

NCAC's New Approach to Forming New-Units

On May 17, 2012 the National Capital Area Council Executive Board formally adopted three resolutions designed to improve the way we start and support new-units in our communities. These resolutions implement the recommendations in the national publication entitled "Unit Performance Guide: Starting and Sustaining High-Performing Quality Units".

The first resolution adopts a Council unit size standard of 10 youth for new non-LDS Packs and Troops. This supersedes the national policy which requires 5 youth. HOWEVER, the Council unit size requirement for Crews remains at 5 youth. The District Vice Chair for Membership and the New Unit Commissioner can grant exceptions for new units with 5-9 youth if they feel the new unit is viable.

The second resolution adopts a council training standard that new unit leaders take their leader-specific training before the new unit's first meeting, and Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills when required within 3 months of the new unit's first meeting. As with the Council unit size standard, the District Vice Chair for Membership and the New Unit Commissioner can grant exceptions to the training standard.

The third resolution adopts a Council-specific New-Unit Charter Application. This Council-specific New-Unit Charter Application includes the new council unit size standard and training standard, and also requires signatures from the District Vice Chair for Membership and the New Unit Commissioner. The application also includes checklists for steps in the new unit organizing process which are crucial for a new unit's success (such as developing an annual program plan).

The Council-specific charter application supersedes the national application, and **as of July 1, 2012 the NCAC Council Registrar will only accept the council-specific application for starting new units.**

Why Focus on Sustainable New-Units?

When our council starts a new-unit, we are making an interlocking set of promises:

- We promise youth a quality Scouting program.
- We promise the adult leaders the training and support they need to succeed.
- We promise prospective Chartered Organizations a valuable and productive relationship on behalf of boys, young adults, and their families for many years to come.
- We promise our existing units that the new-unit will strengthen Scouting in its community.

Even though our council's excellent youth retention rate qualifies us for a gold rating in the Journey to Excellence, we have room for improvement. Too many new-units in our council fail within their first three years—for units our council started in 2008, 45% failed within their first three years! When a unit fails, we miss the chance to serve new youth, and potentially burn bridges with a Chartered Organization. A failing new unit also causes turmoil, potentially weakens nearby existing units, and absorbs a disproportionate share of scarce volunteer and professional resources.

Our ideal new-unit failure rate is not zero, due to the inverse relationship between risk and reward. Starting a new unit involves necessary risk—for example, perhaps a new-unit seeks to serve an underserved demographic. This new-unit may face many challenges, and may not succeed. While the risk is great, so is the reward of expanding the Scouting movement.

As a council, we owe it to ourselves to make good on our promises by giving new-units the best chance possible to thrive.

What Do New-Units Need?

In 2011, BSA released a publication which was later updated and renamed to the "Unit Performance Guide: Starting and Sustaining High-Performing Quality Units". This guide includes approximately 100 pages of practical and detailed recommendations on what new-units need to thrive, based on the experiences of professionals and volunteers from across the nation.

The guide's detailed advice can be summarized into three overarching themes. To thrive, a new-unit must:

- **Be Prepared:** New-units which are prepared through creating a shared vision, taking training, planning the annual program, and planning for leadership succession have a better chance to thrive.
- **Enjoy Support:** New-units which enjoy broad support from their Chartered Organization, commissioners, districts, adult leaders, and youth members have a better chance to thrive.
- **Have Potential:** New-units which have potential through targeting youth markets with growth potential, establishing a relationship with a prospective Chartered Organization, and demonstrating momentum through recruiting have a better chance to thrive.

Each of these themes alone gives a new-unit strength. All three themes taken together reinforce each other to provide a new-unit with its best chance to thrive.

The NCAC New-Unit Charter Application implements the recommendations across the three themes in a way that they reinforce each other. Our council is leading the nation in adopting these new national policies.