



Chapter 2: Managing Unit Elections

The lodge is responsible for conducting unit elections in every troop, crew and ship in the council. All unit members, including non-OA members, elect those Scouts who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives to become OA members. In this way, membership is controlled by the youth in their own units and not by those who are already Arrowmen.

The Unit Elections Committee

The unit elections committee sends out information to all scoutmasters, crew advisors, and skippers regarding membership in the OA and the election procedures. It trains unit elections teams, schedules visits of elections teams to units, ensures that the teams conducting the elections are well-trained and in proper uniform when conducting the elections, and records the results of the elections.

The lodge chief appoints a youth Arrowman to be the unit elections committee chair. The unit elections chair must have an adviser who is appointed by the lodge adviser. If the lodge uses chapters, the lodge chief, vice chief, or unit elections chair works with the chapters to ensure that each chapter also elects or appoints a youth Arrowman to manage unit elections at the chapter level. The chapter unit elections chair must have an adult adviser who is appointed by the chapter adviser. Chapter unit elections chairs form the core of the lodge unit elections committee.

The unit elections committee works closely with the lodge officers responsible for membership records, OA unit representatives, call-outs, and Ordeals.

The unit elections committee performs the following functions:

- Reviews the previous unit elections committee's evaluation and decides how to make improvements.
- Sets a time period for elections, beginning with determining the time of the year when unit elections will be held. The dates must be set well in advance of the start of the election period so that units and lodge/chapter committees can properly plan. Factors to be considered when setting the time period include the dates of Ordeals and other chapter, lodge, district, and council Scouting events, the school calendar, and holidays. A long election period requires maintaining teams over several months which some chapters and lodges may find difficult. However, a short election period requires the elections teams to do more elections in a shorter period thus increasing the burden on the teams and requiring more teams.
- Informs units well in advance of the election period by sending an email/letter announcing unit elections to the unit adult leader with a copy to the unit's OA unit representative and adviser. (Refer to the ["Sample Letter Announcing Elections" resource \(page 63\)](#).) The email/letter should set out the time of the year when elections will be held and that only one election can be held per year, describe the purpose of the elections, provide the elections rules and procedures, and outline the membership requirements for youth and adults. The letter should advise unit leaders how they can schedule an election and

include an [Adult Candidate Nomination Form \(page 93\)](#). It may be useful to speak to unit leaders at a district roundtable, reminding them of the email/letter. Commonly, there will be some unit leaders who fail to respond to election scheduling requests. This may be caused by an incorrect address, forgetfulness, or the inherent limitations of email. A follow-up email or phone call may be necessary to receive a response from the unit leader. Unit leaders who are resistant to holding a unit election should be contacted by the chapter or lodge adviser, who should explain the benefits of the Order of the Arrow to the unit and its members.

- Organizes and trains unit elections teams through recruitment, training, and motivation. Serving on a unit elections team is an excellent way to give a young Arrowman the opportunity to assume a position of responsibility and leadership. The unit elections committee should pay special attention to the Order of the Arrow members who are participating in unit elections for the first time and ensure that the training is well-organized and fun. Training sessions cover the elections process, rules and guidelines and help ensure consistency between elections teams. The sample [Unit Elections Ceremony \(page 85\)](#) helps ensure consistency. The best elections teams can deliver an accurate, professional, and meaningful election ceremony and keep the attention of the unit, allowing for effective communication. The training sessions can be conducted at chapter meetings, in conjunction with lodge executive committee meetings or a Lodge Leadership Development Conference (LLDC), or at a separate training event. Food or refreshments could be provided and a game could be played during training sessions. (Refer to two resources: the sample [Unit Elections Ceremony \(page 85\)](#) and [Unit Elections Team Training \(page 77\)](#).) Supplemental practice can help make sure each speaking part is fully memorized, and this will lead to well-informed, meaningful elections.
- Recruits and trains extra team members so that enough team members will be available to handle the elections when the units request them. Each unit election typically requires two or three members. At any given election, some of the team members may be unable to participate because of other activities.
- Offers team members the opportunity to provide feedback to the unit elections committee on the quality of support they received and uses this information to improve unit elections the following year.
- Sets up a system to contact every scoutmaster, crew advisor, and skipper in the council and schedule a unit election for all such units. If a unit has eligible Scouts but does not desire to have an election, the chapter or lodge adviser should contact the unit leader and attempt to discover how the OA can better serve this unit. If the unit leader receives better service and support from the OA in the future, the unit leader may be more receptive to having unit elections.
- Contacts the various elections teams well in advance to schedule elections. Works hard to avoid situations where an Arrowman is called to help with an election at the last minute and limits the number of elections each team member is expected to conduct.
- Conducts all unit elections at troop, crew or ship meetings. The reason for this is participation: more Scouts attend meetings than summer camp and not all units go to council summer camps. This means more Scouts have the opportunity to vote and there is a greater chance that all those eligible will be present.
- Prepares a handout about upcoming Ordeal weekends that the unit elections teams can leave with unit leaders, OA unit representatives and advisers, and newly elected candidates (after they have been called out). This handout should give the dates, times, locations, and contact information for all upcoming Ordeals.

