

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
EAGLE SERVICE PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE
AND EAGLE ADVANCEMENT
FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS



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Background

In working with several hundred Eagle candidates over the past 5-6 years, I've found that many Scouts (and Scouters) weren't clear as to the expectations and requirements in planning and carrying out Eagle Projects, or were unclear as to the Eagle advancement process itself.

These FAQs were collected and researched in an attempt to identify those issues that arise periodically, but which can be answered through a review of multiple BSA publications. As many troops can go for several years without a Scout achieving the Eagle rank, much of the knowledge gained by the adult leaders in working with Eagle candidates may be lost, just through attrition. As a result, these FAQs will be updated periodically as other issues and questions are raised and answers obtained.

General Questions

Does it matter in which order the Eagle requirements are done? No – however, the Scoutmaster conference and the Board of Review are ALWAYS the last steps in the advancement process, no matter what the rank.

Is there a minimum age that a Life Scout can progress to the Eagle rank? No – there is no minimum age.

What BSA publications and forms should the Eagle candidate be aware of? Aside from the Eagle Scout Service Project workbook and the Eagle Scout Rank Application, other publications include “Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Safe Scouting”, the “Guide to Safe Scouting”, and the “Advancement Committee Policies and Procedures Manual” (33088D). These can be purchased at the local council service center/Scout store, and may also be available on the internet. Other appropriate leadership reference material includes that from Junior Leader Training, Woodbadge, etc...

What version of the Eagle Scout Rank Application should be used? The latest version of the Eagle Scout Rank Application (as well as the Eagle Service Project Workbook) must be used. This should be obtained from the District Advancement Committee Chair, and can be either a paper copy or in electronic form.

Project Planning-Related Questions

What is the reason for having an Eagle Service Project? The Project is intended for the Eagle candidate to fully demonstrate his leadership skills. The Scout has typically spent anywhere between three and six years in Scouts while developing his leadership skills (both within and outside of Scouting). This is a chance for him to put into practice what he has learned over the years; the service project should therefore be of a sufficient size, scope and value to the benefiting organization that he will be able to fully demonstrate his leadership skills in the planning and carrying out of the project.

When can a Scout start working on his Eagle Service Project? Requirement #5 on the Eagle Rank Application states, "While a Life Scout, plan, develop and give leadership to others in a service project..." Once the Scout has passed his Life Rank Board of Review, he can begin the planning phase of his project – not before.

What should be the first step in looking for a project? The first steps should be to obtain a copy of the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project Workbook, reading through it and thoroughly understanding the requirements. Once that is done, the Eagle candidate will have a clearer idea of what is expected.

What is the process for obtaining District approval of the Eagle Project plan? The candidate should work with his troop's Eagle advisor and the potential benefiting organization to develop a project; he can contact the District Eagle Project vice-chair with any conceptual questions at this stage. The candidate then develops the detailed plan, which is then approved by his Scoutmaster, troop committee and the benefiting organization. Once these signatures are obtained, the candidate should contact the District for review/approval of the plan. Keep in mind that the project plan might NOT be approved by the District, based on the information provided in the plan, so it is recommended that the candidate keep the District informed as to the size and scope before proceeding too far in the plan.

Who approves the project for the benefiting organization? Typically, this will be an administrator responsible for operation of the facility (ie, principal, teacher, pastor, city manager, etc... Many organizations also require that you submit your plan to other groups for review before submitting it for approval. An example would be submitting plans to a school district maintenance supervisor for comments before submitting it to the principal for approval. Make sure you allow enough time for review and approval; ie, at least a month.

How much time should be allowed for District review/approval? Typically, it will take two to four meetings with the District to ensure the plan/project is of a sufficient size, scope and level of detail to be considered for an Eagle project. Plan on allowing at least 4 weeks; this will allow for an initial meeting, updating the plan and resubmitting it for approval. Plan ahead; don't assume that approval will automatically be granted.

