

AWARD APPLICANT'S HANDBOOK

*Information for Students Completing
Student Award Applications*

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 educationmatters
Calgary's | trust | for public education

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1. INTRODUCTION

Student awards provide financial support to students who are enrolled or planning to enrol, in post-secondary studies. EducationMatters offers student awards in a variety of areas (e.g. fine arts, sciences, trades) based on a variety of criteria (academics, financial need, leadership, volunteerism, athletic involvement). Not all awards have restrictions on field of study or post-secondary program and many are not based strictly on academics. Research carefully and take advantage of all award opportunities available to you!

2. TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Applying for an award takes time and effort. Since applications have firm deadlines, you should begin thinking about your application and compiling the necessary information well in advance. Be prepared to work a minimum of 1-2 hours on each application. The entire process of preparing and submitting your application package, including obtaining references and writing essays, can take up to one month. Do not leave applications to the last minute as most require more thought than just filling in blanks on a form.

Here are a few general points to consider in preparing your scholarship application:

- **READ AND FOLLOW THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.** Often details are missed because an important part of the instructions was not read or followed
- Accuracy and deadlines are very important.
- Double check all spelling, grammar and information accuracy for each application carefully. Plan on proofreading each document at least three times – at least once by another person. Errors can result in an undeserved negative impression by reviewers who read large numbers of applications.
- If cutting and pasting from a previous essay or application please ensure there are no references to other awards left in the application. Carefully proofread everything you submit.
- Consult the Scholarship Coordinator (guidance counsellor) in your school to determine which awards you might be best suited to apply for and to ask for assistance in completing your application(s).
- Tailor your application to meet the Terms of Reference for the award.
- Make sure you have completed and attached all the required information for the application.
- Remember to keep a copy of your completed application for yourself.

A well-presented application demonstrates your organizational skills and conscientious attention to detail.

3. TERMINOLOGY

Scholarships and bursaries are awarded upon consideration of several criteria. The most common criteria are academic achievement, citizenship qualities and financial need. Some awards are based on only one of these criteria; some are in combination; still others have requirements such as volunteerism or part-time employment. Read the Terms of Reference for each award carefully to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria of awards for which you apply.

The following descriptions will be helpful in determining your eligibility:

Academic Achievement refers to your overall final average, or in some instances your final mark in a particular group of subjects, or the average maintained over selected years.

Citizenship Qualities usually take into consideration your extra-curricular activities (e.g. clubs, teams, organizations) and your overall contribution to the school or community (e.g. initiative, cooperation, volunteerism, leadership).

Financial Need takes into consideration your family's ability to contribute financially to your post-secondary education costs (e.g. total family income, number of children, other financial commitments, extenuating circumstances). It can also factor in costs associated with attending post-secondary institutions, including housing, food and transportation.

4. HOW TO APPLY

- Visit www.educationmatters.ca for information on various student awards and to access the online application system.
- To access the online application system, click on the link provided and create your account (tutorial video available)
- Once your account is created, complete the short "eligibility quiz" that will generate a list of awards you *may* be eligible to apply for. The eligibility quiz **cannot** be retaken. If you make an error, you must contact EducationMatters.
- Before applying for an award, review the Terms of Reference carefully to ensure you meet ALL of the criteria.
- The online application contains a "copy" feature that allows applicants to copy answers from previous applications. As a result, applicants are encouraged to complete the most complex/lengthiest application FIRST in order to maximize the information that will be copied into future applications. Previewing the

application using the “preview” icon prior to completion will assist you in determining which applications have the largest amount of information to complete.

- Applications will require the endorsement of a “Third Party” (high school counselor/scholarship coordinator). In the application, you will be asked to send an email to this “Third Party” asking them to answer a few questions and to “endorse” your application. After submitting your first request, if possible, please WAIT for the Third Party to submit their responses before continuing on to other applications (Do not submit multiple requests unless absolutely necessary). Once submitted, Third Party responses can be copied into future applications, which will prevent the Third Party having to resubmit your information more than once.
- Review your applications very carefully before submitting. Once submitted, you will not be able to edit or make any changes to an application. If important changes are required, contact EducationMatters.

4.1 SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

The purpose of the essay is to present a solid case as to why you are deserving of an award. Follow instructions carefully and focus on the specific topic you are asked to write about. Essays and statements should demonstrate evidence of solid writing skills and your knowledge of the subject or theme. The essay **must be written by you, not your family, friends or any third party**. Plagiarism will disqualify you from this and other awards.

An essay is an excellent opportunity for the donor(s)/selection committee to get to know more about you. Make your essays/statements as personal as possible and let your personality shine through.

