

How to Make Your Eagle Scout Project Incredible

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Introduction

I've been involved with Troop 57 for 10 years now--from when I joined Cub Scout Pack 57 in 2015, to finally completing my Eagle Project in 2024. I learned some lessons while doing my Eagle project that might be useful to you. For starters, don't wait until two weeks before your 18th birthday to finish your project like I did!

What makes me qualified to write this, when it was clearly such a struggle for me? Exactly that. I know all the delays, excuses, and other methods of procrastination that scouts use to justify not doing their project until the very end. I also have strategies to combat those, so listen up!

Picking a Good Eagle Project

The first key is to select something that you're interested in, and will want to talk about with enthusiasm. The size of the project shouldn't be too hard to accomplish. If it is something you haven't done before, assume that your time estimates will be way off. For example a construction project could end up taking 5X more time because of repeated trips to the hardware store. On the other hand, the project should not be too trivial--you will get pushback and a lot of questions.

Every year the Pacific Skyline Council gives an award for outstanding [eagle project of the year](#). Look through the list to get inspired. Yes, there are Eagle projects that raise \$12k and build a [library in Armenia](#).

Although there is no Scouting America requirement for a minimum number of hours for an Eagle Scout service project, it might be a good idea to aim for around 100 total project hours. Look at the [Outings and Events Tracker](#), and ask around for project reports to see typical volunteer hours spent on recent projects by Troop 57 and 4057.

There seem to be two types of projects: construction or service. The main challenges of a service project seem to be:

- How to satisfy the "Planning and development" requirement
- How to get enough signups

The [Guide to Advancement](#) gives an example service project and how to incorporate planning and development in the project:

It is important not to categorically reject projects that, on the surface, may not seem to require enough planning and development. Consider, for example, a blood drive. Often rejected out of hand, this project, if done properly, could be acceptable. Few would question the beneficiary. Blood banks save lives—thousands of them: maybe yours, maybe that of a loved one. If the candidate proposes to use a set of “canned” instructions from the bank, implemented with no further planning, the planning effort would not meet the test.

On the other hand, there are councils in which Scouts and advancement committees have met with blood bank officials and worked out approaches that can comply. Typically these involve developing marketing plans and considering logistics. People successful in business know how important these skills are. Some blood banks will also set a minimum for blood collected as a measure of a successful plan. To provide another valuable lesson, they may require the candidate to keep at it until the goal has been met.

Getting enough sign ups might be another challenge of service projects. It's usually easier for conservation projects, because some scouts need more conservation service hours for advancement. It also helps for the project to be something useful, unique, interesting, and not too far from home. For example, a service project that trains scouts in a useful skill like bike repair and then have them apply that skill in a bike repair clinic.

Construction projects come with a different set of complexities, and it's important to scope the project with these in mind:

- there are very strict restrictions on tool use by scouts, so even simple steps like cutting wood is challenging.
- the difference between skill levels of scouts is vast-ranging from experienced makers to scouts who have never hammered a nail.
- I was very surprised by the cost--the wood for my project cost more than \$500.

A good compromise might be hybrid construction/service project which combines a simple construction project with tasks that use lots of child labour in the form of younger scouts. For example, one of the recent Eagle projects had the brilliant idea to make kits that scouts could use to make wooden cutouts at home which could be then attached to the main project.

You have to adjust the project to fit how many scouts are available and what are their skill levels. If you can “deskill” your project a bit, younger scouts are ideal for construction projects because they’re so eager to help and willing to listen!

Here are some useful sites for brainstorming project ideas:

<https://eagleprojects.scoutlife.org/>
<https://pathtoeagle.org/101-eagle-scout-project-ideas/>
<https://nesa.org/resources/trail-to-eagle/project-idea-generator/>
<https://scoutsmarts.com/eagle-scout-project-ideas/>

Selecting a Beneficiary

Instead of selecting a project first, and then hunting for who would benefit by it, a better approach would be to first select a beneficiary. Ask the beneficiary what would be useful for them and work backwards to how to make that happen. This approach is more likely to end up with a useful result, and have a more responsive and appreciative beneficiary.

