

Eagle Scout Service Projects and US Army Garrisons overseas



Scouts work to distribute COVID supplies at an on-base school in Okinawa, Japan

Introduction

Scouting's highest award, the Eagle Scout Rank, is challenging for youth to attain under normal circumstances but if you are in one of the BSAs' two overseas councils, the Far East Council (FEC) or the Transatlantic Council (TAC) you might face the added challenge of completing a project through a language barrier, across a cultural divide, or under an

additional set of rules. A lot of our overseas Scouts are stationed alongside US Army Garrisons¹ (USAGs) that can make the language or cultural challenges easier but add a layer of complexity to the rules you have to understand while planning and working on your project. This article is oriented towards a Life Scout in an overseas environment, adjacent to or on a military base (sometimes called an installation), who is trying to figure out where to start. If your circumstances are close to that but not exactly the same, keep reading and check the footnotes because you will still come away with some good questions to ask your local authorities even if they are non-US or non-military.² This article should be a reference to help you find the right points of contact and solutions as you lead your Eagle Scout Service Project (ESSP) from initial idea to final beneficiary signature.³

Where do I start?

Attempting to start an ESSP, or for that matter any service project, on an overseas USAG becomes a lot easier if you understand the nature of the installation itself. You have to understand how a Garrison is structured. It is a good idea to understand questions about permissions. It is also helpful to understand the range of projects that are possible. The great news is that, once you have a clear idea of where to go, who to ask for support, and what they might need you to do for them, these government officials become far less intimidating because you will find that they actually want to support your trail to Eagle.

The Army Garrison: a military city

Each installation is structured to function like a small city with various agencies supporting military units which are often referred to as tenants. USAGs have major organizations

¹ Other military installations (USMC, USN, USAF) have similar structures and rules.

² This article aims at describing Army Garrisons but will provide parallels to the other services where necessary. State Department locations (Embassies, Consulates, and programs) and other US overseas concerns will often have representatives who can help Scouts in similar ways.

³This article is not the official stance of the US Government or the Department of Defense. Local rules and requirements may vary.

called directorates as well as staff offices. The Directorate of Public Works (DPW)⁴ is often the starting point for many an ESSP. DPWs are responsible for Soldier and Family housing, construction, utilities, city planning, and environmental programs including protected and invasive species management.

Staff Sections within the Directorate of Public Works (and what they do)		
Master Planning (City planning & designs)	Engineering (Specific project planning)	Housing Services Office (includes barracks, family housing, and off-base housing support)
Environmental (Compliance, education, protection, invasive species management. Many projects involve Environmental even if they are not the lead agency)		Business Operations Integration (BOID) (work planning & contract management) and Operations and Maintenance (O&M) (skilled labor)

Many other ESSPs will lead to the Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (DFMWR) or MWR for short.⁵ MWRs are different everywhere, but they usually include Sports, Fitness, & Aquatics, Child and Youth Services (including childcare centers), Outdoor Recreation (think Parks and Rec, but without the comedy), and many of the retail and food businesses under the USAG. Army MWR also includes Army Community Services (ACS) which has programs for family advocacy and readiness, dependent employment, management of the Army Emergency Relief charity, and general support to Soldier off-duty programs.⁶ Because of the broad spectrum of DPW and MWR, most Scouts will find the right area for their ESSP in one of those two Directorates, but a USAG is so much more and there are also supporting agencies.

Staff Sections within the Directorate of Family Morale Welfare and Recreation (and what they do)	
Business and Recreation or Business and Entertainment (retail, food, and events)	Army Community Services - Family Advocacy - Family Readiness

⁴ To find similar services to DPW at an Airbase, look up the civil engineers. At a Navy or Marine Corps base, you will want to find the Ground & Facilities Engineering or the SeaBee Battalion.

⁵ The Navy groups similar activities under Navy MWR, but on a Marine Corps base, you will want to find Marine Corps Camp Services (MCCS). On an Airbase, similar activities are usually operated by the Force Support Squadron (FSS).

⁶ ACS-like services are not always grouped in the same way for non-Army installations but if you have a passion to serve a particular need the Installation Commander's Office can help you find the right points of contact.