- Sets up a system for quickly and reliably transmitting the unit elections results which are recorded on the [Unit Election Report \(page 89\)](#) to the appropriate lodge/chapter officers. Many chapters/lodges use email and then mail a backup copy to ensure that the information is received. Information on candidates should be entered in the lodge records as soon as possible after the election with “Candidate” entered where the membership level is recorded.
- Sets up a system to transmit adult nominations to the lodge adult selection committee and communicates the committee’s decisions back to the lodge/chapter and units. Adults may not be called out until the lodge adult selection committee approves them. It is important to maintain the confidentiality of adult nominations to avoid embarrassment if a nominated adult is not recommended by the lodge adult selection committee or is not approved by the Scout executive.
- Provides information on youth and adult candidates to:
 - The call-out teams. The names of adults to be called out should be received from the lodge adult selection committee.
 - The lodge chief, chapter chiefs, lodge/chapter secretaries, and their advisers. A list of the candidates’ names, unit numbers, email addresses, home addresses, and telephone numbers so that they can encourage candidates’ attendance at the Ordeal.
 - The Ordeal committee
 - The OA unit representatives and advisers
- Prepares a written elections evaluation report after the completion of all unit elections.

Lodge Adult Selection Committee

The lodge adviser, the chair of the council committee on which the lodge adviser serves, and the lodge staff adviser serve as the lodge adult selection committee. The committee reviews the nominations for adult membership received from the unit committees and for adults serving in council and district positions. Those nominated adults that meet the membership requirements for adult unit leaders and council and district adult leaders may be recommended to the Scout executive by the lodge adult selection committee. With the approval of the Scout executive, who serves as Supreme Chief of the Fire, those adults will become candidates for induction.

To ensure that the committee has time to act, the lodge adviser may set a minimum period by which all elections must be held before each call-out or Ordeal. Those deadlines should be emphasized in the materials that are provided to chapters and units. Some lodge adult selection committees may want chapter advisers to review nominations before the committee acts. Adults should not be entered into the lodge records as candidates until after the lodge adult selection committee nominates and the Scout executive approves them. Call-out teams need to be provided with the names of approved adults so that they do not call out adults whose nominations were not approved by the committee or Scout executive.

OA Unit Representative Committee

The OA unit representative committee should play an important part in the unit elections process. The committee is an excellent source of manpower to help conduct unit elections. The committee should provide OA unit representatives’ and advisers’ contact information to the unit elections committee. The use of email is an excellent way to communicate with the OA unit representatives and advisers. The committee should also provide the following support:

- Contact each OA unit representative and adviser at the start of the unit elections season and ask them to encourage their unit leader to schedule an election and to review the elections procedures, which they should provide.
- Follow up with the OA unit representatives and advisers from units that have not yet scheduled an election.
- Send the OA unit representatives and advisers information on the date, time, and location of all upcoming call-out and Ordeal weekends. Have them promote and encourage the newly elected candidates and OA members in their unit to attend.
- Assist in conducting the election if needed.
- Help complete the [Unit Election Evaluation Form \(page 91\)](#) and send it to the lodge/ chapter if requested by the unit elections team.

Unit Elections Team

The unit elections team needs to be prepared and do an excellent job when it visits a unit. Most of the members of the unit will never become members of the OA. Their experience with the OA during the unit elections may be their only exposure to the OA. The performance of the unit elections team can create a very positive image of the OA with both the youth and adult members of the unit. The team must ensure that elections are meaningful experiences for the Scouts and leaders, for Arrowmen in the unit who are conducting the election, and for the new candidates being elected.

Recruit the team members well in advance of the election and practice the election presentation until all the members of the team know their roles. The OA should be represented by a two- or three-member team from the lodge or chapter unit elections committee. All elections team members must be trained and in proper uniform during the election.

Three important resources that should be used by all unit elections teams are included in this guide: the [Unit Elections Team Checklist \(page 81\)](#) (things the unit elections team should do before, during, and after each unit election), the [Unit Elections Rules and Procedures \(page 65\)](#), and the [Unit Elections Frequently Asked Questions \(page 69\)](#).

Immediately after the election the [Unit Election Report \(page 89\)](#) is completed and signed by the elections team members to certify the results.

A [Unit Elections Ceremony \(page 85\)](#) that the unit elections team is strongly encouraged to use is found in the resources. This script provides a standard presentation for all unit elections teams to implement. It addresses all of

The OA Unit Representative

The unit election is an excellent way to strengthen the role of the OA unit representative. To be successful in this position, a Scout needs to establish a robust link with the lodge/ chapter so that information and resources will flow both ways. The unit elections team should coordinate much of the election effort with the OA unit representative providing them the opportunity for leadership as well as offering all the assistance they require. The OA unit representative, with the support of their adviser should:

- Ensure that their unit schedules a unit election.
- Talk to all youth members about the purpose of the Order of the Arrow and the criteria their fellow Scouts should use in voting for those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law.
- Help maintain excitement among eligible Scouts before the election.
- Contact the members of their unit a few days before the unit election to ensure that the maximum number of Scouts will participate.
- Contact the OA members in their unit, both youth and adults, a few days before the unit election and remind them to attend the election in full uniform with sash.

the eligibility requirements and procedures for unit elections.

Videos for use by the unit elections team are available on the national OA website at www.oa-bsa.org. These videos can be used as part of the unit elections to provide information about the Order of the Arrow and explain the unit elections process.

Evaluation

The feedback received during the unit election process allows the lodge and chapter to learn, not only about the quality of their own unit elections but also about the regard in which the Order of the Arrow is held among the units it serves.

After each unit election, the OA unit representative for the unit, with input from their adviser and unit leader, should fill out the [Unit Election Evaluation Form \(page 91\)](#) and return it directly to the unit elections committee chair. The form should be provided with a self-addressed, stamped envelope or a website or email address where the evaluation can be submitted.

After the election season the unit elections committee should examine all available information with the goal of improving the quality of the presentations the next year and the overall election process. The committee should prepare a written report that includes the feedback received from the elections teams, unit leaders, the OA unit representative committee and the lodge adult selection committee. It should include an evaluation and critique of the elections process as well as specific recommendations for the next year. By implementing the recommendations from the evaluation process the lodge will realize continuous improvement from year to year.