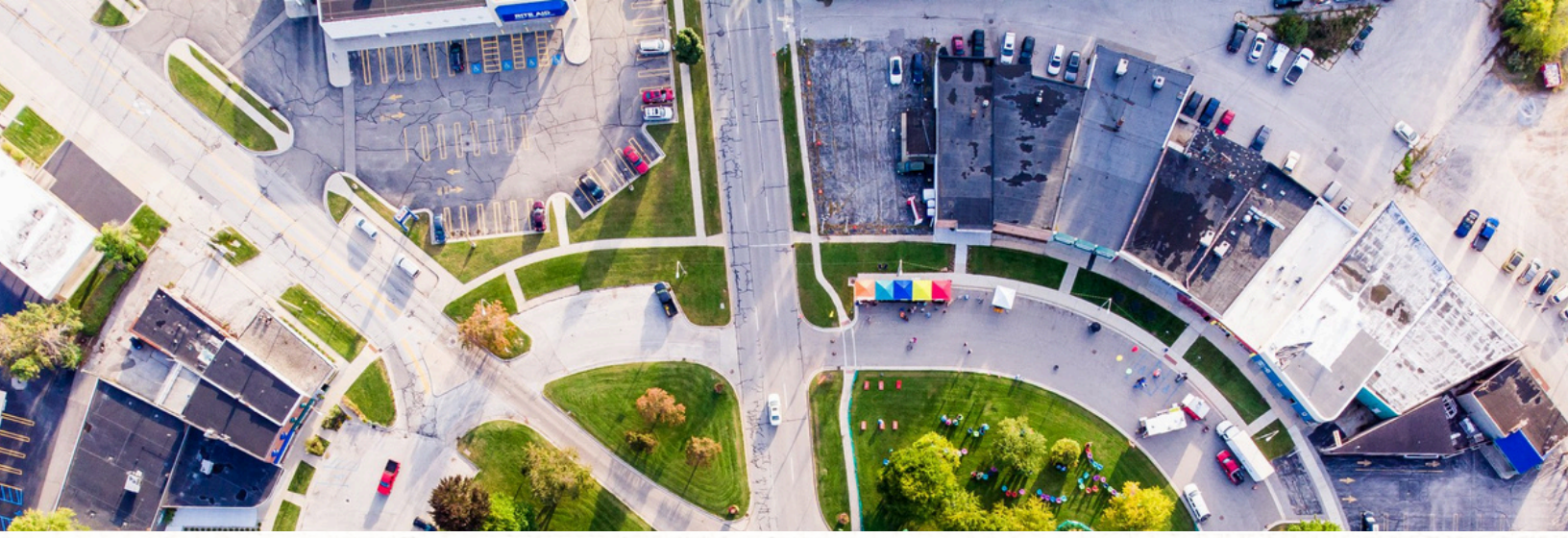




# SCHOLARSHIP REVIEWER HANDBOOK





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The Midland Area Community Foundation is one spoke in a much bigger wheel, and we intentionally align our practices with the priorities and vision of the community of Midland County. Our work, without alignment with the broader community, will not have the impact that we are striving for.

# COMMUNITY

**Our Community's Vision Statement:  
Midland: An Inclusive Community.  
Together. Forward. Bold.  
An Exceptional Place Where Everyone Thrives.**

By serving on a scholarship committee or starting a new scholarship fund, you are making a difference in the lives of local students.

Donors who value education establish scholarship funds for many reasons: to honor or memorialize a loved one, to encourage students as they pursue postsecondary education, and to bridge the gap for students in need.

This handbook explains Midland Area Community Foundation's mission, the basics of our scholarship program, and the role you will play in advancing access to educational opportunities.

**The Midland Area Community Foundation's Purpose Statement: We exist to cultivate the power of giving within our community, support long-term transformation, and help ensure all residents thrive.**

# FOUNDATION

A community foundation is a philanthropic organization that administers permanent, named funds established through gifts and bequests from individuals, families, businesses, and organizations. Community foundation donors enjoy favorable tax advantages and relief from administrative burdens associated with running a private foundation or establishing an independent nonprofit.

