

Application Process

Q. Is there an age limitation for applicants?

A. No. Age is not a factor. However, this scholarship is only open to high school seniors who are planning to pursue post-secondary education for the 2025-26 school year.

Q. What if I am unsure how to answer one of the questions on the application?

A. You can email us at info@bcbonline.com anytime or call one of the branches with your issue.

Q. How can I be sure that my application has been received by the scholarship committee and that it's not lost in the mail or in cyber space?

A. Applicants will receive an e-mailed acknowledgement of application receipt. Applicants not receiving an e-mailed acknowledgement within five (5) business days following application submission should follow up by e-mail to info@bcbonline.com.

Application Review

This scholarship is not based on academic achievement. All seniors involved in extracurricular and community activities and planning to pursue post-secondary education are encouraged to apply.

Q. Which activities should be included on the application?

A. Extracurricular and community involvement activities should be limited to any occurring from August 2021 forward.

Q. How will my written essay be evaluated?

A. The criteria for judging will be based on:

- **Content:** the quality of the answer. All essays will be evaluated for artificial intelligence (AI) assistance. Any evidence of AI assistance on the essay portion will result in automatic disqualification.
- **Style:** the organization and delivery of the applicant's ideas.
- **Grammar and Spelling:** the applicant's command of the English language.

Notification & Awards

Q. If I'm selected as a scholarship recipient, what will I need to show to prove acceptance to or enrollment at a college/technical school?

A. We will accept the following as a valid proof of acceptance/enrollment:

- Acceptance letter on school letterhead.
- Official enrollment verification form.
- Letter from Admissions Office confirming deposit on school letterhead.

Upon notification of being named a scholarship recipient, please submit your proof of acceptance/enrollment as well as your student ID number to info@bcbonline.com.

Q. Will I receive a check for my scholarship?

A. If you are selected as a recipient, a check will be mailed to the appropriate office of the school you will be attending. You will receive a presentation certificate during your high school's graduation awards ceremony.

Q. What expenses can the scholarship pay?

A. Scholarship funds can cover tuition and fees, room and board, books, and other mandatory equipment. Please note that IRS regulations state that scholarship awards *not* used to cover tuition, fees, books, supplies, or equipment are considered taxable income. If you have any questions about how your scholarship might affect your income taxes, please consult your tax advisor.

Other

Q. Is this scholarship renewable?

A. The SmartStart Community Commitment Scholarship is a one-time award and is not renewable.

Q. I received a scholarship, and I'd like to send a thank you note. Where should I send my letter?

A. Please address your thank you letter to SmartStart Scholarship Committee, Benchmark Community Bank, P.O. Box 569, Kenbridge, VA 23944, and we will forward it to the committee.

Q. I have a question you didn't answer here. What should I do?

A. You can send an e-mail to info@bcbonline.com to ask a question about the scholarship.