



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

of Sarasota County

Frequently Asked Questions

General

Are these scholarships based on merit?

Scholarships are awarded through a competitive process. Dedicated volunteers on our scholarship committees make their selections based on:

- Financial need
- Leadership potential
- Academic performance
- Work experience
- Commitment to school and community through volunteerism

What does the ideal scholarship recipient look like?

The ideal applicant has demonstrated financial need, earned a 2.5 GPA or better, worked to earn money for school, and expressed well-defined goals and objectives for their education.

Is the scholarship renewable for more than one year?

Some scholarships are renewable, and some are awarded for one year only. Please read your notification letter carefully as it will detail all the terms of your scholarship award.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for these scholarships?

Scholarships are not restricted to four-year universities; we consider higher education to be college, vocational or technical school, and accredited courses of study for select career fields. You are eligible for this scholarship program if you are:

- Currently attending or enrolling in an accredited college or vocational school
- A current resident of Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, or DeSoto County
- 24 years of age or older as of December 31st of the year in which you apply

If I am already enrolled in school, am I still eligible to apply for a Community Foundation of Sarasota County scholarship?

Yes, if you are a current resident of Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, or DeSoto County.

Can I apply for a scholarship even if I am not sure which school I will be attending?

Yes, although it is in your favor to know what school you want to attend and what career path you want to pursue.

Do I have to be planning to attend a Florida state college or university?

No. Scholarship recipients can attend any accredited college or university, as well as any accredited technical school or vocational school including, but not limited to, cosmetology, car or equipment repair, and all health care and safety professions.

Do I have to be attending a four-year college or university to be eligible for a scholarship?

No, scholarship funds may also be used at vocational or technical schools and community colleges.

Application Process

Do I need an interview?

Scholarship applicants may be asked to attend an interview, but this is not typically the case. Students may be invited to our donor appreciation reception and are expected to attend if invited.

Do I have to write an essay?

Yes. All students are required to write a general essay explaining their educational goals.

What happens if I can't get my required documents in time before the deadline?

All documents, in their entirety, must be submitted and received by the deadline. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Are my answers and financial information kept confidential?

All information is kept confidential by our scholarship committee members. Information is never shared with the public. Applications are disposed of by a confidential shredding company, so there is no risk of identity theft.

When will I find out if I was awarded a scholarship?

For students who apply for full-year funding between March 1 – April 15, you will be notified whether or not you were awarded a scholarship around July 15.

For students who apply for half-year funding between September 1 – October 15, you will be notified whether or not you were awarded a scholarship around November 15.

Is the scholarship award sent to me?

Scholarship awards are sent directly to the school of the student's choice, on the student's behalf. Scholarship funds are never directly released to the student.

Selection Process

Are all applications submitted online?

Most applications are submitted digitally through our online portal, but some applications may require a paper submission.

How will my application be reviewed?

Once submitted, all applications are reviewed by a dedicated committee of community volunteers. Depending on the type of scholarship, interviews may be conducted on a case-by-case basis.

How will I be notified I am selected as a scholarship recipient?

After a scholarship decision has been reached, applicants will be promptly notified of their award status. Please keep in mind that once a decision has been reached, it cannot be altered in any way unless under extraordinary circumstances.

What does the selection process look like?



FAFSA SAR and Other Documents

What is the FAFSA?

FAFSA stands for “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” and is used to apply for different types of federal, state, and private financial aid for education. According to the FAFSA website, FAFSA "is the first step in the financial aid process."

How do I complete a FAFSA?

FAFSA may be completed on the web at <https://www.fafsa.ed.gov> or possibly at your school if they participate in Electronic Data Exchange (contact your school for this information).

FAFSA can also be completed by paper. It may be possible to obtain a hard copy at your school.

According to the FAFSA website, filing online "is the fastest and most accurate way to apply for student aid." FAFSA can be reached by phone at 1-800-433-3243.

When should I complete a FAFSA, and how long will it be until I get a response?

As soon as possible! The earlier in the year that you apply, the quicker you will get a response. Conversely, the later in the year you apply, the longer it will take to get a response. Depending on the time of year during which you are applying, there may be multiple FAFSA applications available for different academic years. Please ensure that you are applying for the academic year for which your scholarship will be awarded. For instance, if you are applying for a scholarship that will be awarded for Fall 2020 – Spring 2021, you should complete with 2020-2021 FAFSA application.

It is recommended that you have filed your tax return prior to completing your FAFSA, but it is not required. It will take longer if you have not filed your family's taxes with it.

Please visit the FAFSA website at <https://www.fafsa.ed.gov> for more information.

What is a FAFSA SAR?

SAR stands for “Student Aid Report.” It summarizes the information provided on the FAFSA and delivers information about the applicant’s financial need, including the EFC, also known as “Estimated Family Contribution.”

What is a college aid award letter?

A college aid award letter is provided to the student by the college they will be attending. It lists the cost of attending the college and aid that is available to the student for the upcoming school year, including grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans.

You will receive the college aid award letter only after you have completed the FAFSA and requested that the results be sent to your chosen college.