

The Eagle Scout Service Project Coach - & - You

The Boy Scouts of America has survived the last 100 years because its practices, processes and procedures are designed to adjust to changes within our ever-changing world – all in an effort to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes, to become responsible, participating citizens and leaders. This current update to the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project Workbook and associated procedures is just another step in that evolution. It offers new flexibility for the Scout and better definition for supporting the process.

Since the inception of the Eagle Leadership Service Project, Units have strived to provide assistance to Eagle Candidates. The most notable effort has been the generally undefined position of Eagle Advisor. With each unit defining the duties as needed, it was at best a general counselor, or perhaps a generic resource of the process, or perhaps a specialist of one thing or another, or perhaps..., or perhaps..., or perhaps anyone who was willing to provide encouragement.

In re-defining the structure of the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project, BSA wanted to assure trained help would be available. A knowledgeable Coach can be the difference between a successful event and a nice try. The successful Eagle Coach will have a well grounded understanding of the process, the flow, the specific duties, latitude, boundaries and many of the specific challenges involved. A successful Eagle Coach will understand the Scout. In practical application, the position of Eagle Project Coach is no less importance than that of an advisor to the President.

An Eagle Candidate is a boy, and young man, a Scout who has completed all the requirements and tests necessary to advance through the ranks to Life Scout. This adult-in-training now wishes to take on the next big challenge of his young career... and not unlike the President, the success or failure is his responsibility as are the final decisions... and like a good Presidential Advisor, your job is to help him understand the possibilities, the strengths, weaknesses, and risks involved, his options, and whatever common sense life experiences that might help him make the appropriate choices.

You must understand and appreciate your position in this new process. The Eagle Candidate is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of his project. This is a learning process and not all learning processes are successful nor are they all failures. It is highly recommended an Eagle Candidate seek the services of a trained Eagle Scout Service Project Coach - but there is no requirement... it is strictly the Scout's option. Ultimately... the responsibility for success belongs to the Scout, and final evaluation is left to the Eagle Board of Review.

Since BSA has denied you the authority to dictate changes, withdraw approval or be directly involved in project decision-making, a successful advisor will be just that, an advisor. Your life experiences both good and bad, when mixed with a little common sense can go a long way in training tomorrow's adults. Your positive conversations offering thoughts, considerations, strengths, weaknesses and risks of a project concept can open a whole new world of wonder and knowledge.

Before continuing with the major components of this adventure, there are 10 primary concepts you will need to add to your knowledgebase and integrate into each project mentorship:

1. The requirement that Scouts use the Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook means they must use the official document as produced by the Boy Scouts of America. No council, district, unit, or individual has the authority to require additional forms, or to add or change requirements, or to make any additions, deletions, or changes in the text, outlines, graphics, or other layout or informational elements of the workbook.
2. The Guide to Advancement, along with the Boy Scout Requirements book, No. 34765, and this workbook, are the only official sources on policies and procedures for Eagle Scout service projects.

3. All Eagle Scout service projects are official Scouting activities, subject to BSA policies & procedures and are considered part of a unit's program and are treated as such with regard to policies, procedures, and requirements regarding Youth Protection, two-deep leadership, etc.
4. An Eagle Candidate is allowed to have a parent, unit leader, or other adult present as an observer at any time he is discussing his proposal or project...
5. No one may require more planning and development than necessary to execute the project.
6. Approval is contingent upon
 - a. Planning & development
 - b. Showing Leadership will take place
 - c. Benefit to the beneficiary
 - d. Feasibility
 - e. Safety issues are addressed
 - f. A reasonable chance for a positive experience
7. Beginning a project prior to approval is counter to the requirements.
8. A board of review may request a candidate do more work or even start over with another project if it determines the requirements were not met.
9. No single procedural concept, process, procedure, recommendation or directive should take precedent over the project as a whole. The board of review will determine a project has met the requirements based on the sum of the policies, procedures, processes, effort and resulting benefit to the community.
10. Any concept could be the basis for a successful project.

Eagle Scout Requirement 5

While a Life Scout, plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school, or your community. (The project must benefit an organization other than Boy Scouting.) A project proposal must be approved by the organization benefiting from the effort, your unit leader and unit committee, and the council or district before you start. You must use the Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook, No. 512-927, in meeting this requirement.

BSA did not design the new process identified in the 2011 printing of the Guide to Advancement and in the Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook to lower the number of Scouts earning Eagle. Their effort provides direction and definition where there was little or none. The workbook with its many structured areas and boxes looks intimidating but they specifically identify the roles and tasks for the Unit, Unit Leaders, Beneficiary, the Eagle Candidate and the approval process. The unknown always appears a little dark and a bit scary; however, if each party to this process handles their tasks appropriately, the burden will most likely be the same or less than the recent past.

Your job is not to create success – your job is to promote success. To be a good advisor, you will need to understand how the pieces make up the whole, how the various roles and tasks fit together and how to advise your Eagle Candidate best traverse the process. At your earliest opportunity, please review the additional details provided. With knowledge, a little patience, a little compassion and a little common sense can go a long way to support the Scout while he creates his success.