverse backgrounds.	Achieve bronze requirements, plus show improvement in four of five targeted JTE criteria.	Achieve silver requirements, plus have at least 30% of the board members being of diverse backgrounds	
#18	Trained Unit Leadership	40% or 2 percentage points increase	50% or 2 percentage points increase	50% or 40% and 2 percentage points increase	60% or 50% and 2 percentage points increase	70% or 50% and 2 percentage points increase	75% or 60% and 2 percentage points increase	

Item	Objective	Bronze-2019	Bronze-2020	Silver-2019	Silver-2020	Gold-2019	Gold-2020	
Finance								
#1	Fundraising Performance	Fundraising Performance - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold						No Changes
#2	Fundraising manpower	Fundraising Manpower - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold						No Changes
Membership								
Membership Growth - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#3	Membership Impact	No Changes						No Changes
#4	Community Impact	No Changes						No Changes
#5	New member recruiting	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 3% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts by 1%	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 3% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts by 1%	Achieve Bronze, plus have an increase in new Scouts BSA or an increase in new young adults (Venturers/Sea Scout/Explorers)	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 5% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA by 3%	Achieve Bronze, plus have an increase in new Scouts BSA and an increase in new young adults (Venturers/Sea Scout/Explorers)	New Cub Scouts joining represent at least 8% of TAY or increase in recruiting new Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA by 5%	
Program								
Youth Retention - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#6	Youth Retention	No Changes						No Changes
#7	Cub Scout Advancement	No Changes						72% or 60% and 2 percentage points increase
#8	Scouts BSA Advancement	No Changes						70% or 60% and 2 percentage points increase
#9	Cub Scout Camping	No Changes						No Changes
#10	Scouts BSA Camping	No Changes						No Changes
#11	Community Service	No Changes						No Changes
Unit Service								
Unit Growth/Retention - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#12	Unit growth/retention	Increase the number of new units organized or retain 90% of existing units	Increase the number of new units organized or retain 90% of non-LDS units	Increase the number of new units organized and have at least one female troop for every 10 non-LDS male troops (or portion thereof)	Increase the number of new units organized and retain at least 90% of non-LDS units	Increase the number of new units organized by at least 10% and have at least one female troop for every 10 non-LDS male troops (or portion thereof)	Increase the number of new units organized by at least 10% and retain at least 90% of non-LDS units	
#13	Unit Contacts	No Changes						No Changes
#14	Unit Performance	No Changes						No Changes
Leadership and Governance								
District Committee - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#15	District Committee	Have a registered district chairman, vice chairman, commissioner and 11 other members - 14 total	Have a registered district chairman, vice chairman, commissioner and 10 other members - 13 total	No Changes				
#16	Unit Leadership	40% or 2 percentage points increase	50% or 2 percentage points increase	50% or 40% and 2 percentage points increase	60% or 50% and 2 percentage points increase	70% or 50% and 2 percentage points increase	75% or 60% and 2 percentage points increase	

Item	Objective	Bronze-2019	Bronze-2020	Silver-2019	Silver-2020	Gold-2019	Gold-2020	
Finance								
#1	Fundraising Performance	Fundraising Performance - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold						No Changes
#2	Fundraising manpower	Fundraising Manpower - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold						No Changes
Membership								
Membership Growth - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#3	Membership Impact	0.25% density or 2% growth (i.e., 20% to 25%)	3% density or 2% growth (i.e., 20% to 25%)	0.60% density or 5% growth	2% density or 5% growth	1.75% density or 8% growth	3% density or 8% growth	
#4	Youth Participation Growth	No Changes						No Changes
#5	Post-Club Growth	No Changes						No Changes
#6	Student Interest Data	No Changes						No Changes
Program								
Youth Retention - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#7	Post-Club Program	40% of posts or clubs hold meeting	60% of posts or clubs hold meeting	No Changes				
#8	Super Activity	No Changes						No Changes
#9	Community Service	Average 3 hours per Explorer or 0.25 hour increase	Average 4 hours per Explorer or 0.25 hour increase	Average 4 hours per Explorer, or 3 hours and 0.25 hour increase	Average 6 hours per Explorer, or 4 hours and 0.25 hour increase	Average 6 hours per Explorer, or 4 hours and 0.25 hour increase	Average 8 hours per Explorer, or 6 hours and 0.25 hour increase	
#10	Open House Recruiting	No Changes						No Changes
Service Team								
Unit Growth/Retention - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#11	Service Team Members	No Changes						No Changes
#12	Post-Club Performance	No Changes						No Changes
Leadership and Governance								
District Committee - Bronze Level Needed for Overall Gold								
#13	District Leadership	No Changes						No Changes
#14	Youth Leadership	No Changes						No Changes



What's a JIRA Anyhow?

