

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING FOR PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

*Please note that many scholarships in the **Masonic Scholarship Resource Guide** require the filing of a separate application. Read each scholarship description carefully. Contact information is included in each award description, and can be used to obtain additional application materials, where required.*

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. You must use the current year's official application. Changes are sometimes made in the information required. Applications from previous years will NOT be considered.
2. You may obtain the current application on our website at www.pagrاندlodge.org/pyf ... click on the "Scholarships" button on the left side of the page. If you cannot access this application, you may request one from our office by phone or mail.
3. We **STRONGLY** prefer that you type your application. Both a blank printable form and a fill-in form are available on our website. Although you may type and print your application on our web-based form, applications cannot be submitted on line. You'll have to print and mail your completed application and supporting materials to us.
4. The **ON-LINE FILL-IN APPLICATION**:
 - a. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to open and fill-in the form. Version 5.0 or higher is recommended.
 - b. You will be able to type and print your application with the free version of Acrobat, but you will NOT be able to save your work, unless you are running the full commercial version.
 - c. We recommend that you save the blank form onto your computer, print a blank copy for a "rough draft" and then either type it and print it in one sitting, or type in and print one page or section at a time. *Remember that each time you close the .pdf form, you will lose all the information you typed into it.*
5. Complete all information. Where needed, mark items as "Not applicable" rather than leaving blanks.
6. Be sure to **include all required attachments**. Use the checklist provided with the application. ***We will not consider incomplete applications.***
7. Check your work, including spelling and grammar. The neatness and correctness of your work will be considered.

MOST COMMON ERRORS

These are some of the errors we see most often. Many of these errors result in an application not being considered, or scoring too low to receive an award.

Incomplete applications. All questions and sections of the application are important. Don't leave blanks –if an item does not apply, write "Not Applicable." ***FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS*** on each section of the application.

"Contact me if you need..." Many applications come missing a required attachment or section, with a notation to contact the applicant if the information is needed. If we didn't need it, we wouldn't ask for it. It is your responsibility to follow up on these items. We will not contact you for information not included in your application.

“See Attached...” Although we welcome additional material to help us in our decision on your application, please do not use attachments as a substitute for “filling in the blanks” on the application. If information is not included in the application itself, it is very easy for us to miss it in the scoring process, and you could miss getting credit for some of your accomplishments or needs. Please fill in the application first, and then attach any additional material to elaborate if needed. It will be most helpful if you clearly label all supplementary material to indicate the sections of the application they are to accompany. Please do not include attachments not directly related to the information requested on the application.

“Mailed Separately...” We understand that some schools insist on mailing transcripts directly to us, and that other attachments might have to be mailed separately from your main application. Please recognize that there is a risk of these items not being considered in your application. Many applications stating that an eligibility verification or transcript was being “mailed separately” end up going un-considered because the separate materials never arrived. ***Please make every effort to obtain all materials in advance and include them under one cover.***

Failing to attach proper financial documentation. A copy of your **PARENTS’** most recent tax return (unless you are no longer a dependent) **MUST** be submitted. Too many applicants send only a copy of their own return for a small part-time job. Our awards are based on *need* as well as *merit*. ***If you are unable or unwilling to provide this information, please do not apply*** – we will not consider your application without it.

Failing to attach required transcripts. Remember that you must send us an official transcript of your **last completed year** of school. If you are currently in your first year of college, a transcript of your **first semester grades** must also be included.

Missing verification of eligibility. You **MUST** submit written verification of your Masonic connection for consideration. This means a copy of your Masonic relative’s *current* Lodge dues card, or a letter from the secretary of your Masonic relative’s Lodge, or a letter from the appropriate Advisor of your Masonic-related youth group must be attached.

Late applications. Every year, we receive dozens of applications in the week following our deadline. Start early enough to complete your application, obtain all the necessary documentation, and get the application in the mail well before the deadline. We will penalize or disqualify late applications.

Failing to complete essays and questions in a thoughtful manner. The content and quality of your writing matters. Most of our awards are highly competitive, and we receive many times more applications than we have awards to give. We are looking for thoughtful, reasoned responses that give us an idea of your personality, abilities, and needs. If you simply write perfunctory answers without giving thought to them, it will show, and will reflect poorly on your chances for an award. Remember, you are communicating your needs and abilities. Give it an appropriate amount of time and effort.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

Past applicants have often asked what precisely we are looking for in determining who will receive scholarship awards. Please remember that ours is a very competitive grant program, and that many well-qualified individuals may not receive awards in any given year. Here are the basic areas we look at and minimal standards we require.

BASIC ELIGIBILITY

As all of our scholarships are funded by the generosity of the Pennsylvania Masonic fraternity, a relationship to a Pennsylvania Mason or membership in a Pennsylvania Masonic-sponsored youth group is a basic requirement for all of our awards. Without proof of such a relationship or membership (properly documented), you will not be considered for an award.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The level of your academic performance and achievements in the past is a major factor in our decision, and the average academic level of applicants is quite competitive. Please note that the academic section of the application specifies a minimum GPA of 3.0 for all applicants. If your GPA is below this level, you will not qualify for an award.

FINANCIAL NEED

Some very academically talented students do not receive awards because of our financial need standards. While we recognize that college is expensive for even the highest income families, we have based our standards on the range of incomes of our applicants. If your family has a large income, relative to the number of people in your household, you should not expect to receive an award. We do consider special financial circumstances if you make us aware of them.

FRATERNAL INVOLVEMENT

Although membership in Masonry or a Masonic Youth Group is not a requirement for receiving an award, it is a significant advantage. Be sure we know about your fraternal activities, as this can be a deciding factor when candidates have similar needs and academic qualifications.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Although these do not receive major weight in our process, they have certainly made the difference in decisions between highly qualified candidates. Success in outside activities often correlates to success in higher education.

Good luck in your application!