

# THE DISTRICT

How the District Carries Out the Operational Mission of the Council



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

# MISSION STATEMENT and PURPOSE

*The mission of the Boy Scouts of America  
is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices  
over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values  
of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.*

## SCOUT OATH

*On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
mentally awake, and morally straight.*

## SCOUT LAW

*A Scout is:*

Trustworthy	Obedient
Loyal	Cheerful
Helpful	Thrifty
Friendly	Brave
Courteous	Clean
Kind	Reverent





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This edition includes numerous revisions as of August 2009 that make this publication more informative and easier to understand.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®



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# VOLUNTARISM

Time is precious, yet almost every adult citizen of the United States gives some time to volunteer service. No other country in the world depends so heavily upon volunteer effort; and in no other country have citizens accepted so universally the idea that volunteer service is a requirement of good citizenship. Since most Americans accept this principle, and since there is no shortage of good causes to serve, each of us must make a choice.

Scouting thrives because of its volunteers and could not exist without them. The question is, why should you choose Scouting for your volunteer service? Perhaps these questions will help you decide.

Do you wish to make a difference with your life? Most of us do. Scouting's volunteers believe they are making a difference in the lives of youth.

Do you care about children and young people? If you care, we are for you and you are for us.

Do you care about the future? Most of us keep busy enough with today's problems. But if you care about the future of your country and its children,

then you will find volunteer service in Scouting very satisfying. One of the best ways to have a hand in shaping the future is to help young people who will ultimately own it and run it.

Do you care about the principles of the Boy Scouts of America? If you believe they are worth strengthening and spreading, then Scouting is a cause worth your gift of time.

Would you like your volunteer service to be different from your everyday work? Well, Scouting is different, and you might find that refreshing. The skills you use in your work may be helpful to your volunteer service, but it won't just be more of the same.

Do you enjoy relationships with spirited people? If so, come on in! Scouting volunteers all serve a common cause, and it shows in our relationships with each other. We know why we are here, and we are enthusiastic about what we are doing.

**One of the great ways to serve youth through Scouting is to work as a *district volunteer*.**



# MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

It requires many pages of small print just to list the names of organizations in the United States. There are thousands of them. But the Boy Scouts of America is a movement, not an organization. There is an important difference.

*The American Heritage Dictionary* says an organization is "something that has been organized or made into an ordered whole; comprising elements with varied functions." Well, there's nothing wrong with that. Scouting is like that, too. But if thousands of volunteers are going to give their time to serve youth through Scouting, there ought to be something more than that.

The same dictionary says a movement is the "activities of a group of people to achieve a specific

goal." It puts the emphasis where Scouting puts it: upon people, action, a specific goal.

So for Scouting, organization is something to use rather than something to be. We know sound organization is needed if the Scouting movement *is to move*. But the boxes and lines on our organization charts are not the Scouting movement. They are only the way in which we sort out our varied functions.

**When you serve as a district volunteer you are part of a worldwide movement, composed of people who are dedicated to a common goal, who use organization as a means, not an end. You can make a difference wherever you live.**



# THE PURPOSE AND MISSION OF THE BSA

The Charter of the Boy Scouts of America states that “the purpose of this corporation shall be to promote, through organization and cooperation with other agencies, the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others, to train them in Scoutcraft, and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues, using methods which are now in common use by Boy Scouts.”

It is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

## ***The District’s Purpose***

A Scouting district is a geographical area of the BSA local council, determined by the council executive board. District leaders mobilize resources to

ensure *the growth and success of Scouting units within the district’s territory.*

**The purpose of the district is to work through chartered organizations and community groups to organize and support successful units.** The end result of effective district support is more and more youth members receiving a better and better program.

## ***The Council’s Purpose***

The purpose of the council is to guide and support its districts for the achievement of the movement’s purpose.

Councils establish policies and programs. Districts carry out the policies and programs in their respective territories.



# THE FUNCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT

All districts are responsible for carrying out four standard functions:

## **1. Membership**

The **membership** function strives for growth through the organization of new Scouting units and through new members and adult volunteers joining existing units and working to retain current members.

## **2. Finance**

The **finance** function sees that the district provides its share of funds to the total council operating budget.

## **3. Program**

The **program** function concentrates on helping Scouting units with camp promotion; special activities including community service; training adult volunteers; and youth advancement and recognition.

## **4. Unit service**

The **unit service** function provides direct coaching and consultation by district volunteers for unit adults to help ensure the success of every Scouting unit.

The membership, finance, and program functions are carried out by members of the district committee. The unit service function is carried out by the district commissioner staff.

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 movement cannot achieve its purpose without first organizing units and enrolling members. The district cannot support its units without the funds to do it. 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.



# THE MEMBERSHIP FUNCTION

## ***Membership Growth and Quality Program***

Quality program and quality membership are equally important to the achievement of the movement's purpose. It is also true that neither is the automatic by-product of the other. However, experience has shown that the absence of either one for any period of time normally hurts the other. Both result from the careful planning and hard work of district volunteers.

If we are committed to the idea that the movement helps boys and young people become better adults, then we must also be committed to enrolling them as members. The stronger the district's belief in the value of Tiger Cub, Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, and Venturing experiences, the more natural its commitment to membership growth.

## ***Relationships With Community Organizations***

In the United States the Scouting movement operates within a unique system that has contributed significantly to its success. Though we own Tiger Cub Scouting, Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing, we do not own the units that convey these phases of the program to youth.

We charter community organizations to organize and operate *their* units. The advantages of this plan to both parties are obvious, and it has resulted in a thriving relationship. This is something like a franchise relationship in a business.

It is this mutual concern for youth that brings community organizations and Scouting together. Scouting can provide the vehicle for organizations to act upon their concern; and community organizations can provide the facilities and the financial and human resources needed to operate successful units. The organization that operates a unit can help it thrive by giving close and constant support to its leaders. The Scouting district helps the organization succeed with support by its district volunteers.

## ***Elements of the Membership Function***

Membership growth occurs in five ways:

1. Organizing new units
2. Recruiting new youth and adult members for existing units
3. Guiding program transition
4. Helping units to recharter on time and avoid being dropped.
5. Helping to retain youth—more youth and adults reregistered at unit charter renewal

All five ways are needed for healthy growth. Here are some things that districts do to produce growth:

1. Gather information about the district.
  - District membership and population trends over a period of years.
  - A listing of community organizations functioning within the district, and information about each.
  - A community-by-community youth survey for Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturing.
  - A listing of all units that have not added new members during the past 12 months. This may indicate other problems in these units.
2. Develop a plan for membership growth.

At the end of each year the district needs to use the above information to assess its membership situation, then develop a plan for the year ahead.

These are some of the questions to be answered:

  - How many units are needed to properly serve the available youth in the district?
  - How many new units are needed for these youth in the next 12 months?
  - How can we maximize diversity in our membership?
  - In which community organizations will these units be organized? Who will organize each, and under what schedule?

- Which units need to be reorganized, and who will reorganize them?
  - Are there any parts of the district that are seriously under-represented?
  - Do most graduating Webelos Scouts join Boy Scout troops and become active Scouts?
  - Are there any significant demographic trends in the district that will change the need for units?
- 3. Use special membership approaches where appropriate.**  
Together plan? Roundup? Joining nights? Impact plan? The relationships conference? Who will carry these out?
- 4. Use special relationship efforts.**  
How will the district develop closer ties with community organizations? (Both those that now operate units and those that do not.) Will the leaders of those organizations be brought together in a conference? Who will do it?
- 5. Secure the cooperation of those responsible for other district functions.**  
Membership growth is a concern of the entire district. Commissioners can help unit volunteers

understand why the district is interested in membership growth and alert other district volunteers to units needing reorganization. The assistance of skilled volunteers in training is needed to train the leaders of new units, reorganized units, and new leaders in existing units. Volunteers who specialize in camping need to be alerted to the camping needs of new and reorganized units.

## ***Additional Information About Membership***

Membership doesn't just happen. Youth join the BSA, and adults become leaders because they are asked personally. One of the most important functions of the district is to identify people who should be asked to join, and then arrange for the asking to take place.

Suggestions for organizing the district to carry out the membership function are covered later in this manual. Detailed information about how to carry out the function is covered in the *Membership Committee Guide*, No. 33080.



# THE FINANCE FUNCTION

## ***Why Finance?***

Almost every human endeavor has its financial side, and so does the Scouting movement. There are camps to build, to improve, to operate. A professional staff is needed for the support and guidance of volunteers. There is training to provide, activities to plan and implement, and a service center to build or rent and operate. All these things are necessary to the movement's achievement of its purpose, and they cost money.

## ***Who Gives the Money—and Why?***

One fundraiser was heard to say, "People give to people, not causes." This suggests that clever schemes are all that is needed to extract money from people. What the fundraiser should have said is, "People give to causes, but it makes a difference who asks them and how."

The council's financial support comes from the people who live in its districts. It comes from the parents of members, from Scouting's volunteers, and from members of the community who care about Scouting. The amount they give depends upon what they know about Scouting and how they feel about it. So the district's greatest fundraising asset is the goodwill of the people who will be asked to give.

To secure that goodwill it is necessary for the district to keep the public informed about Scouting's accomplishments. It needs to be done constantly, not merely during money-raising times.

When the results of a fundraising effort are in, they may be viewed in two ways:

1. As a measure of the public's current regard for Scouting.
2. As a measure of the district's use of sound financial procedures.

## ***How People Give to Scouting***

The people of a district give money to Scouting by enrolling as Friends of Scouting, through their gifts to special projects, and from their support of special activities and events. In communities where Scouting participates in the United Way, a portion of each contribution goes to help support Scouting.

### ***Friends of Scouting***

Under this plan, people who believe in Scouting enroll as Friends of Scouting through their contributions. This is usually the major source of income raised by volunteers within the district. The Friends of Scouting campaign has three parts:

1. **District/division enrollment.** Here memberships are secured from district committee members, commissioner staff members, and others who are demonstrating their support by serving Scouting.
2. **The community enrollment.** All prospects who are not enrolled in the district or family enrollments are enrolled here, such as former youth and adult members, community businesses, and previous contributors.
3. **The family enrollment.** All parents of Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers are encouraged to enroll as families. Though most families welcome the opportunity to give, this is entirely voluntary and not a condition for membership in Scouting. It is important to communicate that money contributed to Friends of Scouting enables the district to support and build Scouting and the values of Scouting throughout the community, including strengthening weak units and starting new units.