Outdoor Recreation	Sports Fitness & Aquatics	- Army Emergency Relief - New Arrival Support - Army Lending Closet - Spouse Employment
Child & Youth Services - Childcare Centers - Afterschool Programs	Marketing, Programs, Maintenance & Support	Note: Every MWR is designed for local support. Feel free to ask if you have an interest that does not appear here or is local to your USAG.

In addition to DPW and MWR, the chart below shows the broad variety of agencies and programs that each USAG has within the other Directorates and Staffs. Many of these activities are the kinds of things where an ESSP or Merit Badge fits right into the mission or purpose of the staff. This means that a USAG probably has an office for any interest you might have as you explore your ESSP. Whether you are directly affiliated with the military, associated indirectly, or just a BSA Scout adjacent to a US base, know that the USAG is always a good place to start.

Other Garrison Agencies & Associated Areas (* applied if the office structure may change for different USAGs)			
<u>Directorate of Human Resources (DHR)</u>	<u>Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) + (DPTMS)</u>	<u>Common Garrison Staff Offices not in Directorates</u>	
Army Substance Abuse Prevention - Prevention of Substance Abuse - Suicide Prevention	Military Police - Traffic & Patrol - *Criminal Investigation - Military Working Dogs	Equal Opportunity and Employment (Inclusion)	Public Affairs and Community Relations
Education Center	Physical Security	Information Technology	Resource Management (Budget)
Postal Operations	Fire & Emergency	Garrison Chapel and Religious Affairs	*Legal Ethics & Assistance
Transition Assistance Program	*Installation Safety	*Soldier Ready and Resilient Program	*History and Monuments
*Military Pay Office	<u>DPTMS (Operations)</u> - Emergency/Crisis Management & Disaster Relief - Garrison Operations	Note: This is a representative list of agencies that are most likely to support an ESSP or match an interest area. Feel free to ask if you have an interest that does not appear here or is local to your USAG.	

If none of the directorates within the USAG are the right agency to support your project, they will be interested in connecting you with a point of contact who you can support. This is important to understand because your project may be something for the installation

itself, for the units that are stationed on the installation, or for the service members and families who use the installation for support. USAGs usually have close relationships with every element stationed on the installation.

There are usually a few other agencies on each installation that are considered separate from the installation itself and are therefore able to accept support independent of the installation command itself. There are installation activities that are not part of the USAG itself such as logistics, network, or medical support. Also, tenant units, sometimes called mission units, may have this kind of authority. For example, if you wanted to support Service Members who are deployed forward, you might go straight to a battalion (or Squadron) headquarters and not need any installation support. Likewise there are agencies, such as the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) Schools, that can gain approval from their internal channels so you could just talk to your school principal. Private volunteer organizations like the Red Cross, USO, a military fraternity, or a dependent spouse organization are frequently able to accept support with no USAG coordination.

Permission: Proper authority

No matter which agency you decide to serve, the USAG⁷ remains a great starting point. When you are conducting a service project for the US Government, you should ask the installation to help you determine which decision maker has the authority to serve as the beneficiary representative and support your project. The government often breaks down the concept of permission into more specific questions about authorities, requirements, and restrictions. If you know this going in, you may not be as dismayed if it looks like your project proposal is being taken apart and examined like a science project by the installation staff. At the same time, you are not responsible for interpreting Government rules. Make

⁷ If you are uncertain, just make an appointment with the Garrison Commander or Garrison Manager. For USAF, USMC, and US Navy the Installation Commanders Office may have a different title but they will have a similar interest in supporting your development as a Scout and a leader.

sure that you follow the rules of the ESSP as set out by the BSA, be obedient to anything the USAG or your beneficiary asks of you, and see if you can pick up a lesson or two along the way.