What types of projects are allowed as Eagle Service Projects? As defined in the Eagle Service Project Workbook, the project must benefit a school, religious institution or the community. It may not benefit BSA, any BSA properties, any individuals or businesses. It may not be a maintenance type of project or a routine task, nor may the project itself be a fundraiser. Proposed projects of this type will **not** be approved. The project may be a "hard" project (construction) or "soft" project (performing a service).

The benefiting organization must be a charitable organization (501c3) or governmental/quasi-governmental organization. Non-profit businesses would not be considered as valid beneficiaries unless they were a qualified charitable organization.

What about Eagle Service Projects outside of Muir District or Mt. Diablo/Silverado Council? There is nothing that prohibits projects being performed for qualified organizations outside of the District or Council, as long as the published requirements are being met. For specific questions on potential projects or beneficiaries, the Eagle candidate should contact the District Eagle Projects vice-chair before much time is spent in developing a plan.

What is the minimum size of Eagle Service Project that is allowed by BSA? There is no minimum (or maximum) size. The project must be of sufficient scope and size for the Eagle candidate to fully demonstrate his leadership capabilities. What may be sufficient for one candidate may be too extensive for another candidate, and yet too simple for a third candidate. Typically, a project requires between 180-200 manhours to complete – this is a nationwide average. This does NOT mean that a project estimated at 180-200 manhours would be approved. The Scoutmaster plays a critical part in evaluating the Eagle candidate's abilities, as he is most knowledgeable about the Scout's capabilities. In any case, the Scout should NOT try to do the minimum just to "get by." Additionally, the Scout should not use other previously-completed Eagle Service Projects to justify his project. Each project must be able to stand on its own merits.

How extensive should the plan be in order to get District approval? Assuming the project is of sufficient size and scope to allow the Eagle candidate to fully demonstrate his leadership capabilities, the plan must be sufficiently detailed so that any other person would be able to successfully carry out the project, using only what was contained in the project plan. That means many areas must be addressed, including; description, benefits, funding, labor, schedules, materials/supplies, tools/equipment, safety, transportation, plans, drawings, details, sketches, names/phone numbers, etc... The plan should represent the Eagle candidate's best effort, and may take several months to prepare.

Why is so much detail required in the plan? Although the workbook appears to ask only a few questions that must be answered for the plan to be approved, more information is required in the "Project Details" section of the workbook. This section requires a number of areas to be addressed, and it must be addressed completely (ie, all safety aspects, all materials requirements, all tasks supporting the method by which the project is carried out, etc...). Merely answering 4 questions is by no means a complete plan. The Eagle Board of Review cannot judge whether the Eagle candidate met the requirements in carrying out a project without seeing an entire plan as approved by the District. The Eagle Board of Review is the final authority in determining whether the candidate has met the leadership requirements.

Can the project be worked on before approval of the project plan? No. The Eagle Project workbook specifically states that an Eagle candidate cannot start working on the project (other than planning) until the four signatures approving the plan have been obtained. Starting work on the project before the project is approved is strictly prohibited.

Is a Tour Permit required as part of the Eagle Service Project plan? Keep in mind that the tour permit is issued to units and not individuals, and that National does not require tour permits for every Eagle Service project. They are not required for most short, in-town outings of a few hours – see page 52 of the Guide to Safe Scouting.

That being said, tour permit applications should be submitted by the troop for those projects located outside the “home” Council. The troop can request a tour permit if many of their scouts are participating in the project. If they choose to get a permit, separate permits must be issued for each date of the project. Only if the unit is camping at the worksite, can multiple dates (say a weekend) be listed on a single permit.

Can fundraising be done before approval of the Eagle project plan? Establishing funding sources or soliciting of materials can be done before the project plan has been approved by the District Advancement Committee, according to MDSC – that is considered part of the planning process, rather than implementation of the project. Since that funding or acquisition of materials can be used only for that specific project, possession of the funds or materials should not take place before the project is approved. Returning of funds and/or materials to the donors because a project was not approved can place the Eagle candidate in a difficult position at best. It is therefore recommended to not start collecting funds or materials too soon, in the event that the project has been determined to be unsuitable as an Eagle project. Also, any funds obtained for a specific project must be returned to the donors if the project is cancelled.

