

What are the top three things districts can do to support units in recruitment efforts

Top 3 Themes

1. Stronger district recruiting support and coaching for units and infrastructure to coordinate recruiting and provide special events and activities to attract youth and families
Districts can take a more active role in organizing and executing recruiting.

What this includes (FYI: many ideas are at [our School and Community Presence page](#)):

- Identify and promote community-based recruiting opportunities
- Coordinated school access and school recruiting support
- District-run or supported events that aid recruiting because they are fun and provide program for returning Scouts and families
- Clear recruitment plans and game plans for units (like the [Guide to Cub Scout Family Recruiting](#) focusing on the [Six Steps to Successful and Sustainable Recruiting](#), and the [Plan and Script for Sign Up Events](#) found [with other Sign Up Event resources here](#))
- Help connecting families to the right unit, starting with coaching units on [how to promote](#), including [using BeAScout to define their unique local program](#), but also creating and sharing a menu of units and when/where they regularly meet.

Key takeaway

Units grow when the district coaches unit leaders about how to recruit, and when the district coordinates units, leads where needed (using the EDGE method to help units: Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, Enable), organizes, and opens doors.

2. Better tools, marketing, and resources for units
There is a strong demand for modern, easy-to-use recruiting tools and materials.

What this includes (FYI, many ideas and resources are on [our How to Promote Your Unit page](#)):

- Ready-to-use marketing materials and customizable templates
- Promo videos and digital content
- Swag and giveaways to attract youth (FYI, swag for new Cub Scout signups in 2026 includes backpacks, certificates for free handbooks, plus stickers, slime, pencils, etc.)
- Centralized, council-supported marketing campaigns
- Easier printing and distribution of materials

Key takeaway

Units want plug-and-play tools that reduce effort and increase effectiveness.

3. More visible, engaging, and community-based recruiting methods (NEW focus)
Many responses point to moving beyond traditional school nights and making Scouting more visible and experiential.

What this includes (FYI, many ideas and resources are noted in the links below):

- Community events, county events, and public visibility (see [our School and Community Presence page](#), especially [here](#))
- “Bring a friend” campaigns and peer-to-peer recruiting (see [our How to Promote Your Unit page](#), especially [here](#))
- Test-drive style events for hands-on experiences (see [our Sign Up Events page – which is about both School Sign Up Nights and Fun Events](#) – especially [here](#))
- Service projects and public presence in uniform (see [our School and Community Presence page](#), especially [here](#))
- Signage, yard signs, and broader awareness efforts (see [our How to Promote Your Unit page](#))
- Removing “school territory” mindset and expanding reach (This *needs* District coordination. Districts can help units (1) self-identify by meeting days and program/activity emphasis, (2) know their limitations (ensure sufficient engaged leaders), and (3) coordinate with others in program and recruiting – so families can pick the best fit. Delivery on that concept is a local District function to coordinate among units – done by Commissioners, DEs, Membership Teams, Chair. Steps include sharing what days Units meet (avoid overlap conflicts); coordinate among participating Packs at joint Sign Up Nights (keep it tight in schools); ensure units “play nice”.)

Key takeaway

Recruiting needs to feel like an experience, not just a sign-up night, and it must extend beyond schools.

Supporting Themes

Training and leader development (using the [Guide to Cub Scout Family Recruiting](#) focusing on the [Six Steps to Successful and Sustainable Recruiting](#), and the *Plan and Script for Sign Up Events* found [with other Sign Up Event resources here](#))

- Training leaders how to recruit effectively
- Rally nights and coaching
- Helping units build and execute recruitment plans

Incentives and motivation

- Incentives for units and Scouts to recruit
- Store credit, recognition, or rewards

Communication and coordination

- Better communication between district and units
- Transparency and clearer direction
- More involvement from district leadership

Program-driven recruiting

- Activities, camporees, and events that attract new youth
- Using program excitement as the recruiting hook

Concise takeaway for leadership use

Districts should focus on three priorities

1. Coordinate and coach unit recruiting efforts, lead and organize where needed
2. Equip units with simple, modern recruiting tools and marketing
3. Expand recruiting beyond schools through visible, experience-based outreach

What elements of Scouting keep youth engaged and returning

Top 3 Themes

1. Outdoor adventure and unique experiences
This is by far the strongest and most repeated theme.

What this includes (FYI, see [this program emphasis](#), plus [Build a Calendar of Activities](#))

- Camping and campouts
- High adventure and “outing in Scouting”
- Outdoor skills and activities
- Range and target sports like archery and shooting
- Experiences youth cannot get elsewhere
- Being outdoors and away from technology

Key takeaway

The outdoor experience is the core product. The more frequent and exciting the outdoor program, the higher the retention.