Community foundations make grants – including scholarships – from these funds to qualified charitable, educational, and cultural organizations. More than 900 community foundations exist throughout the United States. They play a dynamic and collaborative role in their communities by bringing together nonprofits, government agencies, donors, and the public to discuss and address significant community issues.

The Midland Area Community Foundation's 225+ active scholarship funds award more than 350 scholarships, providing over \$800,000 in financial assistance to local students each year. The average scholarship award for the 2023-2024 academic year was \$2,200, with the largest award being \$22,000. The total permanent endowment of scholarship funds is over \$22 million.



**The Role of the Donor:**

The donor, through a fund agreement, establishes the scholarship and recommends general eligibility criteria.

**The Role of the Selection Committee**

Selection committees use eligibility criteria while reviewing applications and then make recommendations regarding recipients. Our selection committees consist of 400+ community volunteers interested in making a difference in the lives of local students.

We rely on committees to honor donor intent by adhering to the criteria specified in the guidelines, which are based on the fund agreement between the Midland Area Community Foundation and the donor. Every scholarship fund consists of specific guidelines and requirements. Some donors have defined their intentions broadly, while some have very specific criteria.

The Foundation follows best practices for attracting a qualified pool of applicants and adheres to federal law regarding the review of applications and awarding of scholarship funds.

**Selection Committee Expectations:**

1. The Scholarship Coordinator will introduce you to your committee. Your committee should have an initial meeting (this can be done virtually or in person) to discuss the scholarship criteria; this ensures everyone is on the same page as far as emphasis/priorities before you begin reviewing applications. A standard rubric will be provided that we encourage you to use as a resource in discussing, sorting, and evaluating applications.
2. Your committee should set a deadline prior to the Foundation deadline. This will allow you time to discuss the applications and make the selection together and turn your selection in by the review deadline.
3. Your committee can now start their review. All scholarship applications are reviewed online. You will be reviewing on your own time at your own pace.
4. Your full committee will discuss all the applications and submit your recommendation to the Foundation. This form will be included in the email you receive when applications are ready for review.

## Scholarship Regulations:

The Midland Area Community Foundation does not allow donors who establish scholarship funds to serve on the scholarship selection committee for any fund they establish, nor may they name specific individuals to serve on such committees. The individuals in whose honor or memory a scholarship has been created, including members of their families, are not permitted to apply for or receive that scholarship. Donor is defined as:

- Donors to a fund.
- Persons appointed or designated by a donor in a fund agreement (“advisors”).
- Family members of a donor or advisor, including spouses, siblings, ancestors, descendants (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, stepchildren, step-grandchildren), and spouses of descendants.
- Other “related” persons, such as a donor or advisor’s employees, attorneys, or advisors.
- In the case of a fund created by a nonprofit or for-profit entity, the directors, members, officers, and employees of that entity.

\*The following exception applies to the above rule: Donors (or family members who established a scholarship fund prior to the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (H.R.4) were allowed to serve on that committee. Those donors (or family members) serving in this role may not constitute a majority of the committee or chair the committee. Under the Pension Protection Act of 2006, no more than a minority of selection committee members may consist of donors to a scholarship fund.

## The Role of the Community Foundation Board:

The Midland Area Community Foundation has a legal responsibility to ratify selection committee recommendations. Our Board reviews these recommendations and, as long as they honor donor intent and use a fair process, approves them.

## Confidentiality:

Protecting the privacy of all students’ personal information is required by state and federal law. Each reviewer will sign a confidentiality agreement that the Scholarship Coordinator will send with the selection committee introduction email. Each reviewer must follow all of these guidelines:

1. Selection committee members will not discuss students’ private financial or personal information outside of a committee meeting.
2. Selection committee members will not share their individually assigned password and user ID with anyone else, including other members.
3. Committee members will keep all paper and electronic materials (applications, transcripts, and all supplemental materials) in a secure location or secure computer during selection. These materials must be shredded or deleted after the selection process is complete.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

**Selection committee members must be able to make independent recommendations without any conflict of interest or the appearance of any conflict of interest.**