JIRA is a truncation of the word “Gojira,” which is the Japanese name for “Godzilla.” More importantly to Scouters, JIRA is a software package that the BSA is in the midst of deploying with two primary capabilities for volunteers: (1) a national service desk and (2) to request general help (Assistance Please) or submit technical problems (Report a Technical Problem). Eventually, JIRA is intended to replace sending an email to myScouting when you need help.

Before you can start using JIRA, you need to first know how to get into JIRA and you need to set up an account. But before you decide whether to start using JIRA, let me describe to you why I **love** JIRA:

- It provides me instant feedback via email to let me know that my JIRA “ticket” has been received and alerts me every time there is an update to my ticket.
- I can “share” my ticket with people I think are appropriate. See the image below as an example. (If you have a systemic commissioner technology issue that you think I should be aware of as the National Commissioner Service Team technology chair, you can add me to your ticket using my rick_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu email address.)
- For those who realize “a picture is worth a thousand words,” JIRA can help explain what is going on when technical problems are reported through the submission of screen shots.
- I can search for tickets that I submitted or that others made me a participant in by “sharing” their ticket with me.
 - As a volunteer, you cannot find JIRA ticket requests unless you created them or the creator made you a participant by “sharing” it with you.
 - When searching in JIRA, you must use the full ticket request number including the preceding letters and the dash, e.g., HD-123456.

To get to the BSA’s volunteer JIRA portal, go to <https://membercare.scouting.org>, which will redirect you to where you need to go. **If you are a first-time user**, use the link on the page to sign up for an account using your preferred email address as your username. (JIRA is not yet integrated with the rest of the BSA’s Single Sign On [SSO].)

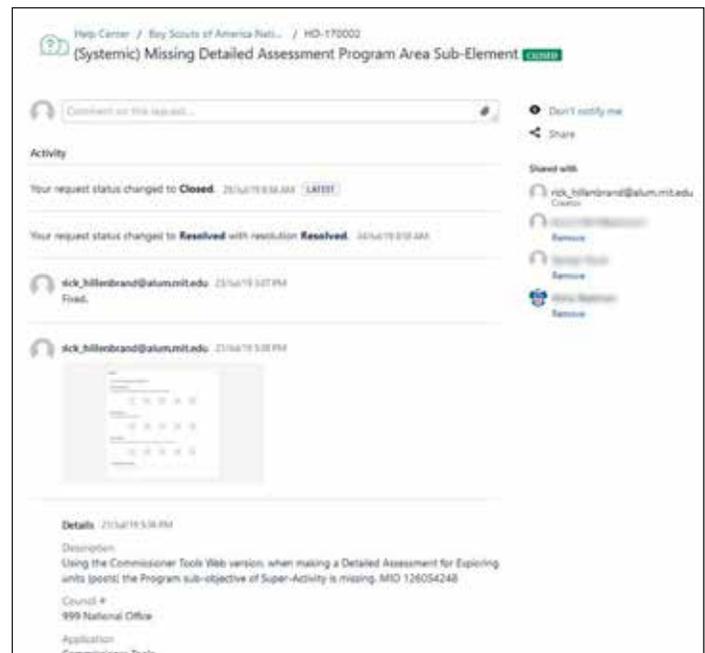
For general questions, I recommend using the **Assistance Please** link. **For technical problems, such as reporting possible software bugs** or when you are experiencing general “weirdness” with one of the BSA’s applications, I recommend using the **Report a Technical Problem** link. In either case, the information you will need to provide is very similar. If you

go to the BSA’s JIRA Help Center, at this time you will find two options. The first option, Boy Scouts of America National Service Center, will send you back to the landing page that you go to after logging in. The second option, Scoutbook Support, has the beginnings of some features, but it has been disabled for additional development at the time this article was written, so I wouldn’t use it at this time.

So how do you submit the technical glitch you found in a BSA application? Once you have logged in and clicked on the Report a Technical Problem link, just fill out all the requested information. The more details and the more screen shots you can provide, the easier it will be to resolve your problem.

