**Scholarship Applications
Frequently Asked Questions**

Community Foundation staff understands that applicants may have questions as they begin the application process. We ask all applicants to carefully and completely read this document before beginning an application or reaching out to staff who are working diligently to process student applications. Frequently asked questions and answers are provided below for the following categories:

Tips for Success

1. Complete your application well before the deadline.
2. Read the descriptions for each scholarship completely and apply only if you meet the listed criteria.
3. When registering for our scholarship portal, provide an email address that you check frequently. We notify award recipients exclusively via email, so it is crucial to provide an accurate email address.
4. Add administrator@grantinterface.com to your email client's "safe senders" list. Again, we send all notifications by email, and if our email goes to your spam folder, you may miss a critical email.
5. Check your email frequently.
6. Spend time writing complete and thoughtful responses to the essay question(s). We recommend that you provide a response that is at least 500 words.
7. Write your essays as well as your community service, extracurricular activity, honors and awards, and employment log in a separate place, like Word or Google Docs, then paste your answers in the application.
8. You will need to upload your most recent academic transcript (high school seniors, we are looking for your grades through the first semester of your senior year) and your FAFSA Submission Summary for the 2024-2025 academic year. Please ensure that you have these documents in a pdf format and are ready to upload them.
9. Some scholarships require letters of recommendation, ensure that you request recommendations at least three weeks ahead of our advertised deadline.
10. Respond to follow-up communications and requests for additional information from the Community Foundation of South Alabama. Failure to respond or complete an acceptance form may result in a missed opportunity.

Application Status Updates

When do applications open?

Applications typically open the second week of January.

When do applications open and close?

Applications will close at 11:59 p.m. CDT on the "Close Date." After 11:59 p.m. on the close date listed below, we will be unable to accept any additional submissions or materials for your application. After the close date, materials will not be accepted via email or postal mail, please ensure you upload all requested materials into the scholarship portal.

Can I get an extension if I need one?

No. The Community Foundation cannot provide an extension to any applicant for any reason. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed. If you have a disability and are experiencing accessibility challenges in completing our application(s), please notify staff as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations or other arrangements.

I am a parent/guardian, should I complete scholarship applications for my student?

We understand that students may need assistance or guidance when completing scholarship applications, however, we recommend that parents/guardians allow students to lead in the scholarship application process.

What is the most important aspect of my application?

Each scholarship evaluator carefully reviews and considers every section of your application, so be sure to fill out every section completely and upload all documents. All document uploads should contain your name. Please ensure that you follow all instructions regarding document uploads.

How do I write a good answer to the essay questions?

A good essay is one that answers the essay prompt completely and is on-topic, is free of spelling errors, and uses proper grammar. We recommend having someone with strong writing skills review your essay(s) before you submit your application.

What is the status of my application?

Foundation staff aim to provide continuous updates throughout the scholarship process to applicants. **Foundation staff will send all award and declination notifications by July 1.** Please wait to reach out with questions on the status of your submitted application until after July 1.

When will I find out if I received a scholarship?

Final status notifications will be sent out via email **no later than July 1**. Due to the high volume of applications received and each scholarship's unique committee review process, not all students are notified of their award status on the same date. If you applied and/or qualified for multiple scholarships, you may receive notifications about the status of each scholarship several days or even weeks apart. Additionally, applicants for a scholarship may receive award or declination notifications at different times. **Please wait to reach out with questions on the status of your application until after July 1.**

Eligibility And Who Should Apply

How can I determine which scholarships I am eligible to apply to?

Each scholarship fund has specific eligibility criteria that were defined by the donor when the fund was established. Some scholarships are geared towards supporting students from a specific town or place, while others aim to support students with exceptional academic merits. Please read the description of each available scholarship in our portal. If you meet the minimum eligibility criteria, we welcome your application.

Can staff tell me which scholarships I am eligible for?

No. The best way to determine if you meet the criteria for any of the Community Foundation's scholarships is to review the scholarship descriptions in our scholarship portal. If you meet the minimum criteria for a scholarship, we welcome your application. No exceptions can be made to a scholarship's eligibility rules.

Should I apply if I just meet the minimum requirements? Is it worth my time?

Yes! You are welcome to apply for any of the available scholarships where you meet all the eligibility requirements. While each donor has specific criteria, they are looking for students with diverse talents, leadership experience, and interests within their specified eligibility range. It is up to you to decide if the application is worth your time, but we always encourage eligible students to apply.

Should I apply if I don't meet the eligibility requirements of a scholarship?

No. Scholarship criteria were established for each of the scholarships by a donor with an interest in supporting a specific category of student. Unfortunately, if you do not meet the eligibility criteria, your scholarship application will not be reviewed, as these criteria cannot legally be waived.

What is the scholarship committee looking for?