**Committee members agree that selections will be made through an objective, nondiscriminatory process. Evaluation will be conducted without bias based on the established criteria for each scholarship fund.**

**Committee members agree that evaluations will be based on fair, equitable criteria established before the review process.**

**If a family member of a committee member has applied for assistance, that committee member will declare a conflict of interest and will not be present during the review and selection process for that award cycle.**

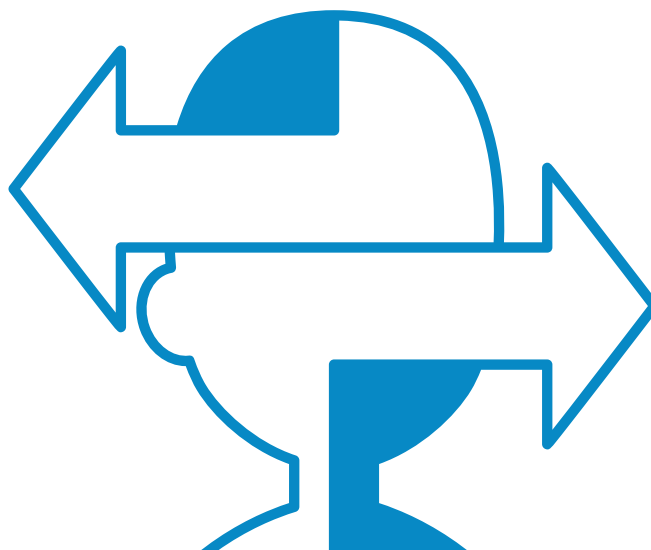
**If an applicant's family member has a financial relationship with a committee member, that member shall declare a conflict of interest, withdraw from the meeting until the discussion of that applicant is complete, and refrain from voting on that applicant.**

