



2024 National Order of the Arrow Conference

Session: Free Money: A Scouting America Guide to Effectively Complete Scholarship Applications

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Session Length: 45 minutes

Session Description

During this session, attendees will get an overview of the National Eagle Scout Association and its annual scholarship program. The session will also provide tips and best practices for applying for these scholarships as well as for writing scholarship essays as well. Lastly, the session will provide an opportunity for those attending to practice applying the skills they learned.

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1: Learn tips and best practices for applying for scholarships.

Outcome 2: Learn tips and best practices for writing scholarship essays.

Theme Connection: Seek New Heights

This training will provide tips and best practices for applying for scholarships and writing scholarship essays to enable attendees to Seek New Heights academically.

Facility and Material Needs

Facility Needs

Is this session remote delegate-compatible? Yes
(ie. can the material be engagingly taught via live stream)

Does this session need audio/video (AV) capabilities? Yes
(ie. projector)

Are there any other specific facility needs for this session? No
(ie. movable chairs, panel-style seating, etc.)

Material Needs

Material	Quantity	Source
Supporting Presentation		 Free Money - NOAC 2024 Training Sli...
Supporting Handout		 Free Money - NOAC 2024 Handout

Session Preparation Steps

Step 1: Review the syllabus

Step 2: Review the slides

Step 3: Practice

Lesson Plan

Introduction

5 minutes

Slides 1-3

- On behalf of the National Eagle Scout Association, I would like to welcome you to this presentation, "Free Money. A Scouting America Guide to Effectively Complete Scholarship Applications." My name is Spencer Long, and I have the honor of serving the Scouting America Alumni Association as the Chair of the Scouting America Alumni Educators Affinity Group.
- Background and context are always important, and to that end, I wanted to share a little more about how this session came about. After the 2022 NESAs Scholarship process, members of the NESAs Scholarship Selection Committee approached the Scouting America Alumni Educators Affinity Group for some help on how they might be able to get better and more complete applications as part of their process. Many of the applications submitted that year were incomplete, had mistakes, or simply just missed the mark for what was being asked for in the various essays as part of the application process. The goal of our session today is to provide some tips and best practices to those of you who may be thinking about applying for these scholarships. You will likely find that the tips shared in this session will also be applicable to other scholarship processes as well.

Background about NESAs

5 minutes

Slide 4

- For over 50 years, the National Eagle Scout Association, otherwise known as NESAs, has been giving Eagle Scout pride a purpose because a Scout's journey does not end at Eagle.
- NESAs members play a critical role in creating a world filled with leaders who are responsible, participating citizens guided by the Scout Oath and Law.
- As we look towards the next 50 years, NESAs will continue to empower Eagle Scouts to perpetuate the mission, vision, and time-honored traditions of Scouting for future generations. We will help to find ways to carry on the Eagle Scout tradition of excellence through time and treasure.

- Through the BSA Alumni Association, Eagle Scouts have a multitude of ways to stay engaged in Scouting beyond involvement as a youth.

Background on NESA Scholarships

5 minutes

Slide 5

- To help level set even further, it's important to understand a little more about the NESA Scholarship program and the process for applying.
- NESA Scholarship applications are taken annually.
- Applications are open for submission between December 31 and January 31
- Applications are started by visiting the Scholarship Portal on the NESA website, nesa.org.
- Once an application is started, the application is sent an email with a link to the application. This is how applicants submit their materials and complete the application.
- Anyone applying for a Scholarship must be a member of the National Eagle Scout Association
- Scholarships are open from an NESA member's senior year of high school to their junior year of college
- In 2021, there were 4,000+ applications received, for 45 scholarships
- In 2022, there were 4,000+ applications received for 65 scholarships
- In 2023, there were 4,000+ applications received for 69 scholarships
- In 2024, there were 4,300+ applications received for 69 scholarships
- Essentially, for every 60 applications received, one scholarship is awarded. This means your application must be up to the highest standards to rise to the top.
- Scholarships in 2024 ranged from \$3,500 to \$48,000. The amounts can change annually depending on available allocation.
- Approximately 3,437 scholarships worth \$13,098,500 awarded since 1984

Tips and Best Practices

5 minutes

Slide 6

- Tip 1: Follow Direction.

Be sure you read over the entire application and have a complete understanding of what will be required in the application and when it is to be submitted. This could include the submission of any supporting materials such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, or other required materials.

- Tip 2: Don't Procrastinate.

Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to complete each part of the application and to gather all the required supporting materials. Many scholarship applications require you to submit items outside of your control. Be sure to ask for those items with advance notice to meet the application deadlines. Remember, your failure to plan does not constitute an emergency for someone else. Waiting until the last minute could result in you missing a deadline. Understand that in many cases, incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Be Prepared.

- Tip 3: Write Great Essays and Proofread

Answering essay questions in a scholarship application is a time for you to share about yourself and share with the selection committee things they might not have otherwise known about you from other parts of your application. Although we will go into greater detail about essays specifically later in this presentation, it's important that your essay is edited for grammar and spelling, and it also addresses the essay prompt that has been provided. All too often, students recycle essay responses used in other scholarship applications and, as a result, don't address the prompt being asked.