### ***Gifts for Special Projects***

Each year a special committee of the council develops a list of special projects needing financial support. The district assists by developing a list of prospects living within the district. Key volunteers of the district may be asked to make presentations to these prospects.

## ***Special Activities and Events***

The council and its districts conduct activities, such as merit badge shows, which have a double purpose. They enrich unit programs and provide a source of funds through ticket sales. District finance volunteers promote and manage these ticket sales.

### ***The United Way***

In communities of the district where Scouting benefits from the United Way campaign, district volunteers give support through their own financial contributions and service.

### ***Bequests and Endowments***

Bequests and endowments gifts are made to the council, but they come from people who reside in the districts. Often it is because they have seen Scouting in action in the district that people decide to make such gifts. District finance volunteers should assist in the encouragement of such giving, with close coordination by the council.

### ***Other Elements***

District finance volunteers are responsible for guiding unit money-earning activities to make sure they are kept within the prescribed BSA policy.

### ***Additional Information About Finance***

The duties and organization of the district finance committee are covered later in this manual. The *District Finance Committee Guide*, No. 33779, gives detailed information about how to carry out this function.



# THE PROGRAM FUNCTION

The district must carry out successfully all four of its functions, if its units are to prosper. Each function is justified by its contribution to the establishment and support of Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing. Through the program function, troops can be helped to attend the council camp, but only if the money is available to maintain and operate the camp. Through the program function a crew can be helped to improve its advancement, but not until someone organizes the crew.

So district volunteers all aim themselves in a single direction: toward the establishment and support of the movement's programs by means of its functions. It would be a mistake to assume that since there are four district functions, program is only a fourth of the district's responsibility. The establishment and support of the Scouting program is its whole responsibility. However, **most volunteers who work within the program function concentrate on one or more of the areas of program: camping/outdoor activities, activities and civic service, training, or advancement and recognition.**

## **CAMP PROMOTION AND OUTDOOR**

The movement's outdoor emphasis ranges from the Cub Scout individual family camping, day camping, and resident camping, to Boy Scout long-term camping in the council camp, to Boy Scout and Venturing experiences at Philmont and the other national high-adventure facilities. These activities are carried out in a manner consistent with the methods of each program phase, and they are tailored to specific grade and age levels.

### **Cub Scout Camping**

Camping means living in the out-of-doors. The time period can be almost any length. Some of the types of Cub Scout camping are:

**Family camping.** The Cub Scout and his family camp on their own, spending time living out-of-doors.

**Day camping.** Boys attend with other den members and den or pack leadership. The camp is conducted by the council or district under certified leadership at an approved campsite, during daylight hours.

**Resident camping.** Program conducted by local council with certified camp staff leadership at an accredited camp for two or more nights with fellow Cub Scouts. Cub Scout pack or den leadership and parent participation are essential.

Webelos dens are encouraged to have several parent/boy overnight campouts a year. A Boy Scout troop may host such campouts during the year to build a strong tie to boys and adults in a Cub Scout pack.

### **Boy Scout Camping**

In an earlier time a boy could find a brook to follow, a lake for skipping stones, a wooded path to explore. Today, with our large cities and urban sprawl, many boys cannot find these things at all. Since our research shows that boys want these experiences as much as ever and since they need them more than ever, the Boy Scouts of America has dedicated itself to preserving their chance to have them.

The council's Boy Scout camp is, for most troops and Varsity Scout teams, the long-term camping highlight of the year. It provides a unique environment and opportunities a boy can use for his own development. Away from home, faced with the challenge to become more self-sufficient, a boy finds some strengths he didn't know he had. He has the chance to measure himself and try out some skills for living and working with others. It is an adventure of self-discovery.

Although a boy is more on his own in a Boy Scout camp, he comes with his troop and a Scoutmaster who provides continuity with his past experience. He builds upon what he already has learned with the help of friends and a leader who knows him.

National high-adventure experiences are provided by the BSA. They are designed to supplement and extend the camping experiences available in the council. Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico provides an exciting western mountain adventure for older Scouts and Venturers as well as training experiences for volunteers. Other high-adventure bases in other parts of the country offer wilderness camping and canoeing experiences. Details are given in the separate manual on the program function.

The Order of the Arrow is a nationwide camping brotherhood to which troops elect campers they wish to recognize. The Order is known as a Brotherhood of Cheerful Service, and its members render significant service to the district and council camping program through camp promotion.

### ***Venturing Outdoor Activities***

Venturing's outdoor activities are one of six activity areas of Venturing. Crew activities vary according to their special interests. Some crews do advanced camping, while others focus on very different outdoor activities. Each crew is encouraged to hold a superactivity—a weeklong or longer activity away from its usual meeting location—each year.

## ***The Elements of Camping***

### **1. Planning**

- Gather facts about each unit's outdoor activities.
- Use this data as the basis for planning steps to improve the record.

### **2. Setting goals**

- Camping/outdoor activities goals are set each year in terms of the number of crews participating in superactivities; the number of troops having a minimum of six days and nights of long-term camping; and the number of packs experiencing day camping, Webelos Scout/adult overnights, resident camping, and earning the National Summertime Pack Award.
- District camping/outdoor activities volunteers assist in setting these goals and give leadership to achieving them.

### **3. Assisting units**

- Assist unit leaders in planning a schedule of camping and/or outdoor activities.
- Work closely with the commissioner staff on camping and outdoor program.

### **4. Promoting camping and outdoor activities**

- Each year, develop and carry out a thorough plan for promoting camping.
- Working closely with its officers, provide opportunities for the Order of the Arrow to help promote camping.

### **5. Conducting district camping/outdoor activities events**

- Cooperate with the council in planning and carrying out the district's share of events such as Cub Scout day camps and Boy Scout camporees.

## ***ACTIVITIES AND CIVIC SERVICE***

Each human being begins life as a tiny island unto itself. Then, gradually, comes the discovery that each life is a part of the whole, intertwined with the lives of others. One of the aims of the Scouting movement is to help young people make that discovery and become caring persons.

Service to others is stressed in the Cub Scout Promise, the Boy Scout Promise, the Varsity Scout Pledge, and the Venturing Oath. It is brought to life through practical service projects.

Cub Scout packs carry out their service projects in their own neighborhoods. Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers range farther in their projects, often participating in district and councilwide service. Occasionally there are nationwide service projects. It is essential that all projects be of a nature that young participants will consider worthwhile. But in addition to their useful results, projects should be judged in terms of their value in helping young people discover their relationship and responsibility toward other people.

District and council activities should be designed to enrich programs, not replace them. Most districts and councils should poll their unit leaders annually to learn what activities they would like. When the results are in, a well-balanced schedule of events is developed along these lines:

- A display event such as a Scouting show
- A skill event such as a camporee for Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts
- At least one Scouting Anniversary Week event
- At least one civic-service event
- Each community service project is carried out according to criteria that will ensure the project actually teaches qualities of good citizenship.

### ***Elements of Activities and Civic Service***

1. Conduct an annual poll of unit leaders to determine unit needs and interests for district activities.
2. Determine how Scouting can become involved in selected needs and interests of communities in the district.
3. Plan and promote a well-balanced schedule of district events and recruit teams to carry them out.
4. Promote and carry out the district's share of national events such as Anniversary Week activities or a national jamboree.

5. Promote and carry out the district's share of council events such as recognition dinners and shows.
6. Conduct district camporees and other district activities.
7. Help Scouting units take part in community service projects in such a manner that youth members learn qualities of good citizenship.
8. Coordinate the involvement of the district and its units in Good Turn for America.

## **TRAINING**

One leader said: "I guess I'm the wrong person for the position. Everything I try to do seems to go wrong. It probably would be better for me and for the unit if I would resign."

Well, there is always the chance that the leader was the wrong person for the position; but more often than not, such feelings result from the fact that leaders have not learned how to fill the post. Usually it is easier, and surely it is more satisfying, to operate a pack, troop, team or crew in the right way than the wrong way. But a person has to be shown how.

When a district helps a community organization to recruit a leader, that is only the beginning. The district is a party to a contract to help the leader succeed by providing training. Training is necessary not only for the information it gives, but for other reasons as well.

- It builds the confidence of leaders, which in turn builds the confidence of unit members in their leaders. This helps ensure success.
- It increases the tenure of leaders because they derive greater satisfaction from their position.
- It gives leaders the chance to become acquainted with and network with other leaders.

For all unit leaders, several levels of training are available: Fast Start, Youth Protection, position specific, This Is Scouting, supplemental, and advanced. The various training courses are flexible enough to include individual or group training, though training as a group is usually best.

In addition to unit leader training, district training volunteers support the council in its responsibility for Wood Badge training, the training of district volunteers, and training certain youth leaders. They also encourage all volunteers to participate in the training recognition plan, which motivates and recognizes progress in the leadership development plan. District and council volunteers and certain youth leaders can benefit from training opportunities offered at Philmont Volunteer Training Center as well.

## **Elements of Training**

1. Keep careful records of the training progress of unit leaders.
2. In light of the record, establish the district's training priorities for each year.
3. Develop an annual training schedule to meet the priorities. Plan additional training as needed.
4. Assist in establishing annual district training goals and monitor progress toward them.
5. Recruit and train a staff of able trainers or instructors.
6. Promote participation in district and council training events.
7. Recognize volunteers who complete training.
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of all training, and report progress toward priorities.

## **ADVANCEMENT AND RECOGNITION**

Advancement is one of the methods the movement uses to achieve its objectives. Without advancement, it is impossible for a young man to obtain all of the benefits of participation in the Scouting program. Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting specialize in placing surmountable hurdles before boys. As they face these hurdles without breaking stride, boys learn to know themselves and gain confidence.

Advancement gives boys a means of measuring their own progress. They learn and develop skills against a standard that the program provides. As the progression and expectations increase, participants grow and gain experience.

Advancement also provides a means of recognizing boys for their progress. There is a ladder to climb, and recognition at each step.