Recommendations:

- In the Summary line, be brief but get to the point.
- In the Description box, be as specific as possible, referring to screenshots that you are submitting with this ticket.
- Make it easier to figure out who you are and how to contact you. One thing the BSA’s Information Delivery Group constantly has a problem with is people not including membership data about themselves, such as member ID, council, username, etc.
- In the Application line, put the name of the application such as Commissioner Tools, Member Manager, etc.
- Add screen shots. You can never have too many screen shots.



Take Ownership

I was very fortunate to be able to attend the World Scout Jamboree. I hope many of you were as well. The energy there was electric! During my time at the Jamboree, I had very worthwhile chats with people from all over the world. Largely, they were there for the same reason: to ensure the best experience for the youth and adults who attended. The overall majority traveled thousands of miles and at great expense.

One of the conversations I had with a BSA professional was about “ownership.” The context of the conversation related to BSA volunteers (and professionals), and what a difference it makes when either “owns” their role and how that affects the experience. Ownership makes it personal!

I felt that many of the IST (International Service Team), aka staff and leaders, definitely took ownership in the positions they had and the work involved to support the effort, and they had fun at the same time. Ownership! We know that when commissioners in the BSA take ownership in their positions, there is potential for greater impact that serves to further the mission of the BSA.

We are all working hard to increase the number of engaged commissioners. And with your help, we will continue to work toward having greater impact on the experiences of the youth we serve. Thank you all for what you are doing to help make that happen. Thank you for taking ownership as a commissioner, whether unit-serving or administrative. It all makes a difference.

In my August article “Recruiting Commissioners Can Be a Challenge,” I listed checkpoints for assessing progress. We will share trends with you as we progress through this year and next. I want to be very optimistic here and say that we *will* increase the number of engaged commissioners over the next few months, and unit leaders will receive the support we know they will appreciate. The endgame is we keep more families engaged and enjoying their Scouting experience.

Ready – Set – Go!

This will be my final newsletter submission, as I will no longer be on the National Commissioner Service Team. In this role, I’ve had the distinct pleasure of meeting with many very dedicated commissioners across the country. Without a doubt, the most enjoyable experience for me while on the service team has been meeting you and sharing a new way to look at recruiting more volunteers, more unit-serving commissioners. I know from these encounters that commissioners know what we need—more commissioners and more engaged unit-serving commissioners. I am confident that you understand the urgency we face.

But there are realities that you have also shared. At our first impact session for recruiting and engaging commissioners, almost a year ago in Phoenix, I shared a great quote from the book *You Can’t Send a Duck to Eagle School*: “If you chase two rabbits, they will both escape.” We are all chasing more than just a few rabbits these days. Nothing new. Most of us wear more than one hat. Some remarkable and game-changing events have occurred these past few years. And then we are faced with changes and challenges within the organization that require attention ... sometimes immediate attention. If you’ve been in Scouting for any length of time, it’s really what we tend to expect.



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Regardless, I believe it’s a great time to be in Scouting. The opportunities are extraordinary.

So, what’s next? How do we collectively recruit more volunteers—and specifically to unit service? More commissioners! Just staying focused on the need and taking that first step can be the biggest hurdles. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Council and district commissioners: Your commissioner corps is looking to you to jump-start this effort.

- Assemble your planning team. *A plan emphasizes commitment.*
 - o Your planning team should at the least include your key commissioner corps leadership.
 - o Collaborating with your district committees, including professionals, will serve to strengthen your efforts to identify and recruit more volunteers. Unit service involves more than just what commissioners can provide. It’s a team effort! One of our responsibilities as commissioners is to support unit leaders by connecting them to council and district resources.



- o Speaking of resources: You have valuable resources available. Your regional commissioners and area commissioners can help develop the framework for effective recruiting plans that will consider local demographics.
- Use a SMART goal approach.
 - o Specific
 - o Measurable
 - o Attainable/Action-oriented
 - o Realistic
 - o Time- and Resource-based
- Assess your strengths and needs.
 - o An effective recruitment plan starts with an assessment of where you are now and where you want to be. You need to compile the data available.
 - o I strongly recommend that you run a report in Commissioner Tools that lists units with assigned commissioners and units that are unassigned. The report should also include units with visits and units without visits. You can request help from your professional staff in running reports that will be informative and helpful to you.
- o Establish accountability. Who will help drive the initiative and take responsibility for their piece of the initiative?
- o This calls for all hands on deck. We are all recruiters!
- o Establish checkpoints: 30-day, 60-day, 90-day, one year from now. Recruitment is a year-round effort.
- o We are looking for best methods that are sharable!
- I would encourage you to review past articles from the service team that are applicable to recruiting more commissioners. There is a lot of information that will help you with your recruiting efforts.
- You have the tools! Your recruiting plan does not need to be perfect.

