

Unit Connections: A Commissioner's Guide to Positive Impact

Pre-Connection Preparation:

- **Review Unit Data:** Utilize available resources (e.g., unit dashboards, unit metrics, membership records, advancement reports, activity calendars) to identify potential areas for discussion and improvement. Look for trends, gaps, and areas where the unit might need assistance.
- **Identify Key Topics:** Based on the data review, determine the most pressing issues to address with the unit leadership. Prioritize based on impact and urgency. (Examples: low membership, stagnant advancement, lack of outdoor activities, training gaps).
- **Schedule Unit Connection:** Contact the unit leader to schedule a connection at a convenient time and location. Be clear about the purpose of the connection.
- **Prepare Questions/Discussion Points:** Outline specific questions to ask and topics to discuss. Think about potential solutions and resources you can offer using the Connection Guides.

During the Unit Connection:

- **Review Data Together:** Conversationally share the data you reviewed with the unit leader. Ensure they understand the trends and potential concerns. This collaborative review helps ensure everyone is on the same page.
- **Facilitate Discussion:** Ask open-ended questions to encourage the unit leader and other leaders to share their perspectives on the challenges and potential solutions. Actively listen to their input. (Examples: "What do you think is contributing to the low membership?", "What are some barriers to getting Scouts to camp?", "What resources would be most helpful?")
- **Brainstorm Solutions:** Work together to brainstorm potential outreach activities, program enhancements, or other strategies to address the identified issues. Encourage creative thinking and explore various options. Offer examples from other successful units but avoid being prescriptive.
- **Focus on Actionable Steps:** Encourage and guide the unit leaders to identify goals and actions steps. Who will do what by when?
- **Resource Sharing:** Provide information about relevant training courses, program resources, funding opportunities, or other support available from the council or district.
- **Confirm Next Steps:** Summarize the agreed-upon action steps and assign responsibilities. Ensure the unit leader understands what they are expected to do.
- **Schedule Follow-up:** Schedule a follow-up connection to review progress on the action items and offer further support.

Post-Unit Connection:

- **Document the Visit:** Create a written record of the connection, including the topics discussed, the agreed-upon action steps, and the date of the next connection. This is your Unit Connection log.
- **Follow Up:** Contact the unit leader before the scheduled follow-up connection to check in on progress and offer assistance.
- **Provide Continued Support:** Attend unit events, offer guidance, and connect the unit leaders with other resources as needed.

Key Considerations:

- **Focus on Strengths:** While addressing challenges, also acknowledge and celebrate the unit's strengths and successes.
- **Empower Unit Leaders:** The commissioner's role is to facilitate and support, not to take over. Empower the unit leaders to develop and implement their own solutions and guide on goal setting as needed.
- **Be Patient:** Change takes time. Be patient and persistent in your efforts to support the unit's growth and improvement.
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of information shared during unit visits.

By following this process, commissioners can effectively support units in identifying challenges, developing solutions, and strengthening their programs.

Examples of Unit Connection logs

Adult Leader Training:

Reviewed adult leader training for Troop 123 on the unit dashboard and noticed the Scoutmaster and a few adult leaders are not trained. I set up some time to meet with the Scoutmaster to discuss adult leader training status in Troop 123. We reviewed the training results and confirmed current Scoutmaster, and several adults are not position-trained. During our conversation I emphasized the importance of training, particularly Scoutmaster training, and provided dates for upcoming courses. Scoutmaster acknowledged the need and committed to attending training and communicating the importance of training to all adult leaders at the next leader meeting. Unit Connection scheduled with the Scoutmaster in one month to review progress and offer further support.

Goal Setting: Scoutmaster and committee of Troop 123 will develop a plan to achieve 100% position-trained adult leadership.

Youth Membership:

Reviewed the youth membership for Troop 123 and they have not added any new scouts in quite some time. I set up some time to meet with the Scoutmaster to discuss the importance of positive year over year growth and strategies for increasing youth membership. They have not had any formal recruiting events in over a year. We brainstormed potential outreach activities, including an open house or "Bring a Friend" event. Scoutmaster agreed to discuss these ideas with the troop committee and during their next PLC with the youth and develop a recruitment plan. Unit Connection scheduled with the Scoutmaster in one month to review progress and offer further support.

Goal Setting: Scoutmaster and committee of Troop 123 will develop a plan to increase opportunities for new youth to visit the troop.

Unit Size:

Reviewed the youth membership totals for Troop 123 and noted the unit to have fallen under 10 scouts with no new Scouts added recently. Met with Scoutmaster to discuss strategies for increasing unit size. Noted the troop hasn't held formal recruiting events in over a year. Brainstormed potential outreach activities, including an open house and a "Bring a Friend" event. Scoutmaster will discuss these ideas with the troop committee and during the next PLC meeting to develop a recruitment plan. Unit Connection scheduled in one month to review progress and offer support.

Goal Setting: Scoutmaster and committee of Troop 123 will develop a recruitment plan for new youth to visit the troop.

Advancement:

Reviewed Troop 444 advancement records and noted a slowdown in Scout advancement. Met with Scoutmaster and Advancement Chair to discuss and they are struggling to get their new crossover scouts to attend campouts and the older scouts are all mostly Life rank. We discussed strategies for improving advancement progress and how they can incorporate more opportunities during weekly meetings while at the same time talking to the scouts during the next PLC on how to improve attendance during monthly campouts. Scoutmaster will discuss these ideas with the troop committee and during their next PLC meeting to develop an action plan. Unit Connection scheduled in one month to review progress and offer support.

Goal Setting: Scoutmaster and committee of Troop 123 will develop a plan to include advancement activities during troop meetings by using the PLC meetings to plan troop meeting activities.

Outdoor Activities:

Reviewed Troop 123 activity calendar and noted they did not go to summer camp last year and have not signed up for summer camp this year. Met with Scoutmaster and found out they don't have any adults who can get off work for a week to attend camp and many of the scouts are not interested in attending summer camp. The Scoutmaster doesn't seem like they want the troop to plan on attending summer camp as it has not been a priority for this troop in the past. They go camping about 6 times per year but only weekend camping events and never anything longer than a couple of days. I did mention that scouts who are interested can attend with other units as provisional scouts during summer camp and gave information about the program. I will continue to work with the troop and promote the great opportunities youth gain from planning and attending a scout summer camp. I will continue to connect with different leaders in the unit to gauge interest and promote more camping.

Goal Setting: Scoutmaster and committee of Troop 123 will develop a plan to create a unit calendar by having an annual planning conference led by the youth.

Post/Crew Leaders Elected and Trained:

Connected with Crew 123 during one of their meetings and spent a few minutes talking to the advisor. The crew has struggled to meet in person due to schedule conflicts for the last few months. The youth leadership roles have expired and there were 3 youth out of 10 at the meeting tonight. We discussed strategies to help the crew improve attendance such as changing the meeting location and or day of week. They also do not have a unit calendar where everyone can plan ahead. I offered various resources they could use to communicate and share a calendar. The Advisor also mentioned needing to get more adult leaders to help with the crew and if he could recruit a few parents then this could help attendance as well. I will continue to work with the crew and the advisor to support them and will connect with the advisor next week to see if they have another meeting scheduled soon.

Goal Setting: Advisor will work with the youth to develop a plan to increase attendance at meetings.