### **Cub Scout Advancement**

In Cub Scouting, advancement is more informal and the standards are less rigid. Parents work with their sons on achievements and certify completion of requirements without further review by den or pack leaders. Other adults also may help Cub Scouts with their achievements. The emphasis is upon what happens to boys as they do their best, and upon the relationship that builds between boys and parents.

In Webelos Scouting, as a part of its preparation for Boy Scouting, advancement completion for ranks and activity badges is certified by the Webelos den leader or another adult designated by the leader. Advancement becomes an important part of den meetings and activities.

## **Boy Scout and Varsity Scout Advancement**

Certifying Boy Scout and Varsity Scout advancement is done by boy and adult leaders. This permits greater emphasis upon standards and greater consistency of measurement, both of which are important to boys of Scout age.

As the Boy Scout or Varsity Scout advances from Tenderfoot to Eagle, he works with his patrol, his troop/team and on his own. There are four phases, as follows:

### **1. The Boy Scout learns.**

A Boy Scout learns by doing, and as he grows in ability he is asked to teach other Scouts.

### **2. The Boy Scout is tested.**

A Boy Scout is tested on requirements by his patrol leader, Scoutmaster or assistant, or a troop committee member.

### **3. The Boy Scout is reviewed.**

When a Boy Scout has completed all requirements for a rank, he appears before a board of review conducted by troop committee members. The council determines who conducts the Eagle Scout board of review.

### **4. The Boy Scout is recognized.**

When the board of review certifies a Boy Scout's advancement to the next rank, he receives his badge in a ceremony at the next troop meeting. Certificates of advancement can be presented in troop courts of honor.

## **Venturing Advancement**

The Venturing Bronze, Gold, Silver, Ranger, Quest, TRUST, and Quartermaster awards may be earned by all Venturers who meet certain requirements. Details on Venturing advancement can be found in the *Venturer/Ranger Handbook*, No. 33494, *Venturing Leader Manual*, No. 34655E, and *Sea Scout Manual*, No. 33239C.

A male Venturer who has achieved the First Class rank as a Boy Scout in a troop or as a Varsity Scout in a team may continue working toward the Eagle Scout rank as a Venturer until his 18th birthday. There is no alternative Venturing route to qualify for the Eagle Scout rank.

Districts help:

- Ensure that commissioners are aware of advancement procedures for qualified Venturers
- Visit crew Gold and Silver reviews
- The crew identify consultants for the Bronze, Gold, Silver, Ranger, and Quartermaster requirements
- Emphasize the objective of having all Venturers earn the Bronze Award within their first year
- The crew Advisor organize a crew advancement plan

## **Elements of Advancement and Recognition**

Both commissioners and district advancement volunteers assist unit leaders in advancement matters. When commissioners find special advancement problems while carrying out their normal service, they alert advancement volunteers to give special help.

The following are typical responsibilities within the advancement and recognition function:

1. Interpret and carry out the advancement policies of the council.
2. Cooperate with commissioners and trainers in explaining the advancement plans and procedures to new unit leaders.
3. Visit each unit annually to assist leaders to evaluate advancement progress and to set advancement goals for the next year.
4. Keep aware of unit progress throughout the year, and assist units with little or no advancement records.
5. Develop the district's plan for administering the merit badge plan, including the recruiting, registering, and coaching of merit badge counselors.
6. Assist in setting district advancement goals and monitoring progress.
7. Promote regular troop boards of review and courts of honor.
8. Provide a district representative for Eagle Scout boards of review, or organize a district level board of review, whichever fits your council's plan.



# THE UNIT SERVICE FUNCTION

## (Commissioner Service)

### ***How It Is for Unit Leaders***

The whole hope of the Scouting movement rests upon two assumptions:

1. That a chartered organization can use the Scouting program in a manner to make a difference in the lives of young people.
2. **That district volunteers will do whatever is necessary to ensure every unit leader's success.**

Here's the way it is for unit leaders; let's use the Scoutmaster for our example.

One night every single week, the Scoutmaster knows there will be 20, 30, or 40 boys waiting at the troop meeting place. There is no rest at all from that. It makes no difference whether the Scoutmaster brings a headache home from work, is tired, or would rather be doing something else.

Scoutmasters know if they don't appear at the troop meeting, 30 or more boys will lose faith in them.

If there have not been enough meetings of the patrol leaders' council, the boy leaders will not function, and the Scoutmaster will have to run the meeting alone. All of that, and more, is important to Scoutmasters because they take it seriously. They know the troop is composed of boys who need their help.

The problem is that Scoutmasters sometimes feel alone in their position. It isn't meant to be that way. The community organization that operates the troop is expected to care about what is going on; but it isn't always easy to know how to help. Sometimes members of the organization seem to have so much faith in their Scoutmaster they let them do the work alone. A troop committee exists to help, but sometimes it waits for the Scoutmaster to call meetings and make them effective.

It's likely the parents appreciate all that Scoutmasters do for their sons, but they may not always show it. The Scouts enjoy their experience, but sometimes they, too, take their unit leader for granted.

Considering all the things Scoutmasters must do to operate their troop successfully, they probably spend 30 to 40 hours each month on their duties. In addition, they are expected to give a week of vacation each year to provide a long-term camping experience. They probably wouldn't be doing all of that if they didn't

derive some pleasure and satisfaction, but it is a demanding volunteer service to render. It isn't surprising if Scoutmasters become discouraged or even disgusted once in a while.

It is in those moments when a Scoutmaster feels alone and wonders if it's worth the effort. It's one thing if the troop's chartered organization forgets the Scoutmaster, or if the troop committee isn't very helpful, but *it's almost devastating if the Boy Scouts of America seems to be neglecting these unit leaders. But a Scoutmaster who has an effective commissioner will never feel alone.*

### ***The Nature of Unit Service***

The commissioner is not a police officer. This person is a coach, mentor, and resource to the unit. A positive relationship between the commissioner and unit is an essential ingredient to success.

The most important thing a commissioner does for a unit leader is to show that somebody cares. This person is the connecting link between the Boy Scouts of America and the unit leader. When the unit leader is discouraged, it is this person who encourages. When the unit committee is not helping enough, it is the commissioner who meets with it on behalf of the unit leader. Even when there are no problems, it is the commissioner who works closely enough with the unit leader to prevent future issues, and to prove the district cares.

There is a simple formula for success: The commissioner is assigned not more than three units and is responsible for their success and the well-being of their leaders. This person does two things at least monthly for each unit:

1. Visits a unit meeting or unit committee meeting and stays long enough to evaluate how things are going and to talk with the unit leader. The theme of the conversation is: "How are things going, and how can I help?"
2. Phones each unit leader between unit-meeting visits to see if help is needed.

These two simple acts can lift a leader's spirit. Even if no help is needed, it is reassuring to know it is available. Regular contact and monthly visits create a

positive feeling about the district and council. This is essential if a unit leader is to feel good about the position. Of course, if there is a specific problem, the commissioner meets more often until it is resolved.

Should the unit commissioner know all about unit operation? Well, it would be nice, but is not necessary. It is important, however, to know how to deal with common problems, and absolutely necessary to know where to get help with the special problems. This individual must care enough never to let a question go unanswered or a problem unresolved. That is the final test of a good commissioner.

## **How the Commissioner Works With Other District Volunteers**

This manual has shown that several of the district functions require specialized help to units. For example, volunteers working within the advancement function are required to visit units once each year to evaluate advancement progress and where needed to provide help. The camping/outdoor activities volunteers are asked to help unit leaders plan their outdoor programs. It is helpful if the unit commissioner is present during these occasions because they provide insight to the unit's needs.

The effective commissioner is never reluctant to call other district volunteers into unit situations to help meet special needs. It is encouraging to unit leaders to discover there are people besides the commissioner who are ready and able to help. It enhances the reputation of the commissioner with unit leaders and helps keep all district volunteers aware that their first responsibility is to unit leaders. Commissioners also make sure there is harmony between the unit and members of the chartered organization. Problems are not allowed to fester.

## **Elements of Commissioner Service**

The first priority for commissioners is to develop a close relationship with unit leaders, as described above. In addition there are certain specific responsibilities:

1. Work especially close to leaders of new units and new leaders of established units.
2. Help units prepare for charter renewal and lead them through the process. Plan and carry out a charter presentation ceremony.

3. Make a thorough appraisal of each unit's operation and program annually and review each quarter to measure progress. (Use the Quality Unit commitment form or the Unit Self-Assessment form as a guideline.)
4. Roundtable commissioners conduct monthly roundtables for unit leaders, and unit commissioners encourage the participation of all unit leaders and attend with them.
5. At least once each year the unit commissioner conducts a membership inventory and uniform inspection to check on active membership and encourage proper uniforming.
6. Help units achieve the Quality Unit Award, assisting with goal setting and goal monitoring.
7. Help unit leaders understand why enrolling new members is important to their unit's success, and help them do it.
8. Keep unit leaders informed about district and council events, and encourage unit participation.
9. Provide prompt, intensive, and often persistent care when major problems occur in units, and alert the district commissioner.

## **Additional Information About Commissioner Service**

The functions of the district commissioner and the organization of the district commissioner staff are covered later in this manual. Details about commissioner operation are covered in the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*, No. 33621 and in the *Administration of Commissioner Service*, No. 34501.





# THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DISTRICT

There is something to remember about organizational machinery. If we have just the right amount of it, and if it is kept as simple as possible, it will work for us. If we have too much, and it is too complicated, we will work for it.

A well-organized district focuses upon the work to be done, not upon complicated charts with too many slots to fill. The clearer and simpler the plan, the easier it is for volunteers to understand how they fit in. The kind of volunteer structure depends on the number of units, the size of the territory served, and the nature of the communities making up the district (suburban, rural, low-income urban, etc.).

Each district, regardless of size, has a district committee to coordinate the work of the district. Beyond that, the typical district usually would have a committee for each of the functions, including a commissioner staff for unit service. How large should the committees be, and how many subcommittees? Here is the criterion: enough committees with enough members to accomplish the standard district functions effectively.

**All districts, no matter their size, carry out the same standard functions. The exact method of organizing to carry out the functions is left more flexible and must be adapted to the needs and characteristics of the communities which the district serves.** A small district may find the district committee working as a “committee of the whole.” Another small district may find it adequate to have one or two volunteers assigned to each committee. But most other districts need more organization and more people than that.