I can't thank you enough for all you are doing to improve commissioner service throughout this land of ours. You ARE making a difference in the lives of young people. It's been my privilege to work with you and I look forward to our paths crossing again.

Ready – Set – Go!



Every Unit Deserves a Trained Commissioner

The phrase “every Scout deserves a trained leader” has existed for many years and continues to be relevant! From a unit service perspective, we can adapt that phrase to say that “every unit deserves a trained commissioner.” As we continue to add more commissioners, we need to continue to make training a priority.

Administrative commissioners have many options to make training available for their teams:

- Basic training—online and instructor led
- College of Commissioner Science—in the local council or other nearby councils
- Topical training at commissioner meetings
- National conferences and impact sessions

All commissioners should take personal responsibility for their education that includes some (or all) of the above elements.

One area to highlight is the newly released district committee training in the BSA Learn Center. These new modules are a great resource for commissioners as they help to “link units to district resources.” Commissioners who take this training will gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the district committee.

Training and learning should be a continuous cycle that will help equip commissioners to be more effective and have greater impact on the units that they serve.

What steps are you taking to improve your game?



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Curriculum Review and Update Process Being Implemented

Your service team is implementing an ongoing curriculum review and update process that includes both commissioner basic training and the College of Commissioner Science curriculum. The current curriculum has been developed and updated through a series of short-term projects that have occurred over the last decade. As we move forward, a team of subject matter experts is being assembled to make more frequent updates. We are in the planning phase and expect to commence the update process in early 2020. An element of the new process will be a more structured feedback tool for local councils to share information on the training material.

More information will be shared in future editions of the newsletter.



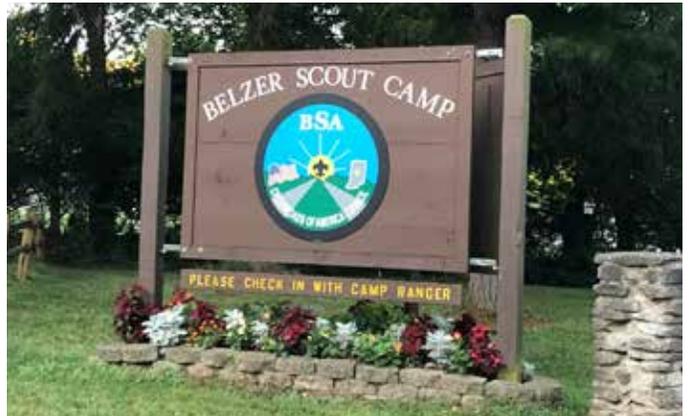
Applying Technology in Unit Service Impact Session Update

Thirty-four Scouters from across the country assembled at Belzer Scout Camp in Crossroads of America Council, in Indianapolis on August 23–25 for the Applying Technology in Unit Service impact session. Time was spent working with and discussing the various technology tools that are available to commissioners. We also had a virtual visit via videoconference from Ellie Morrison, our national commissioner.

Participant feedback regarding “the best thing that happened at the impact session” included:

- “Everything was well presented and executed. You did a fantastic job keeping the participant relaxed and focused on important reports to review and manage in our roles as commissioners. Thank you for a job well done!”
- “Networking with other enthusiastic and experienced Scout leaders ...”
- “Increased my knowledge base and made contact with some national leaders that I can now access for additional clarification on questions/issues that may arise.”
- “Learning that I am in good company even with limited tech skills. Having patient and nonjudgmental faculty. Plus, meeting dedicated Scouters from all over—always a plus with national training.”

Planning is underway for 2020 impact sessions. Information will be available on the [National Level Commissioner Training page](#).



Applying Technology Conference at Florida Sea Base in January

Registration is open for a new conference for commissioners, Applying Technology in Unit Service, to be held January 12–18, 2020, at Florida Sea Base Conference Center.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the suite of tools available to commissioners including Commissioner Tools, Member Manager, Training Manager, Online Registration, Online Charter Renewal, Scoutbook, and more. Participants will have extensive engagement with Commissioner Tools in a hands-on learning environment. This will be an opportunity to provide

meaningful feedback on the technology and will allow participants to expand their networks of Scouters to enable broadening the use of technology. This conference will have extensive use of presentation, guided discussion, and hands-on experiential learning.

