

## SESSION 5: Recognizing Tomorrow's Leaders

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Facilitator:** Section Staff

### Learning outcomes:

Explain the basics of an Order of the Arrow unit visitation  
Develop an effective structure to oversee the unit visitation process  
Create a plan to innovate and improve lodge unit election rates.

**Supplies:** Sticky notes, Cards with challenge scenarios

### Introduction & opening

**3 minutes**

Introduce the session by first introducing yourself and outlining your experiences in the Order of the Arrow; particularly, your experience managing the unit visitation process.

[read learning outcomes]

We mentioned earlier that historically, we conduct unit visitations in less than 50% of troops, crews, and ships. We also talked about our end goal: achieving a 90% unit election rate. By the end of 2022, we need to close the gap between our current metrics and this goal. Your lodge leadership signed the "Declaration to Thrive" document during the 2019 national webinar and committed to a three-year plan to become high performing. Today, we are going to develop attainable goals for the next year to improve our unit election rate.

### The Context: Why should we care?

**5 minutes**

Let's start by putting unit visitations into context. We're going to brainstorm as a group the purpose and significance of unit visitations as well as some common obstacles we face.

1. How do unit visitations help us grow our membership?

Unit visitations are the single most significant driver of performance in the Order of the Arrow. The first point of the purpose of the Order of the Arrow is to "Recognize those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives and through that recognition cause others to conduct themselves in a way that warrants similar recognition."

We set out to recognize those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives through annually conducting an election in all 38,000+ troops, crews, and ships in the entire nation. But we can't truly fulfill that purpose as long as we are only conducting



elections historically in under 50 percent of units. That means there are actually more units that DO NOT see the OA annually than those who do. We lose over half of our potential membership right from the get-go before those Scouts even have a chance to experience the OA. Imagine for a moment that all units, or even 90 percent, were conducting elections. That's thousands of new members, selected as the best and brightest of the Boy Scouts of America, as part of our organization.

## 2. How can we make unit visits impactful?

Unit visitations provide the greatest vehicle for visibility of our organization. There may be about 130,000 Arrowmen, but there are almost 850,000 Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouting youth nationwide. If we use this opportunity effectively, we can inspire so many youth to join our organization.

From the moment you walk in the door at a unit visitation, you are representing the Order of the Arrow; and for many Scouts, this may be the only interaction with our organization. It's important that you present yourself well and are prepared. All unit visitation teams should have completed the national online unit visitation certification program, which can be found at [oa-bsa.org/thrive](http://oa-bsa.org/thrive). This quick training allows each member of the team to understand the unit visitation process from start to finish and the election procedures.

## 3. What are the biggest obstacles we face to achieving a 90% unit election rate?

About half of the units in the BSA don't hold an OA visit in a given year, and the set of units that don't isn't just happenstance. Many units NEVER hold a visitation, because we have not successfully developed a relationship. Getting our foot-in-the-door is one of the biggest obstacles that every lodge faces. We need to find ways to connect with unit leaders and get them on board so they will hold a visitation every single year.

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*Trainer tip: The delegates should ideally come to these conclusions themselves through the Q+A on their own, but make sure all of these elements are discussed before you move on.*

### **The breakdown: How to conduct a unit visitation**

**5 minutes**

Ask the group to start naming parts of the unit election sequence (i.e. promoting at a roundtable meeting, following-up with the unit leader before the election, etc.) and write all of them down. Feel free to use sticky notes to organize this.

As soon as the group agrees they have exhausted ALL options, then work together to put them in order.



It's likely that the group will be surprised at how many parts of the sequence there really are.

**Unit visitation challenges experience**

**12 minutes**

Lodges encounter a variety of challenges that prevent them from hitting a 90% unit election rate. This portion of the session will (1) help lodges brainstorm ways to overcome these recurring challenges and (2) help them source best practices that other lodges use to overcome similar challenges.

Each table should be given a card with one of the scenarios found below and should be given 5 minutes to develop a solution for how they would solve the problem.

As soon as the 5 minutes are up, every lodge will send one delegate to brief everyone on the solution they developed for the scenario.

If you recognize something that the lodge delegate may have left out in the answer as a potential part of the solution, this is a good opportunity for you to ask leading questions to get people to think about other ways to solve the problem. You can also ask other delegates what they would have done.





## Scenarios

### SCENARIO #1

Scouts BSA unit #1915 has not hosted an Order of the Arrow unit election in 10 years. 11 years ago, the Scoutmaster became frustrated with the fact that his youth members would frequently choose to attend lodge events instead of troop campouts. He doesn't believe the OA does anything except for interfere with his ability to run an effective program. Your lodge is working hard to reach high performing status; but in order to hit 90%, you need to get your foot in the door to host a unit election (or at least a unit visitation) in Troop #1915. What do you do?

### SCENARIO #2

Venturing Crew #158 Adviser Paula is not a supporter of the Order of the Arrow, largely because when her daughter was involved in Venturing five years ago, she was disappointed that the option for membership didn't exist at that point in time. So when your lodge reaches out to her to schedule an election, she says the OA has no value to her unit and expresses frustration that the membership policy change wasn't done when her daughter was involved. What do you do?

### SCENARIO #3

Two years ago, your lodge scheduled a unit visitation with Scouts BSA Troop #451. Your unit elections chairman personally confirmed the date, time, and location. You have had trouble recruiting a large, reliable, unit elections team this year; but Jonny Lee (a first year, enthusiastic Arrowman) who has never been to a unit visitation, other than the one where he was elected, offers to attend. Jonny is 14 and hasn't been doing particularly well in school. He fails an exam and his parents take away his cell phone for a few days. Jonny does not notify you that he is going to be out of touch, and he skips the unit visitation. The unit leader is furious that he scheduled 30 minutes of time during the unit meeting for the unit election, and the OA didn't even care to show up. Last year, the unit leader discouraged other unit leaders at the roundtable meeting from hosting a unit election and this narrative is starting to give the lodge a really negative look. What do you do?

### SCENARIO #4

Matt is the boatswain of Sea Scout Ship #123 is also a member of Troop #227. He was elected and inducted into the Order of the Arrow a few years ago. During Matt's induction that your lodge hosted at camp, there was a shortage of trained Elangomats. On Friday evening of the induction weekend, you had to recruit a few Arrowmen extremely last minute to serve in this role. Matt's Elangomat was one of those people. The Elangomat was not knowledgeable about his ability to effectively perform his role and the result was a poor experience for everyone in his clan. After the induction weekend, Matt pledged to never return to the OA and discouraged everyone in his troop and crew from participating also, effectively shutting the door to the possibility of a unit election or visitation. What do you do?



**Action plans  
minutes**

20

Lodges encounter a variety of challenges that prevent them from hitting a 90% unit election rate. The idea of the High Performing Lodge initiative is to provide lodge's with a sense of focus as to what is important.

Delegates will take the remaining 20 minutes of the session to develop an action plan for their lodge to improve their unit election rate in the next year to stay in line with the "Declaration to Thrive."

Lodges should take the first 10 minutes to develop an action plan on their own. A member of the ACT Conference staff should check-in with their designated lodge after 10 minutes and assist as necessary. Each staff member should ensure that their designated lodge has a plan with attainable and tangible goals. There will be additional time for delegates to return to this goal in the "Implementing your Vision" session.