2. Fun, engaging, and active program
Youth stay when meetings and activities are enjoyable and not boring.

What this includes

- Fun “(not boring)” meetings and events
- Hands on, active, non passive programming
- Variety and new adventures
- Seasonal and year round programming
- Avoiding sitting around or lecture style meetings

Key takeaway

If it is not fun and active, youth will not come back. Energy and engagement matter more than structure alone.

3. Friendships and social connection
Scouting is a social experience as much as a program.

What this includes

- Making and spending time with friends
- Social interaction and connection across units
- Peer experiences like “bring a friend” and shared activities
- This is true for adults too ... one of our ways to turn parents into leaders is [parent socials](#).
- Sense of belonging

Key takeaway

Youth return because of relationships. Friends are often the deciding factor in retention.

Supporting Themes

Leadership quality (FYI, see [ideas about Turning Parents Into Helpers and Helpers Into Leaders](#))

- Trained, engaged, and consistent leaders
- Leaders who are valued and supported
- Strong den level leadership called out specifically

Family involvement

- Parent engagement increases retention
- Relationships between families strengthen commitment

Program structure and growth

- Advancement and personal growth
- Opportunities to build skills and confidence
- Exposure to challenge and adversity

Program variety and visibility (FYI, [Cub fun activity ideas here](#); [Troop program ideas here](#))

- New activities and fresh ideas
- Open houses, events, and special experiences
- Clear and exciting program calendars

Concise takeaway for leadership use

Retention is driven by three things

1. A strong outdoor program that delivers unique experiences
2. Fun, active, and engaging meetings and activities
3. Meaningful friendships and social connection

If those three are present, most other challenges become manageable. If any one is missing, retention drops quickly.

What are two things our district can do to better support units facing retention challenges

Top 2 Priorities

1. Strengthen and support unit leadership

This is the most consistent and important theme. Retention issues are overwhelmingly tied to leadership quality and support.

What this includes (FYI, more leaders needed – ways to turn parents into leaders found [here](#))

- Ongoing leader training, especially at the den level
- Coaching leaders on how to run fun, engaging meetings
- Assigning mentors or experienced units to support struggling units
- More active unit commissioner involvement and regular check-ins
- Helping recruit and build stronger adult leadership teams
- Encouraging leadership accountability and, when needed, change

Key takeaway

When leadership is strong, retention improves. When leadership struggles, retention drops quickly.

2. Proactive communication, coaching, and hands-on district support

Units want more direct, personalized support rather than general resources.

What this includes (FYI, key elements of [the AAC Membership Plan](#))

- Regular check-ins with unit leaders, not just roundtable
- Early identification of struggling units using data and feedback
- Clear communication and responsiveness from district
- Helping units plan calendars and improve programming (See [Make a Calendar of Activities](#))
- Providing a district game plan for retention and growth
- Sharing best practices between units

Key takeaway

Support needs to be proactive and personal, not reactive or generic.

Supporting Themes

Reduce barriers for families and volunteers

- Simplify renewal and registration processes
- Allow flexible payment options (note: National sets payment programs)
- Lower overall cost barriers
- Reduce complexity that causes drop-off

Improve program quality and engagement (FYI, [Cub fun activity ideas here](#); [Cub Advancement resources here](#); [Troop program ideas here](#))

- Help units deliver fun, active programs
- Provide district events to supplement unit programming
- Ensure strong, engaging calendars

Build connections and community

- Help units stay connected to schools and communities
- Foster relationships between units
- Assign mentors to new families and leaders

Recruiting still matters for retention

- Continue recruiting to offset attrition
- Focus on bringing in both youth and adult volunteers

Concise takeaway for leadership use

Districts should focus on two actions

1. Invest heavily in leader training, mentoring, and accountability
2. Provide consistent, proactive, hands-on support to units

If those two things are done well, most retention challenges will improve quickly.