A good beneficiary is someone you already have some contact with. The best way to make contact is to meet in person and make your case. For example if you wanted to do a project for Stanford Conservation Program, register and turn up for one of their events and chat with the organizers about eagle project ideas.

If you belong to a club or do an extracurricular activity, those may be great opportunities to meet beneficiaries. Involve them in the creation of the project, and be flexible about modifying your project to fit your beneficiary’s needs. These are the beneficiaries that have recently approved projects for our troop:

Access Books
Allcove Palo Alto
Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula
City of San Jose; Bellarmine College Prep
Duveneck Elementary School
Ed Souza Community Garden
Environmental Volunteers
Fletcher Middle School
Foothill Middle College
Foothills Nature Preserve

Friends Nursery of Palo Alto
Grassroots Ecology & BPA Native Habitat
Greene Middle School
KLL Robotics
Lehi Park - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Palo Alto Baylands
Palo Alto Open Space
Palo Alto Rinconada Community Garden
Palo Alto Teen Arts Council
Pets In Need
Rinconada Community Garden, City of Palo Alto
Rise Academy
There With Care
Walter Hays Elementary School
Wreaths Across America

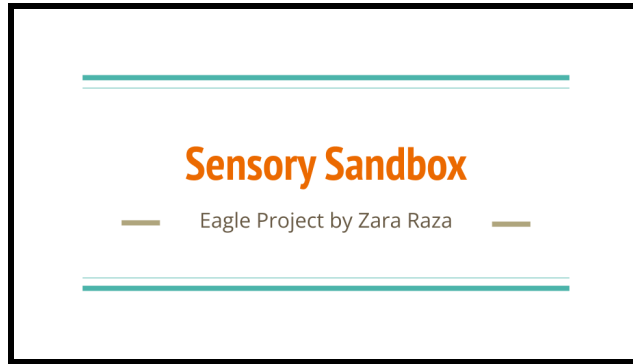
The advantage of using one of these beneficiaries is that they know the process already, and therefore will most likely be faster in signing your forms. These lead to less delays, which is vital to getting your eagle project done in a timely manner. However, don't constrain yourself to this list if you already have a connection with a new beneficiary. Some of the existing beneficiaries are quite jaded, and new beneficiaries could be excited to work with eagle scouts.

Getting the Project Approved

There is one piece of advice that I can give to make the process much smoother: Create a slide presentation of your project proposal like this:



[Easels for Veteran Memorial Wreaths](#)



[Sensory Sandbox](#)



[Duveneck Garden Fence Decor](#)

Having this slide presentation helps you make the pitch to the beneficiary and also helps a lot when you discuss your proposal with the counsel. It is not a required step, but trust me, it helps a lot and saves a lot of time.

There is a 5 way test to determine if a Eagle Project Proposal is acceptable:

#	Requirement	Potential Questions
1	Suitability	What planning is required for the project? How will you demonstrate leadership ? What community benefits will the project provide?
2	Feasibility	How will you know if the project is a success? Can the scouts build something this complex? Can you get enough scout volunteers to complete this project? How did you come up with the Preliminary Cost Estimate? How will you raise the funds?

#	Requirement	Potential Questions
3	Safety	<p>What can go wrong and how to reduce these risks?</p> <p>How will you do the steps that require tools that scouts can't operate?</p> <p>What is SAFE?</p> <p>How will you follow the SAFE guidelines?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAFE Service Project Planning Checklist • SAFE Tool Use • Ladder Safety Moment • Portable Hand and Power Tools Checklist (NIOSH) • Prohibited Activities
4	Planning	<p>How many scouts do you plan to use?</p> <p>What are the overall project phases and milestones?</p> <p>What are the next steps to formulate the detailed plan?</p> <p>How will you prepare for potential problems?</p> <p>Will you require any permits or permissions?</p>
5	Likelihood of success	<p>Do you have prior experience executing something similar to the project?</p> <p>Is the project practical given your skills and the skills of your helpers?</p> <p>Is the time and effort you anticipate to complete the project realistic?</p> <p>What trials/preparation have you done to give confidence that the project is feasible?</p>

It is key to address these five points in the presentation, and be able to answer any of these questions with confidence during the review. It's OK to say "I don't know but this is how I plan to find out". For example I had never built an easel, so during my review I said that I planned to build one and then come up with a detailed plan.

