

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 10 years, I've found that many Scouts and Scouters were unclear 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 are updated periodically as other 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. It is limited only by the amount of time required in each rank.

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 be available on the internet. The leadership reference material from Woodbadge and Junior Leader Training is also useful.

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

What level of assistance should the unit provide in assisting the Scout towards the Eagle rank? Because of the rate of attrition of Scouters and the relatively few number of Scouts progressing towards the Eagle rank, it's recommended that one or more adults at the unit level be available to guide the Scout through the process. This helps ensure district-wide consistency. The adult should not be pushing the Scout, but should be a ready source of information to help the Scout move through the requirements.

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 such that he will be have 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.

After that, the Scout should review the latest version of the Eagle Project Planning Guide (Muir District) to get a better idea of the requirements and expectations. This planning guide, although not an official BSA publication, was written to help clarify the expectations when developing the project and plan.

What is the process for obtaining District approval of the Eagle Project plan? The candidate should work with his troop's Eagle advisor/mentor and the 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 vice-chair for review and approval of the plan. Remember 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 vice-chair 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 the plan be submitted 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 to 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 in any manner, 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 will not be considered as valid beneficiaries unless they are a qualified charitable organization. The Eagle candidate should verify the status of the benefiting organization as early as possible to minimize delays.

Are blood drives acceptable as projects? Blood banks have very specific instructions and requirements for running a blood drive; in addition, the employees and volunteers working for the blood banks are under the direction of the blood bank, not the Eagle candidate. While blood drives are admirable service projects, they leave very little opportunity for the Eagle candidate to demonstrate leadership. Consequently, they are not considered to be viable Eagle Service Projects.

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 – and even stretch the candidate in doing so. 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. However, this does NOT necessarily 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 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.

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.

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 (ie, 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 - that is considered part of the planning process. Actual acquisition of the funds and/or materials cannot take place before the project is approved. Returning of funds and/or materials to the donors because a project was cancelled or otherwise not approved can place the Eagle candidate in a difficult position, as they **MUST** be returned to the donor(s). Funds raised for a project can be used ONLY for that project; the “leftover” funds cannot be donated to the benefiting organization, so it is of critical importance that an excess of funds is not raised.

What kind of funding sources can be used for Eagle projects? Generally, 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, funding of the project (if necessary to carry out the project) must be addressed in the project plan. 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; but remember 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 the reasons for the change, and how he demonstrated leadership in addressing the issue. Potential changes should be discussed with the benefiting organization’s representative before implementation. 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, so coordination and communication are key necessities. Remember that the Eagle candidate is still responsible for directing the project.

If members of the benefiting organization do work on the project, all participants (including the Eagle candidate) **MUST** be aware of the need for the Eagle candidate to remain in charge of the project. Deviations should be agreed upon only between the Eagle candidate and the approving representative of the benefiting organization.

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.

What about medical insurance for workers? In general, each person should have their own insurance. Accident and illness insurance is purchased annually by Mt. Diablo Silverado Council), but this BSA-provided insurance is the very last insurance to “kick-in” – all other existing policies come first, including one’s own medical insurance if medical treatment proved necessary. The individual should review the council website for specific details and limitations at <http://www.bsa-mdsc.org/committees/healthandsafety/llaccidents.php>.

If additional information is needed, the council office should be contacted directly; the amount of information, limitations and details involved preclude detailed discussion in this forum.

In addition, persons can refer to the National BSA websites at:

1. <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx>
2. <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/RiskManagement.aspx>
3. <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/Alerts/Insurance.aspx>

Project Completion-Related Questions

Can adults or parents 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 certain tasks to adults where hazards may be present.

Can the Eagle candidate work on the project? The Eagle candidate is responsible for leading the project, and so should not be doing the “work” assigned to others. Practically speaking, the only things the Eagle candidate should have in his hands during the project implementation is paper and pencil for taking notes (as well as a copy of his plan).

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 (not the adult’s “supervision”). Note that the Eagle candidate is still responsible for leading the project, and so cannot delegate ANY supervisory or leadership tasks to anyone.

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 – this must be done BEFORE reaching 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, positions of responsibility 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 Eagle BOR 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 Eagle Board of Review 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 Eagle Board of Review will read the letters, 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)
9/1/10 – General updates, including insurance clarification
3/1/11 – General updates