To register for this conference and to learn more about other national training opportunities, go to: www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/.



Making Meaningful Contacts to Grow and Sustain Our Units

Our role as unit commissioners is to service our units by being their resource, friend, coach, and any other role they need. We have tools that help us help them. Using Commissioner Tools we enter our contacts, whether they are a simple, detailed, intermediate, or collaborative assessment, as a means to provide assistance to the unit based on their needs and goals. This is vital to their success to sustain and grow their unit.

To improve and deepen our support, we enter meaningful contacts that contain some kind of actionable item and/or information that leads the unit to be more successful. Ideally, a unit commissioner completes a collaborative detailed assessment with the unit, identifying three to five goals for the unit and the commissioner to work on that will make the unit more successful. These goals are placed into a Unit Service Plan and worked on for the next six months or so, documented in Commissioner Tools as tasks are completed. Then another detailed assessment is done and the cycle continues.

These meaningful entries with actionable information are recorded in the comment section(s) of the specific assessment you are entering. Why do we make these entries? To have a record of what the unit has accomplished and so the unit commissioner can look back to see if there is a need for follow-up or to bring resources to the unit. It is a historical reference that can be used to help the unit succeed. Who can see the entries? Registered commissioners within your district or higher (council, area, regional, and national) can see what has been entered. Also, district professionals can view what is in Commissioner Tools and add information to it; when used as intended, this enables the application to be our sole source of information about unit health—which is a good thing.

No registered leaders in the unit can see the assessment or any comments. The district commissioner should review the report of the entries and specific comments so they can be discussed to achieve the action required. It is important that the comments are meaningful and have actionable information.

When making comments, commissioners have many variables to consider: where in the relationship with the unit is the unit commissioner (new or established); what type of contact is being entered; when was the last contact entered; did the unit complete Journey to Excellence; has a collaborative detailed assessment and a Unit Service Plan with three to five goals been completed; what is the current rating of the unit. We have a variety of items to think through when entering contacts and making comments, but in the spirit of being a resource to our units, we should connect our entries to the Unit Service Plan, JTE goals, or what needs to be followed up on so the unit can be successful. After listening and observing ask, “How can I add value to the unit I am serving?”



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Here are some examples of comments that add meaning:

- “Need more youth or adults; discuss membership plan”
- “Attend next parent meeting/committee meeting regarding budget”
- “Contact district training chair for Scoutbook assistance”
- “Great recruitment event, USP goal met. Attend welcome event next week and assist with new family orientation”
- “Contact chartered organization rep for availability to conduct a collaborative assessment,” then send an email.
- “Received an email resignation from the committee chair. This unit is in the red zone. Will contact district commissioner to discuss. Conference call scheduled with the chartered organization rep and CM on Friday”

Comments that add no meaning include “No comment,” “Good,” “Great,” or “All is well.”

In the past, we would tally the number of adults and youth attending an activity. Today we might say “well attended” or “lacking attendance due to high cost of event; program chair will recommend doing a different activity next year.”

With Commissioner Tools we can document progress toward the goals necessary for helping our units grow and succeed. This information is invaluable to the entire commissioner staff as a whole to help make Scouting as strong as it can be. Our youth deserve a well-run program, and a great commissioner can make this happen.



Change Is a Constant for National Programs

Being the program chair for the National Commissioner Service Team provides an unprecedented perspective on program changes that are going on from Cub Scouting to Sea Scouting. One of the primary responsibilities for this role is to communicate these changes to all levels of commissioners so they can better serve unit leadership. Having first-hand knowledge about changes on the national levels not only helps the leadership with timely information but also enhances and clarifies the details of program execution with youth. Enabling Scouts to have a great experience in the BSA is really the overarching goal of unit service.

Starting with the August edition of *The Commissioner*, we have included a new section called “Program Updates for Commissioners,” which contains the latest changes from each program. Working with program subject matter experts, communication chairs, and program leadership, we are collecting national information for immediate dissemination to help unit commissioners in their support of unit leadership. Some programs, like Scouts BSA and Disability Awareness, have their own official update pages, so we have provided a link to their material. Much of the information available there is posted earlier than what you will find in more popular BSA sources like *Bryan on Scouting* or *Scouting* magazine.

