

Eagle Scout leadership service projects: an introduction

As an Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) volunteer or staff member, you may be contacted by a Boy Scout seeking an opportunity to perform an Eagle Scout leadership service project to benefit the Ice Age Trail. You may not know much about Boy Scouting or have any experience working with Scouts on Eagle projects. The purpose of this paper is to provide you with the information you'll need to work with the Scout and his leaders to empower him to successfully complete his project.

Background

The Eagle Scout candidate is a member of a Troop. All of the Troops in a local area comprise a District. Several Districts make up a Council. For example, the Glacier's Edge Council includes all of the Troops in the Wisconsin counties of Adams, Columbia, Dane, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk, Rock, and Walworth, as well as Winnebago and Boone counties in Illinois.

After a Boy Scout advances through the ranks and attains the rank of Life Scout, he must satisfy a number of demanding requirements in order to qualify for the rank of Eagle. These include demonstrated leadership ability, earning a minimum of 21 merit badges, and

While a Life Scout, he must plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school, or his community. The project idea must be approved by his Scoutmaster and troop committee and by the council or district before he starts.

The Life Scout must complete all requirements for the rank of Eagle before his 18th birthday. Less than 1% of boys who join Scouting will attain the rank of Eagle.

The purpose of the Eagle project is to demonstrate planning skills, development skills, and leadership of others. *In other words, the detailed process the Scout goes through in planning and developing the project, and the leadership skills he must demonstrate in guiding the project to completion are as important as successful completion of the project itself.*

Much more information about the requirements for prospective Eagle Scout candidates can be found at: <http://www.glaciersedge.org/youth-advancement-resources>

Steps in the process

1. The Scout contacts one or more religious institutions, community organizations or schools, seeking information about possible Eagle projects. He may have a specific project in mind, or he may be looking for suggestions of projects he can undertake to benefit the religious institution, school, or community.
2. The Scout gathers information about the project he would like to perform. Some of this information will come from you, as the representative of the recipient organization .

3. The Scout obtains verbal approval for his project from his Scoutmaster or project advisor in the Troop. He then prepares a written project plan, following a template provided by the local Boy Scout Council.
4. *A representative of the recipient organization must approve the project plan in writing, by signing and dating the Scout's Eagle Project Workbook.*
5. The Scout's Scoutmaster or project advisor approves the project plan in writing. The Troop Committee Chairperson must also give written approval of the project plan.
6. The Scout submits the project plan to the District Advancement Committee for written approval. Once approved by the District, the project plan document is returned to the Scout.

**ONLY AFTER COMPLETION OF ALL THE ABOVE STEPS MAY THE BOY
SCOUT BEGIN ACTUAL WORK ON THE PROJECT**

7. The Scout undertakes and completes the project. The Scout is expected to keep detailed records of all work he performs during the project, including all contacts he makes, whether by telephone, e-mail, or in person. He should take photographs to document the "before" and "after" aspects of the project.
8. The Scout prepares a detailed written report of all aspects of the project, including the leadership he demonstrated in planning and completing the work; the tools, materials and equipment used; project costs and how these costs were met; numbers of volunteers the Scout recruited to assist in the work and how many hours were required; and how safety was maintained throughout the project.
9. *A representative of the recipient organization must sign and date the project workbook, signifying the project was planned, developed and carried out successfully.*
10. A Troop representative approves the completed project in writing.
11. The Eagle candidate completes a Scoutmaster Conference, then submits his completed Eagle Project Workbook and rank application to the Council.
12. A Board of Review is held. The vote of the Board must be unanimous if a candidate is to be elevated to the rank of Eagle Scout. After the candidate is elevated to the rank of Eagle, he is awarded the rank of Eagle at an Eagle Scout Court of Honor. This celebration is a time to recognize the young man's achievement as well as an opportunity for the new Eagle Scout to thank all of the people who helped him on the path to Eagle. Oftentimes, a representative of the recipient organization is invited.

Important realities for you

- Note that the lower ranks in Boy Scouting, as well as some merit badges and other Boy Scout awards, require completion of service project hours. These service hours might include, with your approval, work benefiting the Ice Age Trail. However, this service work is of short-duration and does not contain the required leadership component that Eagle Scout projects have.
- First and foremost: An Eagle Scout leadership service project is much, much more than simply a source of free labor.
- Though sometimes looked upon by the Scout as just a task, the Eagle project is, in reality, a tool used in leadership development.

- Boy Scouts arrive at the Eagle project phase of their advancement with differing levels of maturity, capabilities and leadership skills. A good Eagle project augments what the Scout initially brings to the project.
- If you agree to work with a prospective Eagle Scout, you are, to some degree, agreeing to mentor this young man. As a successful Eagle project mentor, you may put a significant amount of effort into the completion of this Scout's project. The payoff is knowing that you have made a significant contribution toward developing a future leader in our society.
- During the project process, should you have questions or concerns better addressed by the Scout's adult leaders, feel free to contact the Scout's Scoutmaster, project advisor or other responsible adult. When you first meet with the Scout, be sure to obtain contact information for one or more of these adults.
- The Boy Scouting program has a strong set of mandatory Youth Protection guidelines intended to prevent child abuse. Please be aware that the Scout is not allowed to meet with you one-on-one. Whenever he meets with you, he must be accompanied by another Scout, a parent, or other responsible adult.
- Experience has shown that a typical Eagle project involves 100-300 man-hours of work and 1-2 working days for the actual project. However, these numbers are only a general guideline. Some very good, successful projects have been less than 100 man-hours.

If you need additional information about working with Eagle Scout candidates, feel free to contact these Ice Age Trail volunteers. They have Boy Scouting backgrounds and have worked with several successful Eagle Scout candidates.

Dan Wallace, Dane County Chapter, IATA
dwallace@src.wisc.edu
 608-835-5144

Ed Spoon, Dane County Chapter, IATA
e3pspoon@chorus.net
 608-279-1939

The author wishes to thank Dan Wallace, members of the troop committee of Boy Scout Troop 349, Verona, WI and the other adult Scout leaders who reviewed this paper.

Ed Spoon
June 7, 2011