An essay can have many purposes, but the basic structure is the same: introduction, body, and summary/conclusion. You may be writing an essay to argue for or against a particular point of view or to explain the steps necessary to complete a task. Either way, your essay will have the same basic format. Here are some tips to getting started:

- Someone who is not aware of the topic or theme should be able understand your reasoning and conclusions. Selection committees have the ability to spot jargon and unclear reasoning.
- Demonstrate that you have a solid understanding of important issues about the topic and are familiar with recent and relevant issues/articles/literature.
- Ask friends, family members and your teachers to read the draft. Give them sufficient time to do this properly and allow yourself time to make changes.
- If you plan to undertake a major revision, get more feedback from someone who knows you well.

- List all references used. Do not plagiarize; if it is a quote, please list as a quote.
- Pay particular attention to the instructions for the essay/statement.
- Space is limited; use it wisely to explain critical assumptions, concepts and conventions. Avoid unnecessary repetition to 'pad' the content.

The essay plays an important role in the selection process. Take care to ensure that you write to address the topic/theme stated in the terms of reference for the specific award(s) for which you are applying. Don't let the thought of putting pen to paper overwhelm you. Just get started!

4.2 REFERENCES

The content of letters of reference should not be a surprise and are not completely out of your control.

Consider the theme of the award you are applying for in order to choose the best person for the task; this is important. Choose someone who knows you well and who can attest to your demonstrating the qualities that are required by the Terms for that award. This person must have first-hand knowledge and experience of who you are and your abilities. The longer they have known you, the better reference they can write for you.

Letters from people who hold senior positions such as Principal or Department Head are only impressive if they know you personally and have worked with you. You do not want the letter written by someone if they are writing from the reports of others (hearsay).

Keep these points in mind as you are considering your references:

- Give the reference a copy of the award Terms of Reference, and any other information that may assist them.
- Give the reference at least one week to write the letter for you.
- Try to choose a reference who is a clear communicator and can articulate your strengths.
- The reference may not use all the information you provide, but will be grateful for your help. Section 17 at the end of this document contains some guidelines and tips for completing the reference.

5. DEADLINES

Deadlines for EducationMatters awards are typically May 1 or May 30. Since application deadlines for awards can vary, be sure review the information for each award carefully to ensure you submit your application by the appropriate deadline.

6. QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR APPLICATION

All recipients are typically notified in the fall. If you have a question, or would like more information on the status of your application, please contact the Grants and Stewardship Officer at EducationMatters as listed below:

Grants and Stewardship Officer
EducationMatters
1221 8 Street SW
Calgary, AB T2R 0L4

Phone: 403-817-7469

Email: kschilman@educationmatters.ca

7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When are the award application deadlines?

A few awards have a deadline of **May 1** while the majority of awards have an application deadline of **May 30**. Please review the information for each award carefully to ensure you submit your application by the appropriate deadline. Application deadlines cannot be extended.

If I'm taking a year off after high school or not planning to attend post-secondary right away, should I apply for awards now or wait until I'm ready to go to post-secondary?

Students should apply for EducationMatters' awards in their Grade 12 year, even if they are taking a year off. Once you leave your high school, you will not be eligible to apply for EducationMatters' awards.

Do I need to be attending post-secondary in Calgary to receive awards from EducationMatters?

Not necessarily. Each award has different requirements regarding eligible post-secondary institutions. Some awards require you to be attending a specific post-secondary (e.g. University of Calgary); some have restrictions on location (e.g. Calgary, Alberta or Canada); while others allow recipients to attend any post-secondary institution including those outside of Canada. Please review the information for each award carefully to ensure your post-secondary plans meet the eligibility requirements.

Can I use the same reference letter for multiple awards?

Applicants are welcome to use the same reference letter for multiple awards. However, please be sure that the letter is applicable to the award you are applying for as some awards require letters from specific individuals or require the reference to address particular characteristics, qualities or achievements. Be thoughtful in choosing your references and be sure to give them adequate time to complete the letter. Teachers are extremely busy and are often asked to write letters for multiple students. Giving your references plenty of notice will allow them to write a more thoughtful, detailed letter, thereby increasing your chances for success!

Bonus tip: Provide your references with a copy of the award criteria/terms of reference when requesting a letter. This will give them a better idea of what should be addressed in the letter and will give them some background on the award(s) you are applying for.

I'm not sure if I qualify for financial need awards. Is there an income cut-off level to determine who is eligible to apply for these awards?

EducationMatters does not have a specific income level to determine which students qualify with respect to financial need. While applicants are required to provide proof of family income, EducationMatters takes a number of other criteria into consideration including, but not limited to, living arrangements/family size, unemployment, medical situations and other circumstances impacting finances.

