Step 2 – Applying for Scholarships

Stay Organized

Use a Scholarship Tracking Worksheet to stay organized and meet deadlines. Start working on scholarships at least a month before the deadline, especially if it requires an essay or letters of recommendation.

Follow ALL Directions

Many scholarship applications will immediately disqualify you for not following all directions. Do not let an oversight keep your from having an opportunity.

Write a Powerful Essay

- **Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling Count** – Use the resources available to you at school/on campus such as tutors and writing centers.
- **Tell a Story** – Powerful essays bring the reader in and highlight your story.
- **Brag a Little** – Scholarship providers do not know you and want to know why they should give you a scholarship. What makes you special or unique? How did you get to where you are? What have you overcome and who helped you overcome it? How has this helped you to shape your future goals?
- **Do Not Reinvent the Wheel** – Several scholarships may have similar questions/prompts. Reuse your essay, if possible, but modify it for the new scholarship opportunity.
- **Proofread EVERYTHING** – Review everything you submit carefully and have at least one other person read it. The more eyes the better.

Have a Great Recommender

Provide your recommendation writers with a packet of information to make their job easier

- **Give Recommenders Plenty of Time** – Most recommenders are asked to write recommendations for many students; give them enough time to personalize your letter.
- **Choose Your Recommenders Carefully**
  - Don’t ask a parent or relative – Even if they are your teacher or supervisor.
  - If a scholarship focuses on a special skill set, ask someone who has seen you exercise that skill. For example, if athletics is considered, ask a coach or league official.
  - If you know a specific teacher/coach, etc. gets asked for a lot of recommendations, see if there’s someone else who might be a better fit. If someone is writing too many recommendations, they may not have time to write the best letter for you.
• **Provide Information Upfront** – Remember, their time is valuable, so provide the following information in a packet when you ask them:
  - Your full name and contact information
  - Name of scholarship and organization providing it
  - Where to send the recommendation letter – does it come back to you or get mailed directly to the organization? If they are sending it to the organization, provide them with a stamped, addressed envelope.
  - Information about the scholarship and the selection criteria – this helps them tailor their letter to the scholarship.
  - A copy of your activity chart/resume including any awards you have received.
  - A summary of your history with them, including any special projects or accomplishments you had while in their class or with their organization. This could also include any challenges you overcame during the same timeframe.
  - A copy of your essay if you are submitting one for the scholarship.
  - Two copies of any forms they need to submit so they have an extra one if an error is made.

• **Follow up** – Touch base with your recommenders one to two weeks before the recommendation is due to ensure they do not need additional information and will be able to meet the deadline.

• **Thank You Note** – Do not forget to thank them for the time they have invested in your future.