



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
- ★ Academic
- ★ Extracurriculars & Community Service
- ★ Work Experience
- ★ Life Experience & Home Duties
- ★ Essay

What does the ideal scholarship recipient look like?

The ideal applicant has demonstrated financial need, earned a 2.8 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 award notification 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 or graduate from a high school in one of these four counties
- ★ Under the age of 24 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, DeSoto, or Charlotte County, or you are a graduate of a high school located within one of these four counties.

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?

Some scholarship applicants may be asked to attend an interview, but this is not typically the case. Students may be invited to meet their donor at a lunch or 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. For the general essay you may also use your common essay. There are also some specific essays for certain scholarships for which it is recommended that they have their own unique essay answer.

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. Personal information is never shared with the public.

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

All students will be notified whether or not they are awarded a scholarship in May.

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 mailed directly to the student, but some funds can be released to the student by the school. To have the funds released to you, you will want to read your award notification email and discuss it with the financial aid department at your school.

Selection Process

Are all applications submitted online?

All applications are accessed and submitted digitally through our online portal.

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 notified of their award status by email and asked to log back into the application portal to accept or decline the scholarship award. 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 SSR 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. FAFSA is often the first step in the financial aid process.

How do I complete a FAFSA?

FAFSA may be completed on the web at studentaid.gov, and 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.

Completing the FAFSA online is often the fastest and most accurate way to apply for student aid. To get started, you and your contributors will each need to create a [Student Aid Account](#) or “FSA ID”.

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

As soon as possible! The FAFSA should be available starting in October of each year as of 2025. 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 funding for the 2025-2026 academic year, you should complete with 2025-2026 FAFSA application.

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

Please visit the FAFSA website at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> for more information.

What is the FSS?

FSS stands for the “FAFSA Submission Summary.” It summarizes the information provided on the FAFSA and delivers information about the applicant’s financial need, including the SAI, also known as “Student Aid Index.”

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. We may require this for some of our larger scholarship awards.