- After you have completed your essay, make sure it meets any guidelines that have been provided, including the maximum or minimum number of words required. Next read your essay aloud to determine how it will read to those reviewing your scholarship. Last, be sure you have someone else review your essay to ensure you addressed the prompt as well as to proof read your response.

Writing a Scholarship Essay

10 minutes

Slide 7

- Tip 1: Research the organization awarding the scholarship

In the case of NESAC, it is important to understand the purpose of the organization and what it values. As you write a scholarship essay, anytime you can align your response with the values or purpose of the awarding organization the more favorably they will likely view your application.

- Tip 2: Answer the essay prompt being asked.

Although this has already been mentioned, it's important to answer/address the essay prompt that is being asked. Be sure to take some time to reflect on the intent of the

prompt and why. After doing that take some time to reflect on your experience to develop an essay that aligns your experience with the essay prompt. In the case of NESAs, you will likely want to draw from a Scouting experience unless you are asked directly to share about how you have applied the skills you learned in Scouting to a situation outside of Scouting.

- Tip 3: Structure Your Essay using STAR

What is STAR?

S - Situation

T - Tasks

A - Actions

R - Results

- Writing an essay for a scholarship is essentially telling a story about you. Many times these essays are behavior-based, and the prompt is asking you to share about a time or situation when you applied a specific skill or had to address a specific problem. The STAR method provides an outline to collect your thoughts. After reading the prompt, reflect and think about a similar situation in which you found yourself. Next, share through your essay the tasks that you were required to achieve in that situation. Third, you will outline the actions that you took to achieve those tasks. Present insights into what you did, why you did it, and any alternatives you considered. Last, you share about the results or outcomes that were achieved by the actions you took. Share if you met your objectives, what you learned, and anything that you have learned since that experience that might shape how you would address a similar situation if it were presented again.
- Example essay prompt: Share a time when you led a team.

Many of you are likely thinking right out of the gate you would want to share about leading your Eagle Scout Project. This is a good example, but understand you are answering an essay for an Eagle Scout scholarship, so what is an example that you can provide that might separate you from others in the essay pool.

- If it was me, I might think about times I was in a leadership position in Scouting outside of leading my Eagle Scout Project. That could be as Lodge Chief, it could be as Senior Patrol Leader, or another role important to you. Once I had selected the role, I would think about a unique time when I led a group in that role. For me, one example that comes to mind for me is when I was able to apply the skills I learned from becoming an Eagle Scout to leading a project at camp as Lodge Chief to renovate/remodel our camp chapel. From there, I would outline the tasks that were

involved. These would include tasks related to working with the various stakeholders (Camping Committee, Properties Committee, Fundraising Committee), the process of building and designing the chapel (Plan design, Material procurement, Recruiting help), and ultimately leading the construction of the project. Each of these has action items that were taken along the way and resulted in the chapel being completed. I would be sure to share what I learned in each step of the process as well as talk about if I had the opportunity to do it again what I might do differently. The goal in this essay approach, using STAR, is to provide a storytelling template that gives a full perspective of how you approach a specific situation.

Past Essay Examples

10 minutes

Slide 8

- The key to the essay questions is “above and beyond” All the normal Scouting and service activities performed with the troop and their church are really par for the course. All of the 4,000 applications have them. Looking for those who have done service outside the troop or church. The poor essays are those that write 2-3 sentences, and it’s the normal activities that would be the same for every Eagle Scout.
- A winning essay for character

The transition from cub scouts, a parent led program, to Boy Scouts, a scout led organization, was intimidating; however, I was excited to take the next step towards my new goal of Eagle Scout. Troop 888 provided scouts multiple leadership positions and with the help of adult leaders, scout positions, and activities I learned several leadership skills such as communication, planning, salesmanship, networking, and public speaking.

As I progressed through the ranks developing my character and leadership, I realized it was finally time to plan my Eagle Scout project. I wanted to choose a project that would exhibit my skills that I learned, and a project that would leave a lasting impact on the beneficiary. During my 8th grade science class, I presented a project talking about states that were utilizing barn owls in their grape vineyards to eliminate pest. During that research, I was surprised by the fact that there were only thirty breeding pairs in Iowa. Wanting to solve this problem I decided I would build four barn owl boxes, installing two boxes each, at two local state parks. During this project, I employed my communication skills to contact the Iowa DNR and email the troop, my planning skills to plan installation dates and obtain the necessary supplies, my public speaking skills to instruct and motivate workers during installation, and my advertising skills to create posters for each park; all skills I developed leading and advertising scout activities.