Each scholarship committee is looking for different students with various qualities. Each committee prioritizes differently students' academic record, work experience, community involvement, and financial need. It is important to have well-written essays, so we encourage you not to wait until the last minute. We also recommend having a family member, a mentor, or a trusted friend proofread your essays for typos.

How is financial need determined?

All scholarships require the completion and submission of a FAFSA Submission Summary formally the Student Aid Report that includes the applicant's Student Aid Index. You must provide a current Submission Summary. Please complete the FAFSA online. For instructions on how to complete the FAFSA, visit the [FAFSA website](#). Unfortunately, the Community Foundation cannot provide advice or technical assistance on how to complete the FAFSA. If you have problems with completing your FAFSA, please go to the FAFSA website and contact their expert staff, who can help you address your challenges. Staff at your high school or college/university should also be able to provide additional assistance if you are having difficulties. It can take several days to receive a FAFSA Submission Summary after you complete the FAFSA. Please do not wait until the scholarship deadline day to attempt to complete your FAFSA and your scholarship application. Please complete your FAFSA early in your scholarship application process.

How is the Student Aid Index (SAI) determined?

The FAFSA Central Processing System uses a complex formula to calculate the Student Aid Index (SAI).

The Community Foundation has no role in this determination.

What if my FAFSA report does not reflect my actual financial need?

If you feel there are additional financial circumstances a review committee should be aware of, you will have the opportunity to discuss this on your scholarship application(s).

How to Apply and Use Our Online Application System

How do I find the scholarship applications?

All our scholarship applications can be found in our online application portal. Once you have created an account and logged in, click "Apply" on the top left, and a list of scholarship opportunities and descriptions will populate. Again, review all the scholarship descriptions before applying.

Can I submit a paper application if I do not have access to a computer?

All our scholarship programs require an online application. We cannot accept paper applications in place of a required online application, nor should you attempt to create your own application for review. No exceptions can be made. If you do not have a computer or internet access, we recommend going to your school, a local library, or a community center to use a public computer. Once you begin the application process, you can save your application and work on it over time as needed.

How do I update my profile information?

To edit the details you've previously entered in the profile section, click the pen icon on the applicant dashboard and make any updates or changes. Click the save button at the bottom of the page to save your changes.

How do I reset my password?

Click "Forgot your password" on the Scholarship Application Portal login page. An email will be sent to your

inbox with instructions on how to reset your password. Please allow 15 minutes for the email to be sent. If the email does not arrive in 15 minutes, please check your spam box.

If I have submitted my application, can I go back and make an edit to the application or materials uploaded?

We will review all submitted applications as-is and cannot allow edits to be made to an already submitted application. For these reasons, please make sure you carefully review all content and materials you provide before submitting. Please triple-check your application before hitting submit.

Can I submit multiple applications for the same scholarship?

No. If you submit multiple applications by creating multiple accounts, each of your submissions will be disqualified.

Do you review applications that are complete but not submitted?

No. We can only review applications that have been submitted to our system. Saved applications that are still in "draft" status at the time the application closes are not included in our review pool and will be automatically denied/abandoned. Please make sure you submit your application once it is complete.

Application Documents and Application Tips and Tricks

Getting started
Once you have created an account in our scholarship portal and logged in to the system, click the "Apply" button on the top left of the screen. Review the descriptions for all available scholarships to determine your eligibility to apply. You can then click "Apply" to begin an application.

What documents will I need to upload?
All required documentation must be openable/readable, and it must contain the applicant's first and last name. Transcripts must contain the school's name as well as the applicant's first and last name. Please do not submit documents that are not complete or have been cropped or altered in any way. If we cannot validate your documentation, you will not be considered for scholarships.
Every scholarship application will require the following documentation:
- **Your FAFSA Submission Summary** Go to https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa to download this document. For more information regarding this requirement, please read this section. Please note that we need your ENTIRE Submission Summary. The report should be at least five pages. For more information about obtaining your FAFSA Submission Summary, review this section.
- **Your most recent academic transcript**. If you are a high school senior, we prefer to have a transcript that includes your grades through the first semester of your senior year. If you are a current college student, we need your most recent academic transcript that includes your grades through the fall semester or quarter. If you are an adult or returning learner, we need your transcript from the last institution you attended (high school, college, or trade school), or you will need to upload your GED report.
- **Letters of Recommendation**. Some scholarships require letter(s) of recommendation for consideration. The application will allow you to email your recommender, and they can upload the recommendation letter on your behalf. It is wise to notify your prospective recommenders so that they may begin preparing your letter well before the application deadline.
- **Your SAT and/or ACT score report** if you are a high school senior who has taken these tests. We want the report from your best test. Do not submit superscoring results.

What document format should I use?