One important note about permissions is that agencies of the US Government and the Department of Defense, including installations, are not legally permitted to solicit for free support or donations. That is, they cannot ask you to do a project - they have to wait for you to ask them. That includes your Eagle Scout Service Project. This is why installations do not keep a public list of projects that Scouts could do. It is best if you approach the USAG or office you want to work with already having a topic area in which you have a personal interest. Then, like with any beneficiary, ask them to help you shape your idea to their need, you will find that there is always a need for support. As you work with the USAG, one of the offices listed above, or another Government entity, these rules about solicitation may also make fundraising for a project something that your beneficiary wants to review carefully before you begin. If you clearly communicate what you hope to do and how you plan to do it, these should be easy challenges to overcome.

Beneficial: Picking a project

Once you have made contact with the right authorities and started discussing projects that you might be interested in, consider the kind of impact you hope to have on your community. Because you are a member of the community, the USAG is usually going to be as interested in supporting your personal development as they are in the actual project you accomplish, but you should seek to make sure your work will have a lasting impact.⁸

Because the installation is a minor city, they will usually be able to support a very diverse set of interests, from environmental to human interest to recreational or anything else.

Almost any project you can do back in the US is possible overseas when you involve your

⁸ Although not a part of requirement 5, it is always good to think about the project you select in terms of the story you will be able to tell about it. Once you are an Eagle Scout, those who know about that achievement will frequently ask you to describe your Eagle Project. Make sure it is something you will be proud to tell over and over throughout your life.

installation leadership. Also, because overseas installations place emphasis on maintaining positive relations with the host nation, they will be able to support you if you need help coordinating with officials from the surrounding area.

What does the installation need to know?

The officials who support your project may not be familiar with the Boy Scouts of America program or the Eagle Scout Service Project. It is likely that they have heard of BSA and have a general understanding of what an Eagle Scout is, but there are a few areas where you can help them provide better support by filling in the gaps. Your beneficiary representative will be able to best support your project if they understand BSA policies, the purpose of the Eagle Scout Service Project, and the skill level of the volunteers you intend to recruit to work on your project. It is also worthwhile if you ask them about their policies, project purposes, and volunteer organizations they would like to involve.

Two sets of rules: BSA and Installation Policies

If you are reading this, you are a Life Scout working on your Eagle Rank or someone supporting that process. That means that you should be familiar with BSA's Youth Protection policies (often called YPT, for Youth Protection Training), the concept of 2-deep leadership (even in digital communication), and the Guide to Safe Scouting. You or an adult from your Scouting unit need to be the representative of these policies when dealing with your beneficiary or ask your Troop leadership for help. The installation will have separate policies regarding youth supervision and safety that you should ask them about in order to make sure that all rules are followed. In the end, the installation rules and BSA's rules are rarely incompatible and when there is a conflict or contradiction, it is best to err on the side of the more cautious rule.

Project Purpose: Fulfilling Requirement 5

It is true with any beneficiary that they will not be responsible for whether or not your project appropriately meets the standards of Requirement 5 of the Eagle Scout Rank Requirements. This will also be true for a military installation. Because the focus of Requirement 5 is that you plan and give leadership on your Eagle Scout Service Project, this is an important talking point with your beneficiary as you get ready for your project. You are responsible for making sure they know that you not only plan to do the project, but that you intend to take charge of making it happen. The military and the agencies that support installations are full of capable leaders who may take over your project if it is not clear that the purpose is for you to have a leadership opportunity.

For Scouts talking to Active Duty Army leaders, the concept of Mission Command Philosophy may be a good discussion topic while preparing for your project. Mission Command is a concept by which military leaders grant authority to subordinates to execute tasks without close supervision. The principles of Mission Command are: 1) Build cohesive teams through mutual trust; 2) Develop shared understanding of the task; 3) Provide clear commander's intent; 4) Issue mission orders (read: simple, purpose-based, instructions); 5) Execute with disciplined initiative; 6) Accept prudent risks. That might sound a bit like a more complicated version of the EDGE (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, Enable) Method and can serve as common ground for military leaders to see your ESSP as a growth experience.

Volunteers: Matching your project to skill-levels

You will be recruiting and leading volunteers to accomplish your project. Sometimes the skill required for the project shapes the volunteers you seek to recruit. Sometimes the volunteers most available to you shape the skill level of the project you select. This is worth communicating to your beneficiary early in the planning phase of your project. The installation may also be able to help you recruit more skilled volunteers. Most installations with families stationed there also have a Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS)

program⁹ that are a great source for volunteers. Installations also often have other volunteer organizations, such as professional networks and service fraternities¹⁰ to which they can introduce you before your project. If necessary, shape your project to match the skill of the volunteers you can recruit because few things are more frustrating than realizing part way into your project that you have started something you cannot finish well.