What approaches are working with the new individual renewal system

Overall takeaway

There is no strong consensus of success. Feedback is more negative than positive (16 to 9). Most responses highlight challenges rather than effective approaches. But we have [given National ideas to cut down on confusion and streamline the process in many ways](#).

Top Themes

1. System is not working well for most units
This is the dominant sentiment.

What respondents said

- “None”, “Nothing”, “Not working” repeated multiple times
- Described as confusing, difficult, or not family friendly
- Reports of technical issues and stalled transactions
- Leaders frustrated with chasing families to renew

Key takeaway

There are very few clearly identified “working approaches” because many units are still struggling with the system itself.

2. Burden has shifted to parents, with mixed results

One of the main structural changes is who owns the renewal process. (FYI, Units can choose (1) all self-pay, (2) all unit pay, or (3) a mix, like “unit pay” for some leaders.)

What this includes

- Parents now responsible for completing renewal if Unit is all self-pay
- Some see this as positive accountability
- Many note parents miss emails or do not follow through
- Communication breakdown is a major issue – but some unit leaders get monthly renewal reports and can engage with unit families.

Key takeaway

The system works only when parents are engaged and responsive, which is inconsistent.

3. Communication and reminders are critical (when it works)

The only consistently mentioned “working” element is reminders.

What this includes

- Expiration reminders can help prompt action
- Direct follow-up from leaders still necessary
- Units still chasing families despite system automation

Key takeaway

The system does not replace communication. It increases the need for it.

4. Some limited positives

A few responses pointed out benefits.

What this includes

- Easier for committee chairs and CORs administratively
- One person no longer delays the entire unit’s renewal
- Simpler in concept for those who understand it
- Works fine in units that have adapted

Key takeaway

The system can work, but mainly in well-organized units with strong communication.

Core Challenges Identified

- Lack of awareness from parents
- Poor email engagement
- Technical or usability issues

- Increased workload on unit leaders to follow up
- Confusion around the process
- Greater difficulty for council-funded or less engaged families

Concise takeaway for leadership use

Very few approaches are consistently working yet. However, the closest things to “working” are

1. Strong, repeated communication and follow-up with families
2. Units taking ownership of guiding parents through the process

Bottom line

The system is not yet intuitive or self-sustaining. Success still depends heavily on unit-level effort and communication.

What is the one thing we can share with units to help them make sure every Scout has an opportunity to renew

Top Answer

Consistent tracking and proactive follow up on membership status

This is the strongest and most repeated theme across responses.

What this looks like

- Regular membership status or renewal reports, ideally monthly (FYI, monthly renewal report emails do go to some unit leaders, at least Chairs)
- Clear visibility for Key 3 on who is expiring and when
- Assigning someone in the unit to actively monitor renewals
- Early and consistent follow up with families before expiration

Key takeaway

Units need visibility and ownership. If no one is watching renewals closely, Scouts will fall through the cracks.

Supporting Actions

Improve communication methods with families (we’ve sent [these ideas and others to National](#))

- Use texting, not just email
- Send multiple reminders, not a single notice
- Ensure correct contact information is on file
- Provide direct, simple instructions for parents

Key takeaway

Email alone is not effective. Multi-channel communication is necessary.

Provide financial and incentive support

- Promote financial assistance and fundraising options
- Offer early renewal incentives or recognition
- Reduce financial barriers where possible

Key takeaway

Cost and timing can prevent renewal if not addressed early.

Equip leaders with simple guidance and tools

- Clear process for how to track and manage renewals
- Training for unit leaders on the system
- Easy to understand steps to support families

Key takeaway

Leaders need a simple, repeatable system they can follow.

Keep families engaged and connected

- Continue events and program excitement during renewal periods
- Make renewal feel like part of the experience, not just a transaction

Key takeaway

Engaged families are far more likely to renew.

Concise takeaway for leadership use

If you only share one thing with units, it should be

Track renewals monthly and assign a leader to personally follow up with every family before they expire

Everything else supports that action.