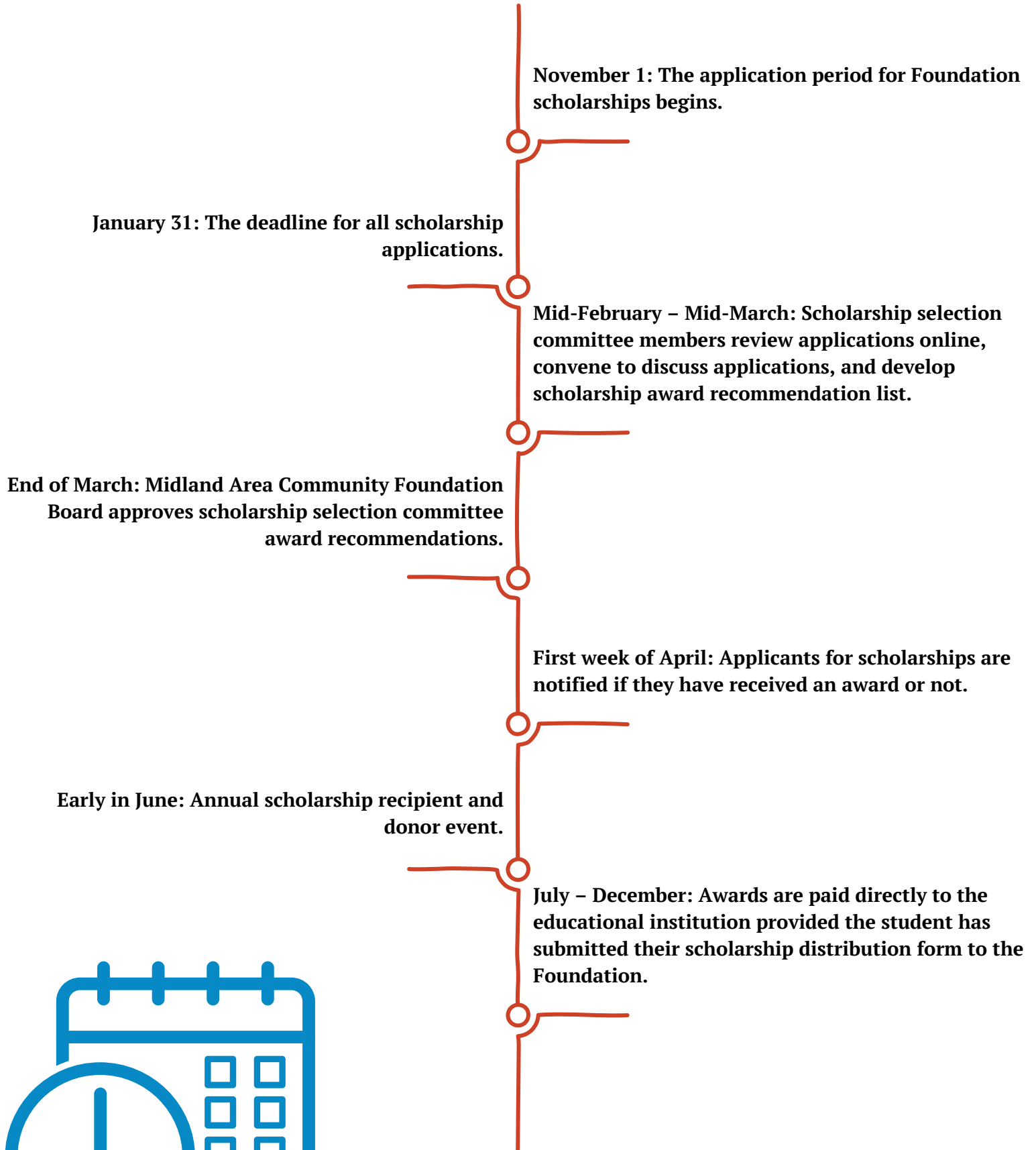
**Family member is defined as:**

- **Spouse, parent, or parent-in-law**
- **Grandparent or grandparent-in-law**
- **Child or stepchild and their spouse**
- **Grandchild or step-grandchild and their spouse**
- **Sibling and their spouse**
- **Niece or nephew and their spouse**

**Financial relationship is defined as a direct or indirect business, investment, or family interest, such as:**

- **An ownership or investment interest in an entity with which the committee member has a transaction or arrangement.**
- **A compensation arrangement with any entity or individual with which the committee member has a transaction or arrangement.**
- **Potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the member is negotiating a transaction or arrangement (compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration, as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial).**





## Tips for Evaluating Applications:

Our students come from all walks of life and have their own passions and interests. The Midland Area Community Foundation is committed to equitably assessing each student. Students' backgrounds – the places they come from, their life experiences, and the resources available to them – make a difference in how they approach their applications. We want to take all these factors into account when evaluating applications.

“Equitable” does not always mean “equal”. A student who has a 4.0 GPA but does not work is not equal to a student who has a 3.0 GPA, works, and takes care of a sick parent. All our applicants have their own story, and all face their own type of adversity.

- How has adversity affected each student?
- Would the scholarship have a bigger impact on one student versus another?
- Look for applicants who demonstrate a clear connection between their academic curriculum, volunteer activities, the work they do for pay, and their educational and career goals.
- Is the applicant volunteering or working in opportunities related to a major?
- Is the applicant involved in long-term community activities?



**Thank you to our committee members for your dedication and commitment to providing our local students with access to post-secondary education. We are grateful for the time and expertise you bring to the entire scholarship process. We could not do this work without you.**

## Scholarship Eligibility Criteria:

Scholarship committees have a responsibility to honor the donor's intent as outlined in the scholarship criteria. Although the criteria may vary from high school attended, to a selected field of study, to robust volunteerism, the two most common criteria are academic merit and financial need.

As noted on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) website, to calculate the “Student Aid Index” (SAI), a need-based analysis is conducted. The analysis takes into account the income and assets of the student and their parents or spouse, if applicable. The analysis formula used considers both taxed and untaxed income, as well as any assets and benefits received, such as unemployment or Social Security.

The SAI is an eligibility index number that a college's or career school's financial aid office uses to determine how much federal student aid the student would receive if the student attended the school. This number results from the information that the student provides in their FAFSA form. The lower the SAI, the more significant the need.