

Trailing the Eagle

An action plan for troops supporting Eagle candidates

Only about 3.5% of Des Plaines Valley Council Boy Scouts attain the rank of Eagle, which may account for the fact that the process by which a boy attains the Eagle may not be well understood among troop leadership. The trail from Life to Eagle is a long and arduous one, but a path well worth traveling- and with strong organized support, your Life Scouts can have a very real chance at attaining this worthy goal. Fortunately, setting up a support structure for Eagle hopefuls is not difficult.

The Foundation

The basis of troop support is the Eagle Coach. The Eagle Coach is a registered troop adult appointed by the Scoutmaster to specialize in Eagle candidate support. Desirable qualities in an Eagle Coach include observation, determination, perseverance, imagination, confidence and a logical attitude. Other job qualifications: Youth Protection Trained, mechanical or carpentry skills, general handyman skills, able to communicate at the Scout's level, capable of following direction, a proven desire to stay on course and finish the job. If your troop leadership includes a trained Eagle Mentor, this person might make a good Eagle Coach or could support an Eagle Coach. If the troop does not have a suitable person available to serve as Eagle Coach, the District Advancement Committee may be able to provide assistance in this area.

In the Life to Eagle process, the Eagle Coach serves as the Scout's primary resource for support. The Eagle Mentor assigned by Council reviews the Project Plan and Final Project Report for conformance with BSA National Requirements, and furnishes signed approval for the Project Plan.

The Process

Requirements for Eagle: It is important to be cognizant of the seven requirements for the rank of Eagle:

1. Be active for six months after Life rank.
2. Live by the Scout Oath and Law.
3. Earn 21 merit badges as specified in the Boy Scout Handbook.
4. Hold a troop position of responsibility for six months.
5. Complete an Eagle Service Project.
6. Take part in a Scoutmaster conference.
7. Successfully complete the Eagle Board of Review.

All but requirement 7 must be completed before the 18th birthday.

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Trailing the Eagle by the numbers...

See *Benchmarks for Success*, p. 7.

Step 1: After Life Board of Review, Scout is given the Des Plaines Valley Council Life-to-Eagle Packet (available at Scout Shop).

Step 2: It is an excellent idea for the Scout to attend a district Life-to-Eagle presentation with his parents. These presentations are normally scheduled on an annual basis, and may also be arranged for individual troops, if warranted. Contact the Council Program Secretary to schedule a presentation.

Step 3: *Choosing a Project:* Scout meets with troop or district Eagle Coach to discuss the Life to Eagle process, and to formulate a concept for a project and identify a beneficiary. **For many Scouts, this is the most difficult part of the process. *It is important to allow at least 4 to 6 MONTHS for project planning, preparation of a Project Plan and completion of the project.*** Many helpful resources for project planning may be found online; suggested places to start include:

<http://home.flash.net/~smithrc/eagleprj.htm>

<http://www.usscouts.org/usscouts/eagle/eagleproj1.html>

<http://www.eaglescout.org/project/select.html>

After the Scout and Eagle Coach develop the project, the Scout then reviews the project idea with a representative of the proposed beneficiary.

Step 4: *The Project Concept:* Each Eagle Candidate must work with a council Eagle Mentor to develop his formal Project Plan. Before one can be assigned, however, the Scout must supply a satisfactory Project Concept Statement. The Project Concept is a paragraph or two describing his project idea, which includes information on the beneficiary, the project's time line and details of the his work force. The Project Concept should be discussed with his Scoutmaster, Venturing Advisor or Varsity Scout Coach before submission to Council. The Project Concept must be approved by Council before an Eagle Mentor may be assigned. When planning the project time frame, allow a *minimum* of four to six weeks for securing approvals before the start date of the project.

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Step 5: *Project Concept approval:* Keeping his Eagle Coach informed, the Scout emails the Project Concept to Linda, the Council Program Secretary (708-354-1111x20, lglover@bsamail.org), and requests an Eagle Mentor. **It is important to alert the secretary if the request is of an urgent nature.** If email is not an option, mail to:

Des Plaines Valley Council
811 West Hillgrove Ave
La Grange, IL 60525-5822
Attn: Linda Glover, Program Secretary

Please include the email address of the troop Eagle Coach and/or the Scoutmaster or other responsible adult who can be copied on correspondence. The Scout copies this adult on all emails. Within a calendar week, the Scout should be contacted by the program coordinator with a response. Upon review of his submission, the Scout will either be placed in the queue to be assigned a Mentor or coached to revise his Concept. When the Project Concept is approved, the Scout may immediately begin to work with his Eagle Coach to develop the formal Project Plan, even though an Eagle Mentor has yet to be assigned. There is no need to delay. However, **NO WORK MAY BE DONE ON THE PROJECT ITSELF** until the formal approvals of the completed Project Plan are given (see step 8 below). If the Scout experiences undue delays in this process, he may email DPVC147@bsamail.org, or contact the Program Secretary for assistance.