I'm applying for financial need awards and do not have the required "Notice(s) of Income Tax Assessments". Can I still apply for financial need awards?

If you have not received the "Notice(s) of Income Tax Assessments" in time for the application deadline, you can still submit your application(s); however, for the interim, you MUST provide some other verification of family income, and are required to submit the "Notice(s) of Income Tax Assessment" as soon as they are received (by June 30). Failure to provide this information could result in your disqualification from financial need awards.

Do I have to provide original transcripts with my scholarship application?

Yes. Your high school counsellor/scholarship coordinator will be asked to upload a copy of your transcript to your application and calculate your averages for Grades 10, 11 & 12.

If I have already received student awards can I still apply for awards through EducationMatters?

Yes, however, some awards have restrictions around students holding multiple awards, awards of a set value or a combination of awards valued in excess of a set value, cumulatively. The Alexander Rutherford Scholarship and, in some cases, University entrance awards, are exempted from this restriction. If you have been offered an

award from EducationMatters and the Terms of Reference indicate such restrictions, you must inform the Grants and Stewardship Officer at EducationMatters, in writing, of additional awards won concurrently with an EducationMatters award.

When will I find out if I have received an award? Will all applicants, including those that are not successful, be contacted by EducationMatters?

All award recipients will be notified by the end of September or early October. Successful applicants are contacted as soon as possible after selections are made. Due to the number of applications received, EducationMatters is unable to contact every applicant.

8. SUMMARY

There are many awards available for students pursuing post-secondary education. Research carefully, take advantage of all opportunities available to you and be sure to allow yourself enough time to complete applications to the best of your ability. Take time to read over your applications *and if possible have someone else review them before submission.*

In addition to the awards listed through EducationMatters, there are several other institutions and funding bodies that offer scholarships and student awards.

Watch the EducationMatters website, your high school and post-secondary institution's newsletter and the Student Awards office for other award opportunities throughout the year.

Don't get discouraged if you are not successful in any one competition. Apply as often as you can and look for other competitions and awards for which you are eligible.

9. SCHEDULE A - INFORMATION FOR REFEREES

Attributes that should be addressed

- Academic ability
- Originality of thought, creativity
- Accuracy of work
- Discipline and intellectual integrity
- Leadership and citizenship skills
- Communication skills
- Artistic or athletic potential

Other tips

- Be specific. Concrete examples of the student's qualities are far more telling than vague generalities. It is important to state clearly the basis for your evaluation.
- Although length is not a reasonable criterion for judging an evaluation, an extremely brief set of comments suggests that the referee is either unfamiliar with or not interested in the student.
- Write thoughtfully and in some detail. General comments without specific support are not particularly useful.
- It is astonishing how many students are "the best student I ever had". More useful comments focus on the student's particular strengths as observed in particular circumstances.
- A letter that includes specifics about what the student has accomplished and is likely to accomplish is more informative than a string of platitudes.
- Do not restate transcript information. The assessor already has this. Do offer useful amplification of reasons for weakness in the student's performance in a course, if appropriate.
- A balanced identification of strengths and weaknesses can highlight a student's potential, particularly if it is made clear that the weakness can be easily overcome.
- In the case of a student who does not have a strong record (for example, his/her academic marks are not outstanding, no previous awards), the referee can make the case for the student by providing information about the student's potential.
- Write about the student, not yourself. Many letters reveal more about the writer than the person for whom the letter is being written.
- If you are writing letters for more than one student for the same competition, specific comparisons are very helpful.
- Think of how you would react to reading your reference letter if you had another two or three hundred to assess. The reality is that the competition is fierce and a referee who does not seriously consider how her or his comments will be received could potentially prevent a good applicant from obtaining an award.

10. SCHEDULE B - USEFUL SITES AND TOOLS

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (includes directory listing)	www.aucc.ca
Alberta Learning Information Service – various scholarships	www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships/info.asp
Calgary Foundation	www.calgaryfoundation.org
Canada Foundation for Innovation	www.innovation.ca
Canada – U.S. Fulbright Awards Program	www.fulbright.ca
Canadian Bureau for International Development	www.cbie.ca
Canadian Merit Scholarships	www.cmsf.ca
Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation	www.millenniumscholarships.ca
Canadian & International Scholarship Programs Commonwealth Scholarship Plan Foreign Government Awards Organization of American States (OAS) Fellowships Program	www.scholarships-bourses-ca.org
National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation	www.naaf.ca
National Science Foundation	www.nsf.gov
Scholarships Canada.com	www.scholarshipscanada.com
School Finder.com	www.schoolfinder.com
TD Canada Trust	www.tdcanadatrust.com/scholarship/