The district Key 3 consists of the district chair, district commissioner, and district executive. The district and district Key 3 support units to ensure that our youth members get the best possible Scouting experience in a safe environment. The best way to ensure this is to make sure all units achieve the Quality Unit Award and that the district achieves the Quality District Award. The district Key 3 meet as often as necessary to ensure proper coordination of the work in the district (probably twice a month for about an hour). They also keep in close telephone contact throughout the month. Usually, the Key 3 work together in building the agenda for the district committee meeting.

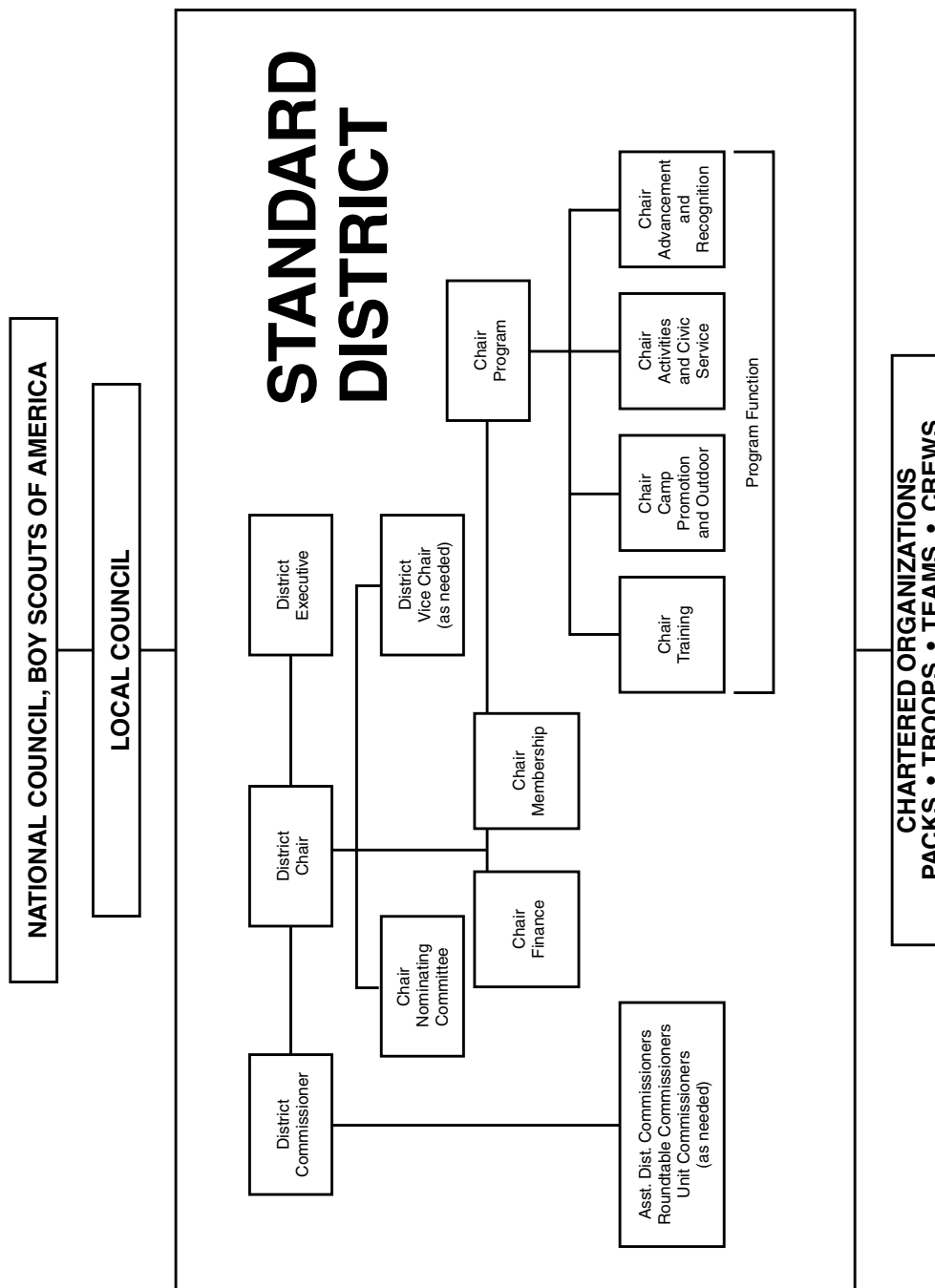
## *The District Key 3*

### *District Chair*

The district chair is nominated by the district nominating committee and elected by the district committee. He or she is automatically nominated for membership on the council executive board, subject to approval by the council executive board.

In leading the district, the district chair:

1. Identifies and continually recruits enough of the right people as operating committee chairs and introduces them to their council counterparts.
2. Initiates plans and helps committee chairs recruit an adequate number of members to carry out the functions of the district.
3. Plans (with the district executive and the district commissioner) and presides at district committee meetings.
4. Works with the district commissioner and district executive to stimulate and coordinate the work of the district to ensure the success of the Scouting units.
5. In cooperation with the district executive, ensures the completion of district goals by monitoring operating committees.
6. Recognizes individuals, committees, and chartered organizations for their Scouting accomplishments.
7. Supports local and national Scouting policies, procedures, and practices.
8. Helps to secure support for Scouting from top community leaders throughout the district.
9. Annually appoints a new district nominating committee to meet year-round, and selects nominees for district officers and district members at large.
10. Trains, coaches, and mentors district committee members.
11. Aids in the development of the district executive.



### **District Commissioner**

The district commissioner is approved and appointed by the council executive board, with the concurrence of the Scout executive, on the recommendation of the district nominating committee. This Scouter represents the district as a member of the council commissioner cabinet.

The district commissioner leads the commissioner staff:

1. Identifies and recruits enough of the right people as commissioners so that all Scouting units in the district receive regular, helpful service.
2. Trains, coaches, and mentors members of the commissioner staff.

3. Supervises and motivates unit commissioners to visit each unit regularly, identify unit needs, and make plans to meet unit needs.
4. Makes sure that every unit commissioner is trained in the use of the Unit Visit Tracking System and uses it consistently.
5. Administers the annual commissioner service plan, which gives specific purposes for commissioner contact with units at designated times of the year.
6. Oversees the unit charter renewal plan so that each unit reregisters on time and with optimum membership.

7. Guides roundtable commissioners to ensure that monthly roundtables are well attended, and provides practical and exciting unit program ideas.
8. Plans and presides at monthly meetings of the district commissioner staff, and sets a good personal example of Scout uniforming.
9. Helps meet district goals.
10. Supports local and national Scouting policies, procedures, and practices.
11. Attends district committee meetings to report on the condition of units and to secure specialized help for units.
12. Promotes the commissioner recognition plan to all commissioners.

### **District Executive**

The district executive is employed by the council executive board upon recommendation of the Scout executive, and works under the direction of the Scout executive.

As the full-time professional in the district, the district executive has a close working relationship with the district chair and the district commissioner to accomplish the district's objectives through volunteers.

The district executive:

1. Provides professional coaching.
2. Proposes plans and agendas, usually "pencil drafts," for consideration.
3. Suggests action plans for recruiting district personnel.
4. Gives inspiration and encouragement.
5. Maintains regular contact with heads of the chartered organization.
6. Keeps district records up to date.
7. Arranges for the council's office services such as mailings, meeting notices, etc.
8. Provides vital behind-the-scenes administrative support.
9. Develops his or her own work schedule.
10. Works with and supports volunteers.
11. Maintains a good working relationship with district volunteers.

## **Rural and Low-Income Urban Districts**

Considerable adaptation is usually needed for effective district operation in very rural and low-income urban areas. In fact, alternative plans have been developed for greater success in such districts. These plans respond to needs expressed from the field for many years and are firmly based on research and field-testing.

Some urban and rural districts may be successful with the more traditional form of operation. But councils should beware: Sometimes traditional district operation and personnel may appear to be active and thriving, but a large percentage of rural and low-income urban units are not responding to the district and are not helped by it. A district's operation must be truly responsive to units and supportive of rural and urban community organizations. A less conventional plan may be needed for greater success.

### **Neighborhood/Small Community/Multicultural Plan**

The Neighborhood/Small Community and Multicultural Plan of District Operation has a major focus on smaller geographical communities. It provides greater flexibility, makes most efficient use of volunteers in a scarce volunteer market, and is based on more informal relationships. A council can use the Neighborhood Plan in one or more of its districts. The objective of district operation remains the same for all districts; the operation and structure differ to fit different situations and needs.

What is a *Scouting neighborhood*? It's a geographical area that includes one or more well-defined local communities of the district. It can be an entire county in a multicounty district. It may be several closely



related small towns. It can be a fairly small, densely populated area within a city—anywhere from 25 to maybe a hundred city blocks.

Rural and low-income urban districts may organize their functions around three or four neighborhoods of the district on a decentralized small-area basis. (See the diagrams on pages 16 and 17.) Formal long-term structure on a district level is minimal. The plan relies heavily on the short-term, task-oriented work of volunteers in contrast to year-long formal assignments.

The key meeting for unit volunteers is the neighborhood planning and training meeting. In this meeting, the three elements of training, providing (roundtable) program resources, and helping with actual unit program planning all occur at the same time, in the same place, and under the leadership of the same unit service persons.

For more information see *Neighborhood/Small Community Plan of District Operation for Urban and Rural Areas*, No. 7-402A, pages 5 and 6, for an important rationale of this plan.

### **Committee-of-the-Whole Plan**

A small rural district with a small number of units may find all district volunteers working as a “committee of the whole.” It is often more practical to use this plan to serve a smaller number of units rather

than attempt to incorporate the area into a much larger district which does not adequately meet the needs of rural communities. One committee carries out all district functions and projects. Some committee members are unit commissioners who perform all service for units in their geographical part of the district. The district is made up of members at large and chartered organization representatives led by a district chair just as in the standard plan of operation.

Some committee members also serve as chairs for specific functions, projects, or events. All members assist as needed. Each chair plans what must be done, instructs the rest of the committee, and sees that the function is not neglected. They do their duty by asking other members to pick up the tasks, often in their own home localities.