When writing your project proposal pdf, you will have to describe the project and why it will be useful to the beneficiary. This is **not** the time for one line answers. Put some thought into why you came up with the project and who will benefit from it. It would be easy to use ChatGPT to generate it, but trust me, the approvers read so many AI generated reports that they can easily pick out something that has been copied. Look at this great example from the project "*Foothills Park Toyon Nature Trail Restoration*" by **Rafferty Meier**:

Project Description and Benefit

Briefly describe your project

My proposed Eagle project aims to enhance the experience of hikers and nature enthusiasts at Foothill Park on the Toyon Nature Trail. The project encompasses several key parts, including updating an informational booklet, marking plants with wooden markers, doing minor trail work, and constructing two benches along the trail.

By updating the informational booklet, the project will provide visitors with valuable knowledge about the diverse plant life found along the trail. This will not only promote environmental awareness but also serve as an educational resource for those interested in the local flora. The booklet will help visitors identify various plants, understand their ecological significance, and foster a deeper appreciation for the natural surroundings. The booklet was first made 30 years ago and some facts are outdated or need revision. All of the pages will be updated but pages 5, 6, 10, 17, 18, 20, and 21 need a complete upheaval.

To enhance the booklet's usefulness, wooden markers are placed around the trail that indicate what the book refers to. These markers were put into place 30 years ago and many of the plants they pointed at are dead or have moved. I will move these markers to new locations where they can point to what they should.

The list of markers in need of relocation are markers 1, 5, 10, 18, 21, and 23.

Near marker 23 the trail has fallen into minor disrepair. I will take a small group of scouts to participate in some minor weeding of invasive plants to clear the trail.

As part of the project, I will undertake the reconstruction of two benches located near marker 8 on the Toyon nature trail at Foothill Park. These benches, unfortunately, have been impacted by poison oak and partially buried due to their positioning on the hillside. Once the old benches have been removed, new benches will be constructed, taking into consideration the best placement that avoids contact with poison oak while providing hikers with comfortable seating to rest and enjoy the natural surroundings.

This project will involve some volunteers working at home on the booklet, one work day building benches at my home, and several work days at the park.

Include images on an additional document.

Tell how your project will be helpful to the beneficiary. Why is it needed?

This project will benefit the community in several ways. Foothills Park is one of the most popular parks on the Peninsula, especially as it opened to the entire community not just Palo Alto residents. The Toyon Nature Trail is one of the most accessible trails and begins right at the entrance. This trail was created over 30 years ago, and while many of the markers still identify plants and features correctly, many of them do not. Because of this, the trail is not as useful as it could be to scouts, school groups and other nature enthusiasts interested in learning about the local plants in the Bay Area. This is a unique trail where people can learn a lot about plants and the ecosystem on an enjoyable, relatively short hike near a dense metropolitan area.

Recreational Experience: By updating the informational booklet, marking plants, restoring the trail, and constructing new benches, the project will improve the overall recreational experience for community members and visitors. People will have access to accurate information about local plant life, making their nature walks more educational and engaging. The improved trail condition and the addition of benches will provide hikers with a safer and more comfortable environment, encouraging them to explore and enjoy the natural beauty of Foothill Park.

Environmental Education: The updated booklet and plant markers will serve as valuable educational resources for the community. People will have the opportunity to learn about the diverse plant species found on the trail, their ecological significance, and the importance of conservation. This increased awareness and knowledge will foster a deeper connection with nature and promote environmental stewardship within the community.