Who benefits?

Finally, it is worth expounding on the perspective of the installation as they support your project. Overseas military installations exist to support the mission, but the Department of Defense has expanded the definitions of support to include supporting people and community. Whether you are a military dependent, affiliated with the installation in another way, an ex-patriot living near an installation, or a citizen of another country participating in the BSA program, the installation is very likely to view you as a part of their community. Scouts-BSA and other youth programs focus on developing leaders and most of the people you encounter at a USAG are leaders themselves who view a part of their mission as taking part in activities that develop others.

Defining community: Who can participate?

You are part of the installation's community. If you are a military dependent, you probably don't need this assurance. However, there are many Scouting units associated with or adjacent to various elements of a USAG or other US military installation overseas to whom this feeling of belonging is not perfectly clear. The military does a lot of positive talk about the children of service members. You may have seen a celebration of the Month of the Military Child or heard statements that were meant to be an invitation come out as pretty exclusive. At times, this exclusive status is the case and some support structures within the

⁹ The USMC and Navy share a Single Marine or Single Sailor Program (SMP/SSP) at their installations and the USAF has Single Airman groups in each unit. All of these programs focus on volunteering.

¹⁰ The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and American Legion are also service organizations commonly located on or near military installations that will want to help.

military are only funded to support those in certain categories. If you are the child of a contractor or an expatriate, if you are not a US-citizen, you might be uncertain which programs include you. Therefore, you need to know this. If you are eligible to participate in a BSA program that is linked to the installation, you will almost always qualify to coordinate your Eagle Project through the installation.¹¹ Even if your troop, crew, or ship is not affiliated with the military installation you want to work with, do not be too shy to ask.¹² Accepting an Eagle Scout Service Project is more likely to be inclusive to all than it is to be limited to some. Just ask.

Beneficiaries: What is in it for them?

Even though you might find yourself working with any one of the various agencies, military units, or other elements on a military installation, it is worth noting that the USAG benefits the most from your personal growth and development.¹³ Military installations, whether overseas or in the US, are responsible for positive community support programs. There is even a Presidential Executive Order directing the Department of Defense to support Scouting overseas as a benefit to military dependents. When a military installation supports Scouting, not only do they get the direct benefit of your service project, they get the intangible benefit of developing leadership in you and your fellow volunteers within their community. It truly is a win-win situation in that you get your project requirement fulfilled and they get an opportunity to help you grow.

While you are there: What else?

Some Scouts wait until they have completed all or most of their Eagle Required merit badges before they move on to looking for an Eagle project, but if you have some left on

¹¹ Even if you are somehow ineligible for the installation access you desire, the USAG or installation community relations office will want to work with you to find a positive outcome.

¹² This attitude that, "it never hurts to ask," is very common in the military and can be applied when by a base in the US or when overseas by an agency that does not perfectly fit what this article describes. It really only hurts to ask if you have a sore throat.

¹³ Second to the benefit to you, of course.

your list, consider the additional benefits of coordinating with an installation. There is an easy connection to Citizenship in the Community, Nation, or World through the various offices on a military installation. If you live there, it is the equivalent of your city and local government offices. Installations have lots of US Government offices and officials from our Nation, and by being overseas, they are focused on Citizenship in the World. There are a lot of other opportunities if you take a minute and review requirements from Eagle Required and elective merit badges. It might even be an extra measure to see if you can incorporate part of a merit badge into your project itself.

Conclusion

Whatever your connection to the military installation, if you are Scouting overseas each installation represents a small segment of the US that will support the completion of your Eagle Scout Service Project. Remember, you need to approach them because they cannot approach you, but do not be nervous - the professionals working at military installations around the world are eager for opportunities to encourage Scouts and youth such as yourself. Hopefully this has helped you to be prepared so you can do a good turn today.