What kind of funding sources can be used for Eagle projects? In general, any type of funding is allowed (subject to appropriate laws). Typical funding sources may include the benefiting organization, local businesses (via donations or discounts on materials), troop grants, etc... Any legitimate funding source can be used. The preference is for the Scout to look for external funding sources first, as this is part of the leadership discussion. Again, all aspects of the funding should be addressed in the project plan prior to approval.

Is fundraising a required component of an Eagle project? No; however, it must be addressed in the project writeup. Many projects just don't require any fundraising, and many projects will be funded entirely by the benefiting organization.

Can the benefiting organization help me on my project? Yes; however – keep in mind that the project plan is an agreement between the Eagle candidate and the representative of the organization. This agreement should be adhered to unless there are reasons to change it – in that case, the Eagle candidate will need to discuss how and why he deviated from the plan, and how he demonstrated leadership in addressing the issue. Any changes (or potential changes) should be discussed with the benefiting organization's representative beforehand. Some flexibility should be allowed to make certain changes without having to stop work and contact the benefiting organization for resolution. The benefiting organization may also have a need to perform work in the area at the same that may or may not be related to the Scout's project. Coordination and communication are key necessities. Keep in mind that the Eagle candidate is still responsible for directing the project as agreed to in the project plan.

What happens if a benefiting organization cancels the project after the plan is approved? Typically, the Eagle candidate will then have to look for another project and begin the planning process over again. All information and documentation collected during this cancelled project should be incorporated into the Scout's final project writeup.

Project Completion-Related Questions

Can adults work on Eagle projects? Yes - there is nothing in the Eagle requirements that prohibits adults from working on an Eagle project. Remember that the Eagle candidate is still responsible for the overall project, although he may assign adults to monitor Scouts where some hazards may be present.

Can non-Scouts work on Eagle projects? Yes - as above, there is nothing in the Eagle rank requirements that prohibits non-Scouts from working on Eagle projects.

Are Scouts allowed to use power tools? Yes, subject to the BSA National publication "Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities." Practically speaking, they should be under an adult's guidance. Note that the Eagle candidate is still responsible for leading the project.

What has to be done to complete the project? The Eagle candidate needs to complete the project as agreed to with the benefiting organization. The final signatures by the Scoutmaster and the benefiting organization signify completion and final acceptance of the project – at that time, the Scout's work on the project is complete (except for the final writeup). The date of project acceptance in the project booklet is the date of completion that should be used on the Eagle Scout application form.

What does the final writeup have to cover? Once the project is accepted, the final writeup can be completed – it covers what actually happened, and compares that to what was originally planned. The Eagle candidate should address how he showed leadership during the carrying out of the project, including addressing any changes made during the project. Remember, the intent of the project is for the Eagle candidate to plan, develop and give leadership to others in successfully planning and carrying out the service project.

Why does the Eagle candidate need to address changes in his final writeup? Aside from being required by the Eagle Project Workbook, part of demonstrating leadership is the ability to address and react to changes in an appropriate and timely manner.

Advancement-Related Questions

How accurate should the Eagle candidate be on the Eagle Scout Rank Application? He should be as accurate as possible, especially with dates for rank advancement, merit badges and positions of responsibility. Rank advancement is based on the date of the rank's Board of Review, not a Court of Honor; likewise, completion of a merit badge is based on the date of completion (as noted on the blue card), not a Court of Honor. Scouts should save their merit badge blue cards and periodically check with the troop's Advancement Chair to ensure that records are current and accurate well before the Eagle Board of Review. The council must review the application prior to scheduling the Eagle Board of Review to ensure that all dates are accurate.

What is the age limit for reaching the Eagle rank? The Eagle candidate must complete the six requirements noted on the Eagle application by the time he turns 18. It is not necessary that the project workbook be completed and turned in to the District Advancement Committee by age 18.