Step 6: *Eagle Mentor Assigned:* The Scout will be contacted by a Mentor as soon as one can be assigned. The Eagle Mentor reviews the project with the Scout and the Eagle Coach and discusses expectations of each of the parties and the degree of involvement of the Mentor and Eagle Coach. The primary function of the Eagle Mentor is to assist with the preparation of a satisfactory Project Plan and Final Project Report.

Step 7: *Draft of Project Plan Reviewed:* The Scout prepares the draft of his Project Plan, which is reviewed by the Eagle Coach and Eagle Mentor. The Eagle Coach assists the Scout with application for a Local Tour Permit if the project will be performed at a location away from the regular troop meeting place. The Eagle Mentor will verify that a Tour Permit has been applied for before approving the Project Plan. If no travel is involved, get a Permit for the Activity Only.

Step 8: *Formal Approval of Project Plan:* When the final draft of the Project Plan is completed, the Scout first reviews it with his Eagle Coach and Eagle Mentor for conformance with BSA National requirements. He then presents it to the beneficiary for written approval, followed by the signed approvals of the Scoutmaster, a troop committee member and finally the Eagle Mentor. **NOTE:** *The signature line for Scoutmaster/Coach/Advisor is intended for signature of Scoutmaster, Varsity Scout Coach or Venture Crew Advisor as appropriate.* All approval signatures must be made in the original Eagle Leadership Service Project Workbook. Make sure all approval signature dates are **BEFORE** the project start date. The Scout may now begin work on his project. **THE EAGLE PROJECT ITSELF MAY NOT BE STARTED UNTIL THE PROJECT PLAN IS FORMALLY APPROVED IN WRITING BY ALL FOUR PARTIES.**

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Step 9: *Do the Project!* The Scout executes the project, keeping the Eagle Coach and beneficiary advised of his progress. The Eagle Coach monitors the activity, and supports the Scout as necessary. The Scout documents any changes from the Project Plan necessary for project completion, and keeps careful records of materials used and time worked by individuals. Taking lots of photographs of project progress is a great idea. The Eagle Mentor will remain available to the Scout and the Eagle Coach for the remainder of the process for consultation as needed.

Step 10: *Final Project Report reviewed by Mentor:* Upon completion of the project, the Scout gathers all the documentation generated during project execution and prepares the Final Project Report. It is a good idea to encourage the boy to avoid the “dead zone” between the completion of the project and the writing of the Project Report. Encourage him to make a quality presentation that will speak well of him and of his project. When the final draft is ready, ask the Eagle Mentor to review it to assure compliance with BSA National requirements.

Step 11: *Scoutmaster Conference.* The Scoutmaster Conference is a positive experience, the objective of which is to help a Scout evaluate his accomplishments and set new goals. This requirement must be completed prior to the Scout’s 18th birthday.

- The Scoutmaster Conference may be conducted at the request of an Eagle candidate, or be initiated by the unit leader
- *When there is a reason to believe that an Eagle candidate will not be qualified to achieve the Eagle Scout award within the six month period prior to his eighteenth birthday, the unit leader should try to meet with the Scout and counsel, on a timely basis, so as to give the Eagle candidate every reasonable opportunity to become qualified.*

Step 12: *Advancement Data Review.* Before the *Eagle Scout Rank Application* may be completed, it is imperative that a review be completed of all board of review and merit badge dates for the Scout. Request an individual Advancement Report from the Council Registrar (708-354-1111 x22, gmayle@bsamail.org) for comparison with troop records. The application **MUST** show the proper merit badges correctly dated before the Star and Life boards of review. The merit badge part of the application is very important, as the Des Plaines Valley Council and the BSA’s Eagle Scout Service perform checking and verification of the dates on which the merit badges were earned. Errors can cause delays in the application process, and in some cases, can force the application back from the National Office to the local Council for clarification.

Step 13: *Preparation of the Eagle Scout Rank Application.* The Scout should complete this form as neatly as possible- use a typewriter if one is available. In any case, it’s a good idea to rough the data in on a work copy of the form first. The Scout should ask individuals for their permission before listing them as references. *All references must be furnished*, with the exception of “employer” if the boy is not employed. **All references must be personal names of individuals known to the Scout.** Names of schools, churches, listed instead of individual names are **not** acceptable. On the back of the form, show only eligible leadership positions held while a Life Scout. Personal signatures of Scoutmaster (or Crew Adviser) and unit committee chair are required.

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Other Details...

The Scout must have the following completed BEFORE his 18th birthday:

- All merit badges
- Eagle Service Project
- Scoutmaster Conference
- Be active as a Life Scout for six months
- Serve actively in a position of responsibility for six months while a Life Scout

The completed Application, personal life statement and Eagle Project Workbook are brought in to the Council Program Secretary for review and certification. The application may be brought in after the 18th birthday, but this is NOT recommended.

Scout Activity Requirement: Be active in your troop, team or crew for a period of at least six months after you achieve the rank of Life Scout. This can be any six month period, not necessarily consecutive, and need not necessarily coincide with the time of execution of the Eagle Project. Use Troop standard for active as long as it is stated and known.

