



NEW-UNIT COMMISSIONER (NUC)

HEART OF AMERICA COUNCIL, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
COMMISSIONER BEST PRACTICE MEMORANDUM, 2014, No. 001 (CBP 14-001)
(Prepared by: V. Parker Lessig, Assistant Council Commissioner, March 2014)

I. DESCRIPTION:

This Best Practice is adopted to help ensure that all new units formed within the Heart of America Council are sustainable. This Best Practice recognizes that new unit leaders require the advice and assistance of a well-trained, highly competent, and skilled unit commissioner to ensure that the new unit survives the first 36 months of its existence. This Best Practice demonstrates the commitment of the commissioner service to help sustain new units as a priority.

II. BACKGROUND AND NEED SERVED:

- A. Only 35 percent of new units are retained after their first 36 months.
- B. Unit service (unit commissioners) and membership (district operating committee) have, historically, worked independently.
- C. Several years ago five guidelines were proposed by national teams with the objective of increasing the retention rate of new units by making them sustainable.
- D. These five elements were developed and tested in two councils and then piloted in 26 councils.
- E. The five guidelines are as follows:
 - 1. A strong, committed charter partner,
 - 2. At least five dedicated unit leaders,
 - 3. At least 10 Scouts,
 - 4. A unit Key 3 (committee chair, unit leader, and charter organization representative), and

5. A commissioner who is dedicated to the unit (the new-unit commissioner).

F. The New-Unit Commissioner:

1. Specializes in service to units with less than three years tenure,
2. Ideally, serves only one unit, and should be assigned no more than two with the second being on a short-term basis until a permanent new-unit commissioner is assigned to that unit,
3. Is present at the first meeting with the potential charter partner along with the district executive and the new-unit organizer (membership),
4. Serves as advisor to the unit Key 3 once the unit is formed, and
5. Remains a commissioner with this unit throughout its first 36 months.

G. The impact of applying these guidelines in the 26 pilot councils was:

1. 18.8 percent fewer dropped units.
2. 33.3 percent higher unit retention rate (same data as above, just a different ratio).

H. **It is important to note that new-unit success is dependent on a number of factors (the five outlined above) – not just in having a new-unit commissioner. A partnership between membership and unit service within the district and throughout the council is CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS!!!**

- I. The process takes time and is difficult. However, councils that have adopted the new-unit commissioner concept say the results are well-worth the effort.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. New-unit organization and unit reorganization are responsibilities of the membership committee.

The new-unit organizer (membership) works closely with the institutional head or executive officer of the chartered organization to put together an organizing committee.

- B. Commissioners are responsible for keeping the unit alive and healthy and often need the support of membership and other members of the district operating committee, such as the training chair.

The new-unit commissioner is not a member of the unit's Key 3 but serves as a coach, mentor, and consultant to the Key 3.

C. The new-unit commissioner's pre-charter responsibilities focus on encouraging those things that facilitate long-term unit success. These include:

1. Recruitment of at least 10 Scouts and five adults,
2. Leader training,
3. Establishment of a leadership succession plan,
4. Familiarity with Journey to Excellence and Voice of Scouting, and
5. Development of a vision statement and goals, a unit budget, and an annual program plan, using the Ideal Year of Scouting (IYOS) model.

D. Additional new-unit commissioner responsibilities are:

1. Attend unit Key 3 meetings (monthly at first, then as needed),
2. Familiarize the Key 3 with the district/council calendar and resources and encourage participation in district events, giving particular emphasis to roundtable attendance,
3. Serve as a link between district resources and the unit,
4. Attend the first meeting and visit the unit monthly,
5. Along with the new-unit organizer, present the charter to a full meeting of the chartered organization,
6. Schedule an annual program planning meeting led by an experienced district representative,
7. Conduct a unit self-assessment twice a year,
8. Encourage a unit-wide communication system including adding leaders and parents to council and district email lists, and
9. Take the lead in mentoring the unit throughout its first 36 months.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. New-Unit Commissioner Selection and Training:

Each district commissioner will select the number of new-unit commissioners necessary to ensure that every unit of less than three years tenure has a new-unit commissioner assigned. The district commissioner should consider that the tasks, processes, and skills required to successfully start a new unit are clearly more demanding and in many respects are different from those required to maintain an on-going unit. Consequently, not every traditional unit commissioner has the skills, background, and commitment required to be a successful new-unit commissioner.

B. Desired characteristics:

1. Successful experience as a unit commissioner,
2. Has earned the Arrowhead Honor and the Commissioner Key,
3. Desires to earn the Commissioner Award of Excellence for Unit Service, *(Satisfying the requirements for this award as a new-unit commissioner will enhance the unit's chances for success.)*
4. Has the time and energy for a 36-month commitment,
5. Is committed to the unit's success, and
6. Has a record of success as a unit leader or a committee chair. *(This would be helpful but is not necessary.)*

C. Additional training:

1. Required training for new-unit commissioners and familiarity with the *Unit Performance Guide*,
2. Review the visioning section of the *Council Commissioner's Manual*.
3. Review the annual service plan and the new-unit service plan.
4. Knowledge and understanding of the IYOS model and the ability to aide unit leaders with its implementation.

D. Encouraged training:

Participate in 21st Century Wood Badge or, if already completed Wood Badge, review sessions: Stages of Team Development, Leading EDGE/Teaching EDGE, Coaching and Mentoring.

E. Commissioner Staff Organization and Considerations

Council and district commissioners who have implemented the new-unit commissioner concept state that the process is long and difficult, can stretch the commissioner staff, and may create problems in assigning commissioners to all units. However, they also state that the outcome is worth the effort. The following suggestions may be helpful:

1. Assigning new-unit commissioners to one unit may reduce the number of a district's traditional commissioners. To mitigate this concern:
 - a. Districts should actively recruit new commissioners, and
 - b. Districts and councils may wish to create a "reserve commissioner corps" composed of former unit commissioners who are not assigned specific units but are available to provide commissioner service on an ad hoc basis when needed.
2. Assign commissioners to those units where the commissioner's personal skills, experience, and training are most needed. For example,
 - a. Recruit new-unit commissioners from the best and most committed unit commissioners, and
 - b. Newly recruited traditional commissioners can be assigned strong units.
3. If a district has more than one new-unit commissioner, consider creating an assistant district commissioner position responsible for working directly with the new-unit commissioners.

V. REPORTING:

- A. New unit commissioners report to the district commissioner, through the responsible assistant district commissioner if directed.
- B. District commissioners or the responsible ADCs report to the responsible ACC who then reports to the council commissioner.

VI. REFERENCES:

- *Unit Performance Guide* (www.scouting.org/membership/new_units.aspx);
- *New-Unit Commissioner* (www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/doc/new_unit_commissioner.doc); and
- Notes from "Building the Structure: Starting and Sustaining High Performing Unit" presented by Larry Chase,

- The Council Commissioner PTC, June 2013.

VII. PROPOSED REVISIONS:

Please report proposed revisions to Parker Lessig, vplessig@sunflower.com.