Another way we are getting the word out is by utilizing many of the other channels of the National Commissioner Service Team. For example, when Scouts BSA decided to host a National Office Hours for unit leaders to post questions to national leaders in a Zoom conference, the word went out through our BSA Commissioner Facebook group. This provided the quickest and broadest announcement of the event. (By the way, Cub Scouting has picked up on the idea of the office hours and will be planning something similar. We will let you know when it is officially announced.) Information is often shared among the National Commissioner Service Team to determine the most effective way to share it with the commissioner corps.

Another area in which the service team is supporting program is working directly with national leadership teams on various



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initiatives. Venturing is looking to train more commissioners for their crews and will be hosting a conference at Florida Sea Base in January 2020. We are getting the word out there and will have teammates attending to teach. National Sea Scouts leadership needs help with Commissioner Tools, so we are working with the national service center to make it happen.

At the National Annual Meeting in Denver, there were discussions on the critical need for commissioner support of unit leadership. Apart from recruitment, resources, and training, which are handled by other team members, program support is vital in helping commissioners stay ahead of the game and plays an important role in creating a life-changing experience for all our Scouts from Cub Scouts to Sea Scouts.



Program Updates for Commissioners

Here are the fall 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

The program year for Cub Scouting has begun! The BSA welcomes more new families in September and October than any other time of the year. To get our new families the information they need to be successful, we need to get them in touch with our available resources quickly.

- Use [Scoutbook](#)! This tool helps with communication to families, and provides den meeting plans, tips on managing youth, links to training, and advancement tracking. This is especially helpful to our brand-new den leaders.
 - The Scouting app, for both iPhone and Android, was constructed to help parents be involved and keep their child on track.
 - The Scoutbook website is designed for den leaders and provides access to the digital Cub Scouting meeting plans for the required adventures.
- [Leader Resources](#): The Cub Scouting website is the gateway to resources to help new parents learn about our program and to help leaders. These assets are constantly updated to ensure that all information is correct and reflects the needs of our families and community. A few resources are listed below; there are many more on the Cub Scouting website.
 - [How Cub Scouting Is Organized](#)
 - [How to Get Involved](#)
 - [Den Leader Resources](#)
 - [Adult Leader Training](#)
 - [Cubmaster Resources](#)
 - [Pack Committee Resources](#)
 - [Benefits of Cub Scouting](#)
 - [Cost of Cub Scouting](#)

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 National Venturing Officers' Association consists of the national Venturing president, national Venturing vice president, four regional Venturing presidents, and their respective Advisors. These individuals are direct resources who know the councils and areas close to you, can answer any questions about Venturing, and can point you in the right direction for additional resources, events, and training opportunities. [Meet Your Officer](#)
- [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 to concerts and meet new friends in Venturing at the event. What more could a Venturer want?
- Scouting U is partnering with Florida Sea Base to provide participants with an amazing venue for learning and fun in the beautiful Florida Keys ... in January! The [Venturing Commissioner and Council Venturing Service Conference](#) will take place January 19–25. More information to come soon!
- On select occasions national VOA officers or Advisors may be available to attend Venturing events in order to inspire others, present trainings, lead discussions, act as keynote speakers, or explain opportunities available in Venturing throughout the nation. If you would like a national officer or Advisor to attend your council, area, or region event, please visit [National Representation](#).
- The [Venturing Alumni Network](#), a Venturing alumni affinity group, has been formed. Operated by a subcommittee of the National Venturing Committee, and supported by the Boy Scouts of America, Venturing, and the Scouting Alumni and Friends, the group's purposed is to service and support the alumni of the Venturing program, help them find purpose, empower them to reconnect and reengage, and retain all those positively impacted by the Venturing program.

Sea Scouts

- Many ships posted pictures over the summer of their ship's events and of Sea Scouts having fun. This youth-led program for young adults gives Scouts opportunities to *grow, and stay*, in Scouting. See the action on the [Sea Scouts Facebook page](#).
- Sea Scouting recently welcomed a new national director, Owen McCulloch, who replaces Janice Downey. Janice continues to support the BSA, and Sea Scouting, in her new role in Marketing. Owen jumped in quickly and attended the William Minto Memorial Rendezvous in September at Bovay Scout Ranch in the Sam Houston Area Council in Texas to get a first-hand look at Sea Scouts and Sea Scouting in action. Minto brought together 180 Sea Scouts representing 25 ships from 10 councils. The weekend event included competitions, education and training, and fun!