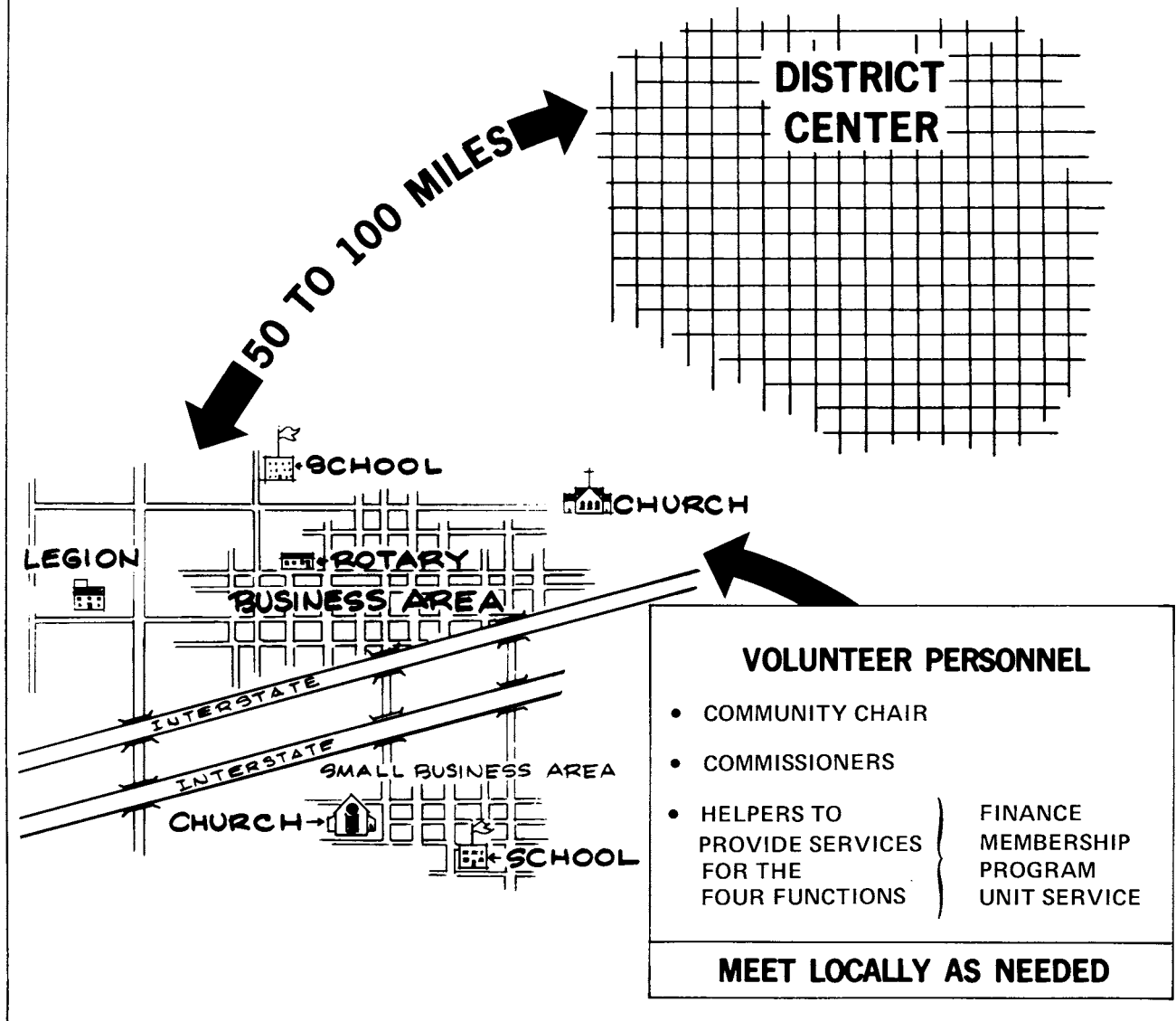
In committee-of-the-whole operation, there is a natural tendency to organize the work into seasonal campaigns with the total committee pitching in. Thus, the total committee may this month work on a together plan, next month on a camporee, sometime later on training courses or a finance campaign.

View the “Rural District Operation—Small Community” and “Urban District Operation—Neighborhood Plan” (on the following pages).



# RURAL DISTRICT OPERATION

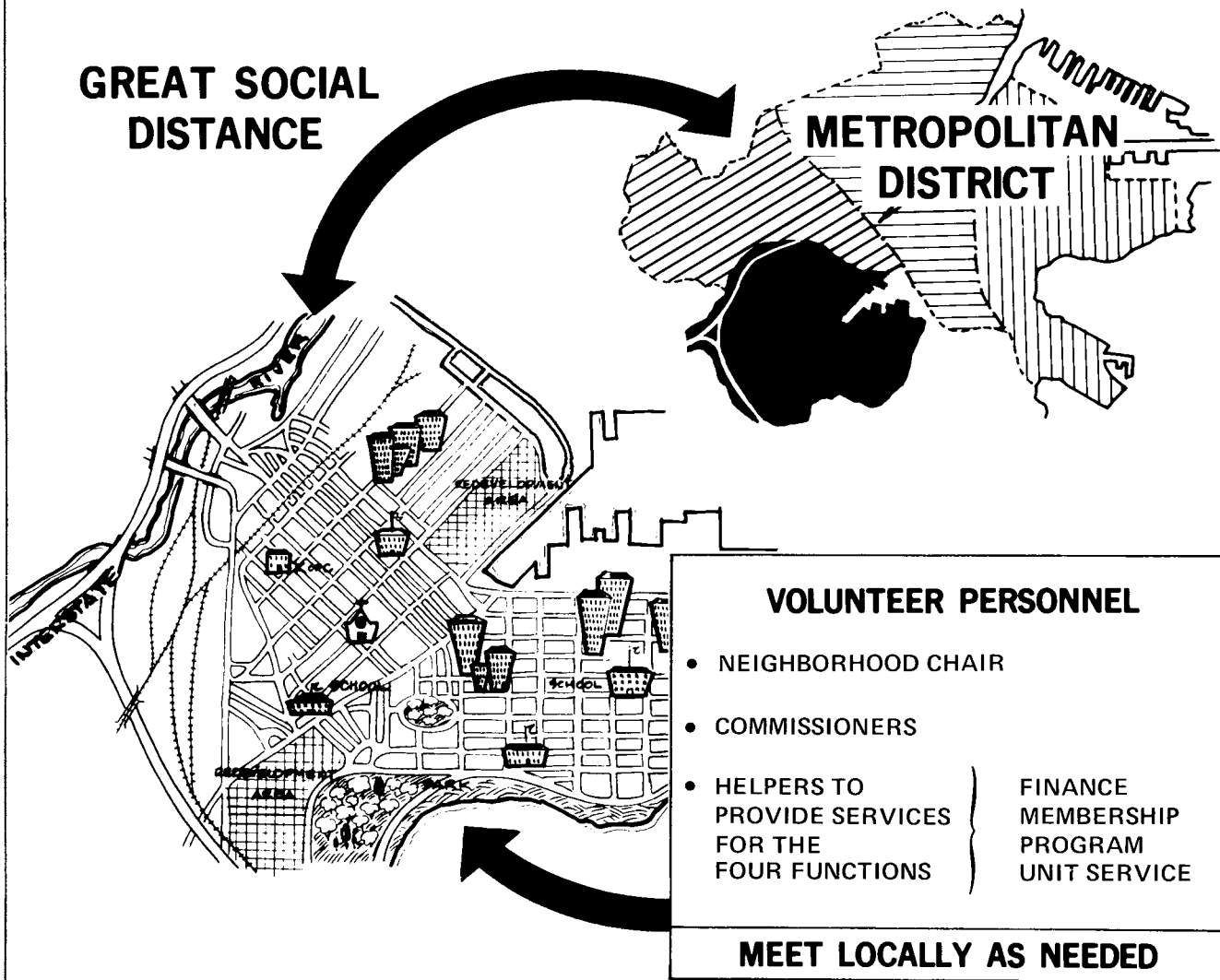
## SMALL COMMUNITY



- **SMALL COMMUNITY: 5-15 UNITS**
- **PLACES SERVICES CLOSE TO PEOPLE**
- **DISTRICT MADE UP OF SEVERAL SIMILAR COMMUNITIES NOT CLOSELY RELATED**

# URBAN DISTRICT OPERATION

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



- SUBCOMMUNITY (NEIGHBORHOOD) OF THE DISTRICT: 10-20 UNITS
- PROVIDES ESSENTIAL LOCAL IDENTITY
- PLACES SERVICES CLOSE TO PEOPLE
- DISTRICT HAS THREE TO SIX SIMILAR NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE PLANS



# THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE

This committee coordinates all the functions of the district for the purposes of (a) organizing and supporting Quality Units, (b) carrying out the policies and objectives of the council, and (c) extending the program to the greatest number of youth.

District members at large are elected annually at the district annual meeting. All chartered organization representatives (selected by community organizations operating units) are automatically members of the council and of their district committee, thus providing a close tie-in with chartered organizations.

District chairs should be universally recognized in their community as outstanding because of their character and achievements as a leader with executive ability. Their positive personality and organization experience inspire confidence that will win support for Scouting. Because of their business and social relationships, they should be able to help the council secure adequate financial support from the district.

**The nominating committee meets throughout the year to build its prospect list, cultivate potential leadership, and fill vacancies.**

District leaders are in a crucial position in the Scouting movement. They are the link between the chartered organizations and their units, and the Boy Scouts of America and its program. The district's role is to help unit leaders be successful in providing a quality program for their youth.



# OPERATING COMMITTEES OF THE DISTRICT

The operating committees of the district have the responsibility to carry out the functions of membership, finance, and program.

The chair of each district operating committee is a member of the like council committee (except for finance and camp promotion which are options for the council).

## **Membership Committee**

This committee carries out several essential tasks to bring about membership growth in the district.

1. Gathers information to keep the membership committee informed of conditions and needs of the district, conduct boy-fact surveys, and recommends district membership goals.