After years of preparing for my goal, I had achieved it, but I soon realized that all of these experiences had molded me into a person who is willing to go through any challenge to lead his community to improve; so, I exercised this character by completing the Stem Nova program award and the BSA Distinguished Conservation award with the goal of refining my character while also encouraging younger scouts to do the same. These skills were essential for helping me obtain my goal of Eagle Scout, but they also guided me in school. I utilized my leadership abilities to become an active part of my school's student council, I followed the scout law and oath to become a student of the month, and a scout's sense of community to accumulate 430 hours of Silver Cord community hours, restore my high school's greenhouse, establish a greenhouse club, be community philanthropy board member, and a board member for the Science Iowa nonprofit.

Upon joining Boy Scouts my end goal was to reach the rank of Eagle Scout, since then many of the people from troop 888 have helped me reach this goal and beyond. Troop 888 has had a positive impact on me in a way that I will never be able to express fully. They have taught me kindness, gave me a sense of responsibility and service to my school and community. Guided me in staying healthy and avoiding bad life habits and vices. Most of all they gave me confidence in myself and trust in others I like how short and simple this is, so I don't want to get too far away from that. If you have a way that we can highlight those, it would be great, but we need to ensure we are getting recommendations for all our chapters.

- A winning essay question for community service

I am currently a freshman in college at the University of California San Diego. I am a part of Bioscholars, a selective organization under the UCSD Biological Science Department for academic and career-motivated biology undergraduate students. This program runs community service activities in San Diego.

I have joined UCSD's Doctors without Borders club, Premeds without Borders club, and the Helping Hand Club. The Doctors without borders club's mission is to provide members with opportunities to engage with Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières' work and to promote its campaigns. The premeds without borders club is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing healthy initiatives through proactive engagement and high-impact volunteer work. By establishing partnerships and coordinating with local nonprofits, we continue to provide a platform for emerging leaders to make meaningful contributions within their respective communities. The Helping Hand's clubs at UCSD aims to improve the access to healthcare in the homeless and underserved communities and to provide students opportunities with hands-on medical-related events around San Diego; to inspire and help teach the medically underserved how to advocate for mental health and medical services.

In High school, I was the President of Circle of Friends at University City High School,

a club that creates a safe and inclusive environment to grow relationships with students in the special needs program and other students. I was a member of Circle of Friends for 6 years. Every Tuesday, students in the special needs program and other students on campus, which include me, ate lunch together, played games, and talk. I continued this program every Tuesday through online zoom meetings during Covid.

In 2017, I became active with Club Dust. I have participated several times going to Tecate, Mexico where I work alongside residents to help build homes for families in need. Usually, we employ local labor to build the actual structure. My job is organizing the volunteers in painting and laying the floor. In November 2020, I helped design and implement a curriculum similar to NYLT for Grossmont Hospital's five head nurses to help with communication and team building.

I witnessed firsthand the refugee crisis abroad which led me to help the large refugee population in San Diego and those impacted by human trafficking. I now serve as an ambassador for San Diego Human Trafficking Prevention where I help create social media campaigns to increase awareness and promote their material to a younger generation. I helped write the script used in a webinar with Alma Tucker, a human trafficking prevention activist. I volunteer at St Lukes North Park Church, which has a large Sudanese refugee community by organizing food to give to families in need.

My service includes causes from humanitarian to environmental. My Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards in the Girl Scouts of America have focused on causes from beach cleanups to planting milkweed and educating about the endangerment of the migratory monarch butterfly. I founded a year-long monthly beach cleanup initiative called "Leave No Trace-Beach Cleanup."

Practice/Sharing/Feedback

20 minutes

Slide 9

Activity

Share the prompt below with the group and ask them to first work individually to answer. After they have had some time to work individually to pair up with the person next to them to share their answer outline. Last, ask for volunteers to share with the entire group for feedback.

Materials Needed: [materials]

Length of Activity: 20 minutes.

Activity Description: Pick one point of the Scout Law. Describe how this point has guided your life and provide a recent/standout example when exemplified that point of the Scout Law.

Potential Alternative Scholarship Opportunities**2 minutes***Slides 10*



- There are several alternative places to look and apply for scholarships Some examples include:
 - Alpha Phi Omega, Leaders of Service Scholarship
 - Inquire about institution-specific scholarships
 - Examples: Scholarships only available to Eagle Scouts, scholarships related to leadership or service
 - Example: Walter Scott Foundation. Any Eagle Scout from Nebraska going to either the University of Nebraska Omaha or Metropolitan Community College, \$4,000 a year for four years.
 - Local community foundations and civic groups
 - Examples: Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Elks Lodge, Lions Club, etc.
 - Others?

Questions**10 minutes***Slides 11***Reflection****3 minutes***Slides 12*

Please take out your notebook and pen. For the final three minutes, think about your current and future roles in the OA, in Scouting, and in life. Write down three key takeaways from this session that will enable you to Seek New Heights in those current and/or future roles. For example, how might receiving a scholarship impact your life? Later today, feel free to share these key ideas with others in your chapter or lodge.

Appendix: Resources and Source Material

[Please add all referenced sources or handouts that would be useful to share with session attendees.]

Resource	Link
Supporting Presentation	 Free Money - NOAC 2024 Training Slides
Supporting Handout	 Free Money - NOAC 2024 Handout