- In August, Coast Guard Auxiliary National Commodore Larry King received the National Sea Scout Leadership Award at the Coast Guard Auxiliary National Conference in Orlando. Commodore King's unwavering support of Sea Scouts has enabled our partnership with the auxiliary to grow and flourish.

Note how the Sea Scout Code of Conduct connects to the overall BSA mission.

- **Sea Scout Code of Conduct**

As a member of this Ship I am expected to:

Uphold the Scout Oath and Law

Live the Sea Scout Promise

Have fun!

- Sea Badge is an adult leadership training for all Scouters, not just those registered in a Sea Scout ship. The following Sea Badge courses are currently scheduled for 2020:

– [Western Region](#): March 6–8

– [Southern Region](#): April 3–5

More courses will be scheduled in the coming months.

- Keep up to date with Sea Scouting by joining the [Sea Scouts Facebook page](#).

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](#).

Unit Service Starts With Relationship

“The Five Love Languages” series of books by Gary Chapman has been instrumental in helping couples and others improve their relationships and navigate various relational challenges. The author defines how everybody expresses love in different ways based on upbringing and personality.

As unit commissioners, service begins with establishing a relationship with the unit leadership and understanding the different components of that relationship. Similar to that series of books, commissioner service also has five components in building up leadership and thus building up the pack, troop, crew, or ship overall. There is a critical need for commissioners to improve support for their unit leaders and it begins here.

1. **Training and orientation for new leaders**—Whether we are helping to start a new unit or training a new unit leader to succeed a retiring one, there is a constant need to train individuals for the new roles they are taking on. Working in conjunction with district operations, the commissioner can connect these individuals to upcoming training opportunities in their district or council.
2. **Parent committee formation and support**—A healthy, growing unit requires a strong parent committee to help cover many different areas of responsibilities, such as finances, communication, camping, and so on. As commissioners, we should monitor the work of adult leaders and provide support on retention, recruitment, or training.
3. **Program resources**—Commissioners need to stay on top of the latest changes, and they can draw from many different sources including *The Commissioner* newsletter and the

Commissioners website. Having a commissioner as a primary source of information on program changes will help the unit navigate these changes and improve overall execution. Connecting unit leadership with district resources is another important responsibility.

4. **Annual planning and SMART goals**—Utilize Commissioner Tools to perform a detailed (collaborative) assessment and to develop a Unit Service Plan that focuses on areas of improvements as a part of the unit annual planning. Defining and achieving SMART goals will help the unit to address potential issues early on and stay on target in all areas of youth service.
5. **Overall health and welfare of the unit**—This is the holistic perspective on monitoring how the unit is doing as a whole and keeping an eye out for future challenges. Commissioners should stay vigilant for potential trouble spots (e.g., membership) and advise leadership how they can anticipate them accordingly. This last component really incorporates the work of the previous four by bringing it all together.

As commissioners, our passion is youth service. We instill in young people the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law and provide life-changing experiences. In the end, we will see many young Scouts transition into adulthood and make their place in society. We can reflect and know that our service is not in vain and that we have made a positive contribution to the next generation of adults and potential leaders in whatever interest or field they pursue. Hopefully the BSA will continue to be a part of that journey.



Exploring Needs Subject Matter Experts and Unit Service

In the Summer 2019 edition of *The Commissioner*, we mentioned that members of your National Commissioner Service Team will be working with national Exploring leadership to develop new approaches to recruiting unit commissioners and Exploring service team members to serve posts and clubs. To assist us in that endeavor, **we are looking for individuals who would be willing to support us and join our team as either Exploring or recruiting subject matter experts (SMEs). Additionally, we're looking for SMEs who have skills and experience in recruiting anyone with a servant's heart who represents the Scouting and Exploring values as well as reflects the diverse communities our units serve.** Please contact Craig Martin (bruin1967@aol.com) if you or anyone you know is interested.

Speaking of recruiting, a question we often hear is, "Does a newly recruited unit commissioner or an Exploring service team member have to have experience with the career field of the Exploring club or post in which he or she is to serve?"