2. Cultivates relationships with community organizations in the district. Helps establish and maintain healthy relations with schools, religious organizations, and other community organizations and conduct such events as district relationship conferences.
3. Organizes units. Schedules units to be organized or reorganized each year and carries out the schedule. In some districts the committee has specialists for organizing packs, troops, teams, and crews.
4. Plans and carries out district roundups and other youth recruiting projects.

Refer to the *Membership Committee Guide*, No. 33080, for more details.

## Finance Committee

The council finance committee carries the major responsibility for finance. Some districts use district finance committees, and some use only a district task force for planning and conducting the annual Friends of Scouting campaign. Where a district finance committee is used, its chair usually serves on the council finance committee and the district committee.

Councils raise their operating budgets in a variety of ways. Included in most are the United Way, Friends of Scouting, project sales, product sales, and other funding projects. Therefore, the structure of the district finance committee depends on local circumstances. Refer to *District Finance Committee Guide*, No. 33779.

## Camp Promotion and Outdoor Committee

The camp promotion and outdoor committee has program specialists as needed for each program.

1. Cub Scout outdoor activities. This group plans and carries out the district's Cub Scout day camps and other Cub Scout activities. They help Cubmasters schedule a balanced plan for each year, and promote pack participation in council Cub Scout and Webelos Scout resident camp and family camp.
2. Boy Scout camping. This group interprets the place of camping in Boy Scouting and Varsity Scouting and promotes troop/team participation in the council Boy Scout camp and high-adventure activities.
3. Venturing outdoor activities. Venturing specialists work with Advisors and Venturers to select and conduct outdoor events and superactivities.

This committee is responsible for planning the district's outdoor and camping approach, and goal setting and achievement of these objectives. Refer to the *Camping Committee Guide*, No. 33083, for further information.

## Activities and Civic Service Committee

This committee serves packs, troops, teams, and crews, and also posts. The committee can be divided into civic service and activities sections as conditions require. Members who are familiar with each phase of Scouting are needed for program-related activities. Refer to the *Activities and Civic Service Committee Guide*, No. 33082, for further information.

## The Training Committee

The functions of the committee can be handled by the committee as a whole. However, a small group of specialists/consultants for each program is needed to recruit, train, and supervise the work of Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, and Venturing trainers. Refer to the *Leadership Training Committee Guide: Plans, Procedures, and Materials*, No. 34169.

## Advancement and Recognition Committee

This committee serves Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing. Since the committee must visit all units at least annually to interpret advancement and evaluate progress, specialists for each program division usually are needed. The number needed will depend upon the number of packs, troops, teams, and crews in the district. **The district is responsible to see that an up-to-date merit badge counselor directory is available and that all merit badge counselors are registered as adults with the Boy Scouts of America.** Refer to *Advancement Policies and Procedures*, No. 33088, for further information.

The recognition arm of this committee deals with all Scout volunteer leaders. It is important to say thank you for service well done, to encourage future service, and to inspire other adults to serve. This committee's responsibility is to identify leaders who should be recognized and thanked, and then to arrange for recognition.

A major task of this committee is the annual selection of recipients for the District Award of Merit. This award may be given to registered volunteers once per year on the basis of one District Award of Merit per 25 traditional units or fraction thereof. For example, if there are 60 traditional units in the district, three District Awards of Merit may be awarded. More information can be found at [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33720.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/33720.pdf).

Other district awards are limited only by your creativity. "Scouter of the Year" awards can go to any volunteer leader. Special awards can be created in the name of a long-time volunteer and presented annually in his or her honor or memory. Some districts invite each unit to nominate a Scouter of the year, and this leader then receives district-level recognition. Earned training awards, Wood Badge beads, and commissioner's Arrowhead Honors also should be presented.

Most districts celebrate their successes and present their District Awards of Merit and other recognitions at an annual dinner. If desired, this can be combined with the District annual meeting, where the new district committee leaders for the upcoming year are elected and installed.



# THE COMMISSIONER STAFF

The district commissioner staff led by the district commissioner includes assistant district commissioners, roundtable commissioners, and unit commissioners.

The district nominating committee, after consultation with the district executive, recommends a district commissioner to the executive board for appointment and approval with the concurrence of the Scout executive.

The district commissioner works closely with the district chair and the district executive. They are known as the Key 3 of the district.

The district commissioner has the following responsibilities:

1. Recruits, appoints, trains, supervises, and motivates the commissioner staff so that all units in the district receive regular helpful service.
2. Conducts monthly meetings of the district commissioner staff for the purpose of reviewing the health of each unit and planning who will help meet specific unit needs during the month ahead.
3. Trains unit commissioners in the use of the Unit Visit Tracking System and sees to it that all unit commissioners are using it properly. Has a training feature at each meeting.
4. Directs commissioners to establish and maintain a system of frequent visits to each unit, report problems through regular meetings of the district commissioner's staff, and review plans to solve such problems.
5. Oversees the unit charter renewal plan and procedures to assure that each unit reregisters on time and with optimum membership.
6. Attends district meetings and reports on the condition and needs of units. Keeps current on all developments and new ideas, including the use of program planning tools, and sees that units are informed.
7. Serves as a member of the district Key 3 and meets regularly with the district chair and district executive to coordinate the work of the district and assess its progress.

8. Works closely with roundtable commissioners to ensure quality roundtables that are well attended.
9. Encourages the commissioner staff to have all units on the unit budget plan, thus encouraging all units to subscribe 100 percent to *Boys' Life*.
10. Serves as a member of the council commissioner cabinet.
11. Sets the goal that every unit will earn Quality Unit recognition every year.
12. Participates in the council's commissioner conferences or college of commissioner service under the leadership of the council commissioner.
13. Supports local and national Scouting policy, procedures, and practices.

Roundtable commissioners are responsible to the district commissioner for planning and operating successful Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturing leader roundtables each month. There is also an area commissioner—a national volunteer position—whose duties are to provide support to all council commissioners in the areas of membership, unit charter renewal, and training in support of commissioner service to strengthen units.

## ***How Large Is a Commissioner Staff?***

The size of a commissioner staff is determined by the number of units in the district. Unit commissioners usually don't function at their best when serving more than three units. Therefore a good rule of thumb is to divide the number of units by three, then recruit that number of unit commissioners. It is a full-time volunteer position to be responsible for the success and well-being of three units and their leaders. For every five unit commissioners there should be an assistant district commissioner.

Refer to *Administration of Commissioner Service*, No. 34501 and *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*, No. 33621, for further information.



# MEETINGS OF THE DISTRICT

A member of the national staff had been meeting with a group of Scouts to learn what was on their minds. After an hour of general conversation, he asked, “Does anything bother you much these days?”

One 12-year-old looked very thoughtful, then he answered, “Yup, ever’body’s too busy.”

“How do you mean?” asked the staff member.

“Well, all the time it seems like there are just too many things to be late for, then when you get there you wonder why you came.”

Hm-m. Interesting that 12-year-olds feel it and that they can put it so succinctly.

Meetings are *not* the most important things Scouting committees do. It’s often the work between meetings that counts. So if there are too many meetings, too many people are likely to wonder why they came. A successful district team is comprised of community and business leaders whose time is limited. It is essential that their time is not wasted.

The agenda for each district meeting should include the following:

1. Check on progress.
2. Plan the work ahead.
3. Establish priorities.
4. Decide who will do what and by when.

The agenda should be developed with the input of the district Key 3 and the committee members and should be sent to all a week in advance. Notes from each meeting should be taken and shared within a week of the completed meeting.

## **Meetings of the District Committee**

In order to coordinate the work of the district, the district committee usually meets each month on a regularly scheduled date.

Since coordination is the focus of the meeting, the agenda needs to reflect that. Committee reports provide a basis for assessing progress and planning for the month ahead. The district commissioner reports on the special needs of units and solicits the assistance of operating committees to meet those needs.

Operating committees are given sufficient time for separate and simultaneous meetings in the first part of the district committee meeting agenda. Each committee checks on progress made by its members during the month, and plans actions for the month ahead. This becomes the basis for each committee’s report to the entire district committee later in the meeting. The district chair gives leadership to whatever coordination may be needed among committees.

District committee meetings should be conducted in a manner to provide some fellowship and build morale, thus contributing to the committee’s sense of unity.

Once each year, usually in the month preceding the council annual meeting, the district holds its annual meeting. District members at large and the district chair and vice chairs are elected. This is also a time to appraise the progress over the past year and create inspiration for the year ahead.

For details, see *A Handbook for District Operations*, No. 34739.

## **Committees of the District**

Operating committees meet only as often as may be necessary to accomplish committee work. If these committees meet within the agenda of the district committee meeting, further meetings should be unnecessary. Mere reporting by members is insufficient reason for the committee to meet. The purpose of reports is to plan for the month ahead. **Meetings are wasted if members leave without receiving specific assignments for the next month.**

## **Commissioner Staff Meetings**

The district commissioner staff meets monthly, under the leadership of the district commissioner. Unit commissioners report upon the condition of their units. This gives the district commissioner a chance to be informed before the district committee meets.

The meeting is sharply focused on the needs of individual units, not preoccupied with district or council needs and projects. **This is a time for assistant district commissioners and their respective unit commissioners to meet and review the health of each unit and plan who will help meet specific unit needs during the month ahead.** Priority is given to unit “trouble spots” that could badly disrupt a unit.

Part of each meeting is devoted to a **brief training topic**. Training is a continuous process for commissioners. The district commissioner and district executive select a topic each month that matches current needs of their commissioners to develop certain skills.

In most councils the council commissioner conducts an annual commissioner conference for all commissioners. Some councils also will conduct a college of commissioner service or a University of Scouting. The goal is to motivate, train, and inform commissioners on how to help units succeed.

### **Key 3 Meetings**

The district Key 3 (district chair, district commissioner, and district executive) meet as often as necessary to ensure proper coordination of the work of the district. (At least twice a month.) They also keep in close contact throughout the month. Usually they work together in building the agenda for the district committee meeting. See *District Key 3*, No. 513-630(09).

#### **Remember the following about meetings:**

- They are important only because of the work they generate between meetings.
- Too many meetings interfere with the tasks to be accomplished.
- Poorly attended meetings have a reverse effect: Instead of building enthusiasm, they destroy it.
- A wise chair uses meetings to assess the attitudes and interest of individual committee members.