Preservation of Natural Resources: The project's trail restoration efforts, including clearing debris and weeding, will help protect and preserve the natural resources of Foothill Park. volunteers will also completely clean the trail of garbage. By addressing erosion in the booklet and preserving a well-maintained trail, the project contributes to the long-term sustainability of the park's ecosystem. This preservation benefits not only the community but also future generations who will be able to enjoy the park's natural beauty.

For the review meeting:

- Show passion for your project! Give it some character.
- Be prepared, have printouts of the proposal and presentation (For online reviews, have both these documents ready to share)
- Reread your proposal, fix mistakes, familiarize yourself with everything you wrote

- Instead of saying "I will do .." say "I will delegate .."
- Take notes during the review, and reply with your summary right after the review

Fundraising

Fundraising is an easy way to add weight to your project to make it more significant. We have a lot of adults in our community who want to help and would jump at a chance to donate to an eagle project. Basically, it comes down to five steps:

1. Fill out the *Eagle Scout Service Project Fundraising Application* in the project plan and send it to council leadership
2. After approval, set up a fundraising site (such as <https://www.gofundme.com/f/Kai-Eagle-Project>)
3. Publicize the site (ongoing activity, not a one time email)
4. Carefully track all expenses to reimburse them, and make sure any excess funds go to the beneficiary.
5. Send personal thank-you notes to all donors

Tracking could look something like:

Reimbursed:	Amount:	Date:	Paid By:	Store:	Description:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$62.49	4/25/2024	Parent	Granger	Screws and lock nuts, other nuts	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$41.04	4/30/2024	Kai	Sherwin Williams	Paint	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$615.85	5/2/2024	Kai	Bruce Bauer	Wood	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$47.91	5/3/2024	Parent	Ace Hardware	Tools and Paintbrushes	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$21.95	5/4/2024	Parent	Ranch 99	Food	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$5.45	5/4/2024	Kai	Grocery Outlet	Food	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15.70	5/4/2024	Kai	Grocery Outlet	Food	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$28.89	5/4/2024	Parent	Pizza Hut	Pizza	
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$28.89	5/5/2024	Parent	Pizza Hut	Pizza	
Total Spent:	\$868.17					
Total Donated:	\$635.00					
Total Difference:	\$233.17					

For more information on fundraising, this link is extremely helpful. One strategy the author talks about is doing a bake sale or similar activity to raise funds:

<https://scoutsmarts.com/eagle-scout-project-fundraising/>

Project Plan and Fundraising Application has to get approved by the council BEFORE any fundraising.

Eagle projects get special discounts at many places, eg I was able to get a 15-20% discount at [Bruce Bauer Lumber](#). It helps to turn up in uniform on a slow weekday and have a spreadsheet of parts needed for the project. Talking to store managers when they're not busy with a hardcopy of your presentation can work wonders: eagle scouts have scored discounts ranging from \$100 gift cards to [free parts](#) and service.

Writing the Final Project Report

Project is done--time to take a break? Don't make that mistake! The best time to write up the final project report is the day of the service. First step is to add pictures to the presentation to show execution. They should show you holding the clipboard and not the hammer! A great example is:



[Baylands Nesting Ground Kiosk by Nathan Hunt](#)

The most important sections of the report are showing what lessons you learned and how you demonstrated leadership. Believe me, this is much easier to write on the night of execution, and gets harder and harder as time passes. Having the presentation is useful to jog your memory.

Every scout I know has learned a lot from doing their eagle project: don't procrastinate in writing it down!

Conclusion

Oh, by the way, this was the feedback I got from my council representative after I sent her my project report:

“Kai - this is AWESOMEEEEEE!! Really great work!! I hope you will use this as an example for all your Scouts in your Troop. There is a lot they can learn from you! This is not only a good project, but also a VERY well put together documentation! Amazing! Very proud of you!”

And now you know my secrets! Best of luck in completing your eagle scout journey!

References

1. https://www.reddit.com/r/BSA/comments/166gcpp/eagle_scout_project_proposal_approval_review_tips/
2. <https://scoutsmarts.com/eagle-project-planning/>
3. <https://www.troop57.net/life-to-eagle/>