The answer is to remember that post advisors are already very knowledgeable about or are experts in their chosen career fields. Newly recruited unit commissioners or Exploring service team members may simply need to help the post advisors or club sponsors translate their career knowledge from an adult level to a youth level that is fun, hands-on, and interactive. And don't forget, these new unit commissioners or Exploring service team members have council and district resources to reach out for to provide unit service. While specific experience is not necessary to serve a particular post or club, a unit commissioner or Exploring service team member with career knowledge or career experience associated with the post's or club's focus may have a more immediate impact on helping the Exploring unit succeed. That experience, however, is not as important as providing service to these Exploring units.

As an example, I have been the unit commissioner/service team representative for the last seven years to a law enforcement post sponsored by a local police department. Although I married into a law enforcement family, I do not claim to be an expert on



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law enforcement by any stretch of the imagination. However, I did spend 30 years in the military and, believe it or not, I have found that my military experience has been extremely beneficial in serving as the post's unit commissioner/service team representative.

By the way, you may find that the current unit commissioners within your council and districts already represent a large number of careers within your community. In serving posts or clubs, it may be helpful to allow unit commissioners to serve those units that specialize in the career field in which the commissioner has expertise. This would give those unit commissioners a distinct advantage in being able to build relationships and credibility, and instantly relate to the adult leadership within the Exploring unit.



Advancement Help May Be “Right Down the Street”

(adapted from the September–October 2019
Advancement News)

One of the most frequently asked questions the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee receives from leaders and parents is: Where do I go for help with advancement for my special needs Scout? Well, the best answer may be right down the street at the Scout’s school. In fact, meeting with the special education or reading specialist teacher at the Scout’s school could be the best strategy.

These teachers work daily with students who have disabilities and they know the challenges and needs of these individuals. Most Scouts who are in a special education program will have an IEP, or Individualized Education Program. The IEP is a written document developed for each schoolchild who is eligible for special education. It is created through a team effort and reviewed at least once a year. Parents have input into their child’s plan and Scouting can be a part of that plan. Many school districts see the importance of what is being learned in classrooms that can be applied to the Scouting program and vice versa.

Provided with a general understanding of the current program in which a Scout is enrolled, a special education or reading specialist teacher may be helpful in planning what that Scout can achieve and the pace at which that Scout can accomplish the work. These teachers may also be able to help a unit committee break down the steps needed for the Scout to achieve the next rank or award.

Once lines of communication have been opened, Scout leaders may find that in many cases special education teachers have been doing advancement-related activities in their own

classroom. For example, the Cooking merit badge. Many high school special education students are learning lifetime skills, and learning to cook is one. Students have to learn about a healthy diet, menu planning, how to go shopping, and eventually cook a meal. The same skills special education teachers are teaching in the classrooms are being taught in Scouting, which can reinforce the IEP for the Scout. Working hand-in-hand and using a Scout’s IEP, the unit committee and special education teachers can enhance the Scout’s ability to learn and succeed in school as well as the troop.

Similarly, Scouts who have physical disabilities may be working at school with their physical education teachers on adapted physical education skills. These teachers may also help the unit learn the limits of what the Scout can do when it comes to the “physical” activities of many requirements. For example, physical activities such as those required for the Swimming, Personal Fitness, or Hiking merit badges will have certain challenges. The teacher might be able to set limits and goals that a Scout can reach in a reasonable amount of time that could help the Scout complete the requirements.

Finally, don’t forget to ask the parents for advice and help. They know their child the best. Elisabeth Shelby, who has a doctorate in special education and is a member of the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee, mentions, “I used to say that the parents know their child, and educators know techniques.” Parents, unit committee members, and educators should combine these two ingredients to enhance a Scout’s ability to achieve the highest possible level of learning success at home, at school, in Scouting—and beyond.

Special Needs Membership Growth Conference

BSA volunteers and professionals are invited to a Special Needs Membership Growth Conference scheduled for January 12–18, 2020, at the Florida Sea Base. Participants will learn how to start a council special needs committee, partner with special needs organizations, and more.

Click [here](#) for more information.



Regional and Area Commissioners

Updated August 2019

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JTE Key Performance Indicators

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

Coming Events

2019

November 1–3

Commissioner Impact Session: Recruiting and Engaging Commissioners

Northeast Region, Cradle of Liberty Council, Wayne, Pennsylvania

Click [here](#) for information and registration.

2020

January 12–18

Applying Technology in Unit Service Conference
Florida Sea Base Conference Center

Click [here](#) for information.

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.