The BSA has a hard-hitting interactive DVD titled *Meetings of the District*, No. AV-06DVD07, to help top district leaders lead their districts to become Quality Districts that help units succeed. There are meeting segments on Key 3 meetings, district committee meetings, commissioner staff meetings, and roundtables. Each meeting segment has a short presentation and three to five interactive scenarios. This training tool goes way beyond mere meeting mechanics to illustrate the key meeting features and key district leader behavior that will help make districts successful.



# GUIDE FOR VOLUNTEERS ON VOLUNTEER-PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Since the early days of Scouting in the United States, good volunteer-professional relationships has been a special hallmark of the Boy Scouts of America. Today, this special relationship between volunteers and professionals is the core of its success at the council/district level. When this relationship thrives, the Scouting movement thrives. Otherwise, Scouting suffers.

The BSA trains Scout professionals on their responsibility for developing good working relationships with volunteers. However, both volunteers and professionals share responsibility for building good working relationships in Scouting. No matter what your position or task in the district or council, skill in working effectively with your professional staff adviser is important. Both volunteer and professional must work to build this relationship.



If partners have complete confidence in each other, they will seek each other's counsel. Neither partner has a monopoly on wisdom, judgment, or experience. When the full resources of both parties are applied to decision making, the combination is unbeatable.

Your professional is a Scouting friend and counselor. Working together is more effective when volunteers and professionals enjoy each other's company. Professionals do not work *for*

volunteers, but *with* them as partners on behalf of youth. The unselfish service you both render and your common dedication breeds mutual respect and a feeling of kinship. One test of the relationship is whether the two parties think of each other as friends.

Occasionally a volunteer will say to a professional, "Remember, you get paid for this, and I don't." But

that is not the significant difference between volunteers and professionals. The significant difference is that volunteers are able to give only a portion of their time to Scouting, while professionals give their full time, and then some.

This means professionals are dependent upon the Scouting movement for the material things of life, but it does not mean professionals look upon Scouting differently than volunteers. Both are dedicated to the same principles, and both are trying to live out those principles in their daily lives and in their work. Many professionals could pursue careers outside Scouting and make more money, but they choose to stay in Scouting because of their commitment to youth and their belief in the program.

## Qualities of a Good Relationship

Good volunteer-professional relationships are characterized by mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual recognition of each other's role and competency. When this relationship works well, both partners are aware of their interdependence, they have complete confidence in each other, and they share the same objectives (to help units succeed in providing a quality program for youth). In Scout districts, for example, mutual dependence results because district executives know they cannot possibly do all the work that needs to be done, and district volunteers know they need the coaching and experience of full-time professionals.



The fact that professionals give all their time means their experience is broader and deepens more quickly. Their training is more intensive and continues throughout their professional careers. This makes their coaching more valuable to volunteers. So seek out the guidance of your professional coach.

## ***Tips for Better Relationships***

Here are a few tips on how good council volunteers work with their professional staff advisers:

- A. Intentionally begin to build a good relationship with your professional from your very first visit. Be positive. Be enthusiastic. Be well prepared. Think in advance about the impression you want to make as one of the trusted volunteers of the district or council.
- B. Be accessible to your professional staff adviser. Exchange phone numbers, e-mail addresses, mailing addresses, etc. Avoid the impression that you are too busy or annoyed when the staff adviser calls. Return the staff adviser's calls.  
  
Set up regularly scheduled visits and/or phone dates. You may need to talk weekly, monthly, or less frequently, depending on your responsibility.
- C. Create a welcome environment for the new professional and plan ways to incorporate that person on the team. Remember, it's easy for a group to turn inward and make newcomers feel awkward or unwelcome. Send a letter of introduction to appropriate volunteers from a person in authority (council president, Scout executive, etc.). This helps a person feel good about joining the district or council. It also helps volunteers get acquainted with the new professional.
- D. A professional will try to make efficient use of volunteers' time and, as best they can, plan visits and meetings at times that are best for volunteers. Volunteers and professionals should help make the most efficient use of each other's Scouting time.
- E. District and council Scouters should know that they can turn to their professional for advice or troubleshooting. Help create the kind of relationship in which you are comfortable asking for help.
- F. Part of being a good Scouter is working with all kinds of people, even when the human chemistry isn't perfect. Feel free to talk with the Scouting professional about how you are working together and what you can both do to improve results in the district.

- G. While you obviously want to form a Scouting relationship, it is nevertheless important to get to know your professional as a whole person. Most of us will feel more comfortable working with someone who is interested in other aspects of our lives as well as our Scouting responsibilities.

Keep in mind that Scouting is not a person's only priority in life. Individuals will have family priorities and may be active in religious and other activities.

- H. Let your professional adviser know if you plan to have your spouse, administrative assistant, or work associate help you with a Scouting task, and how the professional can be helpful to that person.
- I. Develop good communications in which you and your professional listen to and understand each other.
- J. In some instances the function of guiding other volunteers is shared between you and a professional. For example, a district executive works with operating committee chairs who also look to the district chairs for guidance. Both the council commissioner and district executives have a direct working relationship with district commissioners. Unit commissioners work with their district executive and their assistant district commissioner.

You and the professional should be careful to avoid confusion for volunteers and to ensure that they receive consistent messages and have a compatible relationship with their volunteer leader and the professional.

Here are a few examples of the close working relationship that should prevail:

- **Agenda planning.** When the chair of a committee or district commissioner has an agenda to plan, it seems natural to begin with a conversation with the district executive. This person can contribute knowledge of the total needs of the district. The district executive often brings a pencil draft of the agenda. But the final agenda should be the volunteer's, and the volunteer always presides.
- **Recruiting volunteers.** Perhaps the district commissioner wishes to recruit an assistant or a unit commissioner. The district commissioner and district executive together consider the best people available to fill the position.
- **Coaching in committee meetings.** Technically, the district executive is the secretary of the committees of the district, but there is much more to this relationship than taking minutes. The district executive is usually seated beside the chair so they will have easy access to each other.

- **Evaluating meetings.** After a meeting, the chair and the district executive usually discuss what happened and the steps needed to follow up.
- **Setting goals.** The setting of goals results in commitments for both volunteers and the district executive, so both participate in the process.
- **Helping units.** The district executive wants to keep in touch with unit leaders, but volunteers provide unit service. When special problems arise in units, unit commissioners or functional committees ask the district executive to help.
- **Organizing units.** For each new unit, an organizer, trainer, and commissioner are needed. The district executive gives overall support to this effort.

## ***A Closing Note***

Historically, Scouting's great success has resulted because of volunteer talent and the professionals who guide and support talented volunteers.

The best relationships between professional and volunteer are those that include trust, friendship, mutual respect, a recognition of each other's skills, and a further recognition of the symbiosis created when those skills are combined.

The continuing success of Scouting as a volunteer movement is in your capable hands as you and your volunteer team work effectively with your professional adviser.





# DISTRICT NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The nominating committee has a major responsibility mandated in *Standard Local Council Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws*. **However, the nominating committee should continue its work after the annual business meeting to help fill vacancies and to encourage the process of recruiting district volunteers throughout the year.**

Ninety days prior to the district annual meeting, the district chair submits suggestions for members of the nominating committee to the council president for approval. This committee should consist of three to five members. The council president has the discretion to add or delete names for the nominating committee from the council executive board or the community at large. It is recommended that the president appoint a member of the council executive board to serve on this committee. If the district commissioner needs to be replaced, the president may want to ask the council commissioner to serve on the committee.

When approval is received from the council president, the nominating committee meets with the district executive as adviser to evaluate district leadership performance, and to form the slate of nominees for district chair, one or more vice chairs, and district members at large, plus a nominee (to be submitted by the district chair for council executive board approval) to serve as district commissioner.

The committee carries out procedures as outlined in the District Nominating Committee Worksheet, No. 14-33157. Each year, they should view *The District Nominating Committee* video, No. AV-06DVD08.

**District Members at Large.** Individuals of character and standing in the community who, because of interest, organization experience, ability, or general knowledge, may be available for service as a chair or member of a committee in the district or for service in some special capacity to the district. The incoming district chair appoints the chairs of the various operating committees and other special or ad hoc committees.

District members at large (registration code No. 75) are voting members of the district committee. They are nominated by the district nominating committee and are duly elected by the district committee. They may be elected either at the last district annual meeting or during the interim at a regular duly called, monthly district committee meeting.

**District committee members** (registration code No. 79) are not elected but are recruited by the district chair, district vice chair, or one of the operating committee chairs to assist with some function of the district. They are *not* voting members of the district committee. They are usually registered in this position because (1) it is not currently feasible to have a committee member go through the district election process, (2) it is not the intent of the council or district to select them as voting members, (3) their task does not involve ongoing service on the district committee, or (4) the Scouter has agreed to help the district with a project or limited task but does not wish to serve as a regular member of the district committee.

## ***The Year-Round Nominating Committee***

The most successful districts continue the recruiting and nominating process throughout the year. They are continuously looking for new leaders and know that others will need to be replaced. Ideally, there should be one or more backup individuals identified for each key position so that, if necessary, a new person can be put in place as soon as needed.

## ***New Leaders and Rotation of Leaders***

Key leadership in the district is a substantial commitment. It is recommended that leaders serve in any one position for longer than three to four years only under rare circumstances. Finding a replacement should be a high priority. Ideally, each year at least 10 percent of the district committee membership should be new.

When key district leaders are replaced, particularly those with long tenure, it is important to realize that these leaders have given many hours and years of service. Scouting has been an important part of their life. There should be a place in Scouting for every person of good will who wishes to serve. In the spirit of “a Scout is friendly, a Scout is courteous, and a Scout is kind,” a meaningful place should be found where these leaders can continue to contribute if they so choose.



# THE DISTRICT'S RELATION TO THE COUNCIL

The local council establishes districts, each a prescribed part of the geographical territory of the council, for the purpose of unit service and program administration. The council has the authority to realign district territories. It also has the authority to oversee the organization of district committees and district commissioner staffs to administer Scouting in districts and to disband them.

Only the local council is chartered by the Boy Scouts of America. The district is not chartered. Each district exists by authority of a local council.