We recommend uploading all documents as PDFs. Many software and programs will convert a file format into a PDF; please use your program of choice and convert your files into PDFs. If we cannot open or cannot review an applicant's required documents, the application will be considered incomplete and will not receive

consideration. Therefore, we encourage students to test their document uploads to ensure that they can be opened with a PDF reader or web browser and to ensure that the information is readable. We will not accept emailed or paper documents mailed to our office.

I have a document that is multiple pages, can I upload multiple screenshots to satisfy the requirement?
Our system will not allow applicants to upload multiple files for one document. If your academic transcript is five pages and you screenshot each page, you will need to turn those screenshots into one pdf document to upload. Incomplete documents will not receive consideration.

Will you accept a Word document that contains a picture of my SAR, transcript, or reference letter?
No. We do not accept Word documents (files ending with .doc or .docx) for any of the required materials.

Can I upload a note with a link to a document or photo in Google Drive?
No. We will not accept any documents or images that are not uploaded directly to the application.

I'm missing one of the required documents. Should I upload a note explaining why?
Each of the required documents must be uploaded to your application for it to be considered complete. If you have questions or concerns about this requirement, please contact our scholarship staff at ndunn@communityfoundationsa.org.

All reference letters are due at the time the respective application closes. Applications without all the required reference letter(s) will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

Do you require official transcripts?

We do not require official transcripts and can accept either official transcripts or unofficial transcripts for all our scholarships. The transcripts should show your name, student identification number and school name. The transcript must be uploaded into the scholarship application portal. If you are having trouble accessing this information, please contact the registrar's office at your school to help you navigate your school's process for obtaining an unofficial or official copy of your transcript. Mailed or emailed transcripts will not be accepted. You should acquire an official or unofficial transcript, scan it, and upload the resulting document into the scholarship portal. We use the transcript to confirm student's academic standing, courses taken, and performance history.

Can I submit my FAFSA Student Aid Report (SAR) later if my tax forms are not ready by the deadline?

No. Scholarship applications submitted without the FAFSA Submission Summary report will not be considered complete and will not be reviewed. Many of our scholarships require the student to demonstrate financial need. We use the Student Aid Index on the Submission Summary to determine financial need. For details regarding what is considered sufficient tax information for completion of the FAFSA, please visit the FAFSA website.

Can I submit a FAFSA Student Aid Report (SAR) from last year?

No. You must submit a current FAFSA Submission Summary for all scholarship applications for the upcoming academic year. Please upload the most current FAFSA Submission Summary report in PDF format to complete your application for scholarship consideration.

What information must be visible on my FAFSA Submission Summary?

Your FAFSA Submission Summary must include the current FAFSA year, your name, and your student aid index (SAI).

How do I obtain a PDF of my FAFSA Submission Summary?

To access your online SAR and save as a PDF, do the following:

1. Have your FSA ID (username and password) available.

2. Go to the https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa home page and click "Login."

3. Log into the system.

4. Click on the "View or Print your Submission Summary" option near the middle of the "My FAFSA" page and choose to save as a PDF file.

5. Save all pages of the Submission Summary to your computer as a PDF file (typically 5-12 pages total).

if you continue to have difficulties, please contact the FAFSA help center directly. Community Foundation staff cannot provide technical assistance with problems with the FAFSA website.

Scholarship Payment Information

If awarded, when will I receive the scholarship funds?
If you are selected as a scholarship recipient, you must complete and digitally sign an acceptance form. Once we have received the signed form, the Community Foundation will mail scholarship checks directly to each awarded student's college. From the date you submit the acceptance form, please allow up to ten business days for us to process your check and an additional two to three weeks for your school to receive and process your check. We ask that you complete this form as quickly as possible so that we can make sure the award is received in a timely manner by your school. Issuance of payments will begin in July.

If awarded a scholarship, do I get the check?
No. For legal reasons, scholarship award checks are sent directly to your college and credited by your school to your student account. No other arrangements can be made due to rules set by the Internal Revenue Service on how scholarship payments can be made to individual students.

How long does it take for colleges to process the award?
Schools take different amounts of time to process scholarship awards. After the initial three to four weeks following submission of your acceptance form, it is best to work directly with your school to determine where they are in their own timeline for applying these funds to your student account. If a check has not been received by the school four weeks after staff notified you that a payment was mailed, please email Community Foundation staff for more information.

What should I do if I decide to transfer schools and have been awarded a scholarship?
If you have been awarded a scholarship to attend a school and are now transferring to another school, please notify us as soon as possible. Incorrect enrollment information can delay receiving your scholarship funds by one month or more.

<u>Still Have Questions?</u>

Does it help my chances if I call to introduce myself to the Community Foundation?
No. The staff is extremely busy processing applications. It is our hope that by reading this document and the instructions in the portal, students will feel comfortable preparing scholarship applications.

What should I do if I still have questions?
If you have unanswered questions after reviewing this document, please email ndunn@communityfoundationsa.org. We ask that you email your questions rather than call so that we can provide you with the most comprehensive response as quickly as possible.