Can a Scout work on his Eagle rank after age 18? According to the BSA Advancement Policies and Procedures – if a Scout or Venturer foresees that he will be unable to complete the requirements for the Eagle rank prior to his 18th birthday, he may file a petition in writing with the National Boy Scout Committee through the local council for special permission to continue working on the Eagle rank after age 18. The petition must show good and sufficient evidence and detail the extenuating circumstances that prevented the Scout from completing the requirements prior to his 18th birthday. Extenuating circumstances are defined as conditions or situations that are totally beyond the control of the Scout or Venturer. Procrastinating on starting or completing any requirements is not sufficient reason to grant a time extension. In other words, don't delay in working towards the Eagle rank.

What is the next step after completing the project and writing it up? The Eagle candidate should contact the Council office for approval of the Eagle application. This certifies that all dates have been verified. To accomplish this, the Eagle candidate should contact the Council office and obtain a copy of his personal history. This will be used to ensure that all dates (dates of rank and merit badge completion dates) are accurate.

What's next? Assuming that the council has signed off on the application (thereby verifying the dates), the entire project binder is turned into the District Advancement Chair, along with the completed Eagle Scout Rank Application (Form 58-728), the Statement of Goals and Ambitions (from Eagle Requirement #6) and the completed Troop Advancement Report (Form 34403A). The District Advancement Committee Chair will review the application and ensure that the entire package is complete – he will then forward it to the Eagle Board of Review Committee to schedule the Board of Review. Note - only the Eagle Board of Review can determine if the completed project has met all standards as set forth by BSA. The recommendation letters will have already been sent directly to the District Advancement Committee Chair by the references.

How should the reference letters be handled? Once the references have been identified by the Eagle candidate (Requirement #2 of the Eagle Scout Rank Application), an adult Scouter (ie, troop committee member) should request those letters of recommendation – preferably within a month or so prior to the Eagle candidate turning the completed project binder in to the District Advancement Chair. The references will be instructed to send those letters directly to the District Advancement Chair – not to the Eagle candidate or original requester.

Can't the reference letters be requested anytime after achieving Life rank? The references provide input to the Board of Review as to how the Scout lives the Oath and Law; obtaining more recent input will give the Eagle Board of Review a better (and more current) idea as to how the Scout is accomplishing this. In order to meet this need, requesting the letters closer to the time of the Board of Review will therefore provide more accurate input.

Are Eagle candidates limited to 5 reference names (or 6, including employers)? No – the 5 (or 6) references are a minimum. If the Eagle candidate wants additional references, he should supply those additional names and the contact information to the adult handling the recommendation letters. That adult can then solicit the information from those additional references.

The Eagle candidate doesn't go to a church – how is the religious reference handled? The 12th point of the Scout Law is “A Scout is Reverent”, it doesn't say anything about having to go to a church. Typically, this recommendation letter would come from the Scout's minister or pastor of the church that he attends. If the Eagle candidate doesn't attend a church, the preferred alternative would be to have an adult friend or relative write a recommendation letter, attesting to his religious beliefs. It's generally not recommended that the Eagle candidate write this letter, as it's not from an independent person.

When can the Eagle candidate see the recommendation letters? The District Advancement Chair will forward the recommendation letters directly to the Eagle Board of Review, along with the Eagle candidate's project workbook and Eagle application. The Eagle Board of Review will read them, but will not pass them on to the Eagle candidate unless the writer of the recommendation letter specifically allows it in writing (as part of the recommendation letter). The specific requirements for the recommendation letters have been furnished to all troops.

Table of Changes

10/6/04 – Original issue of Eagle Project Guide FAQs
6/3/05 – Updated recommendation letter requirements and expanded approval Q&A.
2/1/06 – Updated Eagle packet information and expanded plan and certification Q&A.
6/26/07 – Updated discussion on fundraising/financing.
1/1/09 – General updates (including reference letters)