The local council is held responsible by the Boy Scouts of America for the administration of Scouting in its entire territory, adherence to basic policy, maintenance of standards, public acceptance and goodwill, providing facilities necessary to good Scouting, organization of new units, service to existing units, and the quality of the program that each youth member receives.

The district exists as a part of the council. The council adopts overall policies and plans a program designed to meet the needs of every part of the council territory. The district, which had an important part in that planning, carries out the programs so that it reaches and helps every chartered organization and every unit.

On occasion, the council may find it beneficial to change the geographical boundaries of districts, number of districts, etc. These changes can be diffi-

cult for some district leaders but may be necessary to respond to financial and demographic changes and challenges.

The district committee is not a legislative body in the same sense as the executive board of the council. It does uphold Boy Scouts of America policy in its own local area, but it can neither make basic changes nor permit violations of established policies. The executive board is the governing body of the council and is responsible for its operation and assets.

The district cannot raise money in the name of Scouting nor permit others to do so except in campaigns authorized by the council. The district cannot hold property or accept gifts. The council is the only agency that can do so. Thus, there is no such thing as a district-owned camp. There may be a campsite and camp property located in district territory and used principally by that district, but the title rests with the council. Districts also do not have budgets, treasurers, or treasuries.

The district chair, district commissioner, district executive, and district operating committee chairs all provide important ties to the overall council organization.



# SIX MAJOR TASKS FOR VOLUNTEER SUCCESS

Council volunteers and professional staff members strengthen district committees and commissioner staffs with six major tasks—the six things they must do to make a volunteer system work.

## 1 Define Responsibilities

Volunteers must know what is expected for them to be successful. Carefully define, in writing, the responsibilities for each position. Use Commissioner Responsibility Cards; District Committee Responsibility cards; and *A Handbook for District Operations* manual to assist you.

## 2 Select and Recruit

Fit the right person to the job. Consider each prospect's skills, interests, and other relevant factors. Consider the variety of motivating factors for people getting involved in Scouting. Use all the prescribed steps in recruiting district volunteers and use the recruiting resources of the BSA. Helpful recruiting resources include *Selecting District People*, *A Handbook for District Operations*, and the District Nominating Committee Worksheet.

## 3 Orient and Train

Provide each person with prompt orientation on the individual assignment and with adequate training to be successful. Use the *District Committee Training Workshop*.

## 4 Coach Volunteers

Provide ongoing coaching as needed. Build a volunteer's confidence and self-esteem. Help conserve a volunteer's time. Coaching should be provided by the appropriate committee chair or professional.

## 5 Recognize Achievement

Prompt volunteer recognition has an important impact on the tenure and quality of service in the district. Recognition must be sincere, timely, and earned. Use the great variety of formal BSA recognition items, but also be creative with frequent locally devised thank-yous. Even more effective may be the personal "pat on the back" for a job well done. Recognize volunteers on a face-to-face basis, from a person of status, and preferably in front of the volunteer's peers.

## 6 Evaluate Performance

Help district volunteers regularly evaluate how they're doing. Use the Self-Evaluation for Unit Commissioners in the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*; *A Self-Evaluation Guide for Successful District Operation*; and the "How Will I Know I Did A Good Job?" section in *A Handbook for District Operations*.



# MEASURING RESULTS

When is a district succeeding? Well, to oversimplify, the district is succeeding:

- When its units are successful (qualifying as Quality Units).
- When there is a strong effort to bring the values of the movement's programs to more and more members and to organize new units.
- When the district raises its share of the council budget.

There is a guiding principle here. A district is not measured by the degree of its business at the district level. Results are what count—results at the only point where Scouting really happens—in the unit.

It is helpful for the district chair to look at the district from the point of view of unit leaders. Do unit leaders feel helped? Are they convinced the district organization is making a significant difference in their success? Or do unit leaders feel they are being asked to help the district? That is not the responsibility of unit leaders.

## ***Setting and Achieving Goals***

Even an idealistic movement needs to plan its work and measure results systematically. Each year units and the committees of the district make a careful assessment of their progress, then plan the work for the year ahead. These plans are expressed in terms of goals, and the goals provide the yardstick for measuring results.

Goals do not help very much until they are owned by those who must achieve them. For example, if the district advancement and recognitions committee sets a goal calling for 75 percent of troop members to advance in rank, that may not motivate Scoutmasters very much. But when Scoutmasters are helped to set their own goals, they surely will be more interested in achieving them.

It is never enough merely to set numerical goals. It is also necessary to establish action goals for achieving numerical goals. So when unit leaders set advancement goals, they must also be helped to determine the steps needed to achieve them. The same applies to functional committees of the district.

When a committee sets a goal, it says: "This is what we will achieve, and this is how we will do it."

The district always begins the goal-setting process, remembering that all people naturally want to succeed and all are chagrined at failure. Then it focuses upon helping people to succeed. For success, goals must be both challenging and attainable.

## ***Successful Scouting in the District***

If a district is to measure the difference it is making, it needs a good yardstick. Both district and council goals are established within the framework of the Quality District requirements. Most of the measurements pertain to unit operation, but goals are established in terms of district totals.

The district chair is a member of the council executive board. Chairs of district operating committees are usually members of like council committees. (In some councils, the camping and finance responsibilities are distinct.) In this way, council and district goals are coordinated.

## ***The Quality Unit Award***

Units establish their goals within the framework of the Quality Unit Award. There are specific standards for each program. Therefore as units set their goals, the district gains insight for the setting of district goals.

Annually, all units review their achievements during the past calendar year and make commitments for the year ahead.

Units establish their goals guided by the unit commissioner. The annual appraisal of its work by the unit leader and unit committee, helped by the commissioner, is the most vital part of this process. Goal setting is planning, and the commissioner is the unit leader's friendly helper in this process. Units that achieve the goals they set are recognized by the Quality Unit Award. It signifies that the unit is operating a quality program for its youth. One of the measurements of a well-functioning district is the number of units that qualify as Quality Units. **One of the major functions of districts is to help units be successful.**



# SUPPORT MATERIALS

## **Literature**

*Activities and Civic Service Committee Guide*,  
No. 33082  
*Administration of Commissioner Service*, No. 34501  
*Advancement Policies and Procedures*, No. 33088  
*Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner Training*,  
No. 34256  
*Camping Committee Guide*, No. 33083  
*The Chartered Organization Representative*,  
No. 33118  
*Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*,  
No. 33621  
*Commissioner Helps for Packs, Troops, and Crews*,  
No. 33618  
Commissioner Responsibility cards, No. 34265D  
Council and District Plan Book, No. 33032  
(online only)  
*Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner and Staff Basic  
Training Manual*, No. 33013  
*Cub Scout Roundtable Planning Guide*, No. 34410  
District Committee Responsibility cards, No. 34266  
*District Committee Training Workshop*, No. 34160  
*District Finance Committee Guide*, No. 33779  
District Key 3, No. 513-630(09)  
District Nominating Committee Worksheet,  
No. 14-33157  
*A Handbook for District Operations*, No. 34739  
*Leadership Training Committee Guide: Plans,  
Procedures, Materials*, No. 34169  
*Many Cultures, One Mission*, No. 523-001  
*Membership Committee Guide*, No. 33080  
*Multicultural Populations, Diverse Marketing  
Strategies*, No. 523-156  
Neighborhood/Small Community Plan of District  
Operation for Urban and Rural Areas, No. 7-402A  
*Sea Scout Manual*, No. 33239C  
*Selecting District People*, No. 34512  
*A Self-Evaluation Guide for Successful District  
Operation*, No. 34207  
*Venturer/Ranger Handbook*, No. 33494  
*Venturing Leader Manual*, No. 34655E

## **Audiovisuals**

Commissioner Service and District Operation  
Support DVD, AV-06DVD08, includes the following  
videos:

*Highlights of District Operations for the  
21st Century*  
*The Unit Commissioner's Orientation: Helping  
Units Succeed*  
*Unit Problem-Solving for Commissioners*  
*The District Nominating Committee*  
*District Key 3 Orientation*  
*Meetings of the District DVD*, AV-06DVD07  
*Commissioner Annual Orientation DVD*,  
AV-04DVD03



# THE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE



Invite,  
involve,  
and inspire  
others . . .

**Position Concept.** Define and declare the ideals and objectives of the movement for Scouting's many publics. Lead volunteers in the development and implementation of a plan for growth and the realization of Scouting values in the lives of youth. Invite, involve, and inspire adults to join in providing more youth with opportunities to participate. Develop strength and stability in a district volunteer organization that will provide for continuity and interim leadership. As Scouting is designed to build and strengthen family relationships, so the district executive manages a daily schedule to provide for his or her family and community, and for fulfilling the responsibilities of good citizenship.

## ***Responsibilities***

1. Define Scouting's mission to the district at large and serve as its principal standard bearer.
2. Select, train, and inspire district volunteers in the art of cultivating effective and adequate leadership for Scouting.
3. Lead the top district volunteers in building a plan of action for Scouting in the district, including effective unit service and serving an increased percentage of available youth.
4. Serve as the professional executive in the administration of assigned Scouting responsibilities on behalf of the council and the BSA.
5. Involve Scouting program and personnel in community life in ways that will bring high visibility and public esteem for Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing.
6. Devote special attention to the selection of finance leadership to ensure the financial resources required for continued growth and development through FOS, the United Way, and other sources of council income.
7. Cultivate, develop, and maintain a close rapport with the key leadership in each chartered organization to help them effectively operate Scouting units to achieve their purpose and that of Scouting. Provide guidance in the proper selection process of quality unit leadership through the chartered organization.
8. Give positive leadership to all volunteers in the development of adult leader training and youth program experiences that will fulfill Scouting's purposes, and effectively help every pack, troop, team, and crew serve its membership.
9. Manage personal involvement in Scouting activities and assignments in such a manner as to ensure their successful conduct. Also provide for personal and family time on a regular basis to foster harmonious relationships and life enrichment.
10. Demonstrate a positive attitude and enthusiasm. Work cooperatively with other council staff. Develop good relationships with volunteers.
11. Working with the Key 3, make sure that every unit achieves Quality status.

**Additional Responsibilities.** To be determined by the local Scout executive.



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