Time Extensions:

The Scout may file a petition in writing for special permission to continue to work toward the Eagle award after reaching age 18:

- The petition must show good and sufficient evidence and detail extenuating circumstances.
- Extenuating circumstances are defined as conditions or situations that are totally beyond the control of the Scout or Venturer.
- Extensions are granted only by the National Boy Scout Committee through application by the local council.
- Petitions should be submitted in writing to the Council Advancement Committee *as far in advance of the 18th birthday as possible.*

Eagle Boards of Review: After the council certifies the Application and authorizes the Eagle Board of Review, the unit will be contacted regarding the venue. The unit has the option of hosting the board in its own facility or participating in the monthly Council Eagle Boards of Review, held the first Thursday of the months September through June. In either case, the unit provides at least three eligible adults to sit on the board. The Board of Review for an Eagle candidate is composed of at least three but not more than six members age 21 or older. These members do not have to be registered in Scouting, but they must have an understanding of the importance and purpose of the Eagle Board of Review. Unit leaders (Scoutmaster, Advisor, etc.), assistant unit leaders, parents, relatives or guardians may not serve as members of a Scout's Board of Review. Unit committee members are welcome to participate as long as they are not related to the Scout. In addition, the Eagle Mentor is encouraged to participate in the Scout's board.

- **Council Eagle Board of Review option:** When this option is selected, the troop Committee Chairman, the Scoutmaster, and the Scout are contacted by letter from the Council office regarding the date and other necessary details. When requesting a specific Board of Review date, it is a good idea to do so as far in advance as possible. Please bear in mind that there is a limit on the number of Scouts that may be reviewed at a given session, and requests are honored in the order received. It may be prudent to plan for the contingency that the review may need to take place at a subsequent month. Although the Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters and parents/relatives may not sit on the Scout's board, they are strongly

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encouraged to support the boy by their attendance. At the event, these adults will be invited to participate in the Eagle Review Boards for Scouts from other troops. The other three adults that your unit has provided will sit on your Scout's Eagle Board. It is appropriate for Scout leaders to attend in uniform, and bring your camera- opportunities for memorable photographs abound.

- **In-Troop Eagle Board of Review option:** When this option is selected, the unit arranges a venue for the review, and contacts the District Advancement Chairman directly to schedule the review. The board of review will be chaired either by the District Advancement Chairman or his designee, and the unit will notify the Scout's Eagle Mentor of the upcoming board so that this individual may participate. The unit will also be responsible for securing at least three eligible adults to participate in the Eagle board, and must make arrangements to pick up the candidate's paperwork at the Council office.

Encourage the Eagle candidate to appear before his Eagle Board in his best complete Scout uniform. This is an excellent time to wear his merit badge sash. Order of the Arrow sashes are not appropriate for this event.

- The Scout will be asked about his experiences in Scouting and to describe his Eagle project. Some units schedule a "dry run" Eagle Board of Review before the actual event to help the Scout prepare.
- The decision of the board of review to approve must be unanimous.
- If the candidate is not approved by the board, an appeal process is available.
- Local councils do not award the Eagle rank- this is done only by the BSA National Council.
- Following the Eagle Board of Review, the application is certified by the Scout Executive and sent to National which verifies and authorizes award (allow 2-3 weeks).
- Expedited handling is no longer available.
- The applicant contacts the Program Secretary to verify that the Eagle materials have been received from National.
- **Avoid disappointment: Do NOT schedule the Eagle Court of Honor until official notification is received!**

Scouts with Disabilities:

All Scouts are encouraged to work towards the rank of Eagle. Special programs can be arranged for Scouts with disabilities to make it possible for them to succeed in this endeavor. Please contact the Council Advancement Chairman for guidance.

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Check List

Requirements for Eagle

- ___ 1 Be active for Six months after Life Rank
- ___ 2 Live by Scout Oath and Law
- ___ 3 Earn 21 Merit Badges as specified in the Boy Scout Hand Book
- ___ 4 Hold a troop position of responsibility for six months
- ___ 5 Complete an Eagle Service Project
- ___ 6 Take part in a Scoutmaster Conference
- ___ 7 Successfully complete the Eagle Board of Review

Benchmarks for Success

	Target Date	Completed On	Action
Step 1			Life to Eagle packet given to Scout
Step 2			Attend Life-To-Eagle Presentation w/ parents
Step 3			Meet with Eagle Coach to choose a project Meet with beneficiary of project
Step 4			Write a short Project Concept
Step 5			Project Concept Approval
Step 6			Eagle Mentor Assigned
Step 7			Draft of Project Plan Reviewed by Mentor
Step 8			Formal approval of Project Plan
Step 9			Do the project
Step 10			Draft of Final Project Report reviewed by Mentor
Step 11			Scoutmaster Conference
Step 12			Advancement Data Review
Step 13			Prepare Eagle Scout Rank Application