



This document is intended to explain the various steps in the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois' (CFNIL) scholarship process to students, parents, and counselors. CFNIL's scholarship application opens on December 1, 2019 and closes at 5:00 p.m. on February 1, 2020. Learn more at cfnil.org/scholarships.

BEFORE THE APPLICATION

- Step 1**
Oct. 1 **COMPLETE THE FAFSA**
 Visit fafsa.ed.gov to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. You'll need the Student Aid Report to complete the financial aid section of the CFNIL application.
- Step 2**
Oct. 7 **MAKE A LIST OF ALL YOUR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**
 Write down your involvement with sports, clubs, volunteer activities, and work. Make sure to note when you were involved, if you had a leadership position, and how many hours you spent at each.
- Step 3**
Oct. 14 **COLLECT YOUR ACADEMIC INFORMATION**
 For high school seniors, track down your second semester report card from your junior year. College students will use your most recent report card or transcript.
- Step 4**
Oct. 21 **READ ABOUT CFNIL'S SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**
 Go to cfnil.org/scholarships and find opportunities that match your background, academics, and goals. CFNIL has 90+ scholarships, each created by donors who established the scholarship's criteria and the endowment that sustains it.
- Step 5**
Oct. 28 **LEARN ABOUT OTHER LOCAL SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**
 Visit rockfordpubliclibrary.org/young-adult-zone/scholarship-search to find a list of all scholarship opportunities for local students.
- Step 6**
Nov. 4 **WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT**
 Write a paragraph explaining your future educational and career goals and why you want to pursue them.
- Step 7**
Nov. 11 **LOOK AT ESSAY PROMPTS**
 Each scholarship has its own essay prompt. If you feel like you're a good candidate for a specific scholarship, we recommend working on the essay as early as possible. All essay questions can be found on the individual scholarship pages on cfnil.org/scholarships.
- Step 8**
Nov. 18 **START THINKING ABOUT REFERENCES**
 You'll need at least one references from an adult who is familiar with you as a student, employee, or member of an organization to apply for CFNIL scholarships. Some scholarships require a specific reference, like a coach or music teacher.
- Step 9**
Nov. 25 **CREATE ACCOUNT ON CFNIL'S SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION PORTAL**
 Visit cfnil.org/scholarships and click "Scholarship Application Portal" to create a login. You can register at any time.

DURING THE APPLICATION

Step 1

APPLICATION OPENS

Dec. 1

Start working on the “Contact Information” and “College Plans & Educational Background” sections of the application and familiarize yourself with the application portal.

Step 2

ATTEND THE COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP FAIR – 5:00 – 7:00 pm, Mendelssohn Performing Arts Center

Dec. 10

Meet with representatives from many local scholarship providers and learn about their application requirements. A CFNIL representative will present a detailed walkthrough of the application.

Step 4

COMPLETE THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND MATCHING QUESTION SECTIONS

Dec. 23

If you selected you want to apply for scholarships with a financial need component (1/3 of our scholarships are financial need-based!), you'll need to provide a copy of your Student Aid Report. Your answers on the application narrows down the number of scholarships for which you fit all the criteria.

Step 5

COMPLETE THE REFERENCE SECTION OF THE APPLICATION

Dec. 30

Provide the contact information for your reference. You will be prompted to compose an email which will be sent to your reference; the system will also send an automatic email prompt to your references once your application is complete.

Step 6

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE SELECTED

Jan. 6

The application will automatically match you with every scholarship for which you qualify, but you get to select the scholarship(s) to which you would like to apply. The system automatically copies your information from your application into a new application for each scholarship.

Step 7

WORK ON ESSAYS FOR EACH SCHOLARSHIP THAT YOU'VE SELECTED

Jan. 13

Write an essay that speaks to the criteria and purpose of each scholarship that you've selected. Have a trusted reader edit your essays.

Step 8

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATIONS

Jan. 27

After reviewing everything on your application(s) for completion and accuracy, it is time to submit.

Step 9

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Feb. 1

You must submit your application by 5 p.m. on Saturday, February 1. No late applications will be accepted.

Step 10

CONFIRM WITH YOUR REFERENCE

Feb. 2 - 18

Follow up with your reference to make sure they have received the email prompt to complete your recommendation. The reference deadline is 8:00 a.m. on February 18.

AFTER THE APPLICATION

Step 1

STAFF SCREENS THE APPLICATION

Feb. 17

CFNIL staff members screen each application for completion and accuracy.

Step 2

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEES & TRUSTEES GO TO WORK

March &
April

Nearly 100 volunteer committee members will read and score the applications in a blind review process. The committees meet in late March to recommend recipients. CFNIL's Trustees ultimately vote on the committees' recommendations.

Step 3

RECIPIENTS ARE NOTIFIED BY LETTER

Apr. 27

CFNIL will send out letters to all students who have received scholarships.

Step 4

APPLICANT STATUSES ARE POSTED ON THE PORTAL

May 1

CFNIL will update the Web Portal with the status of your application(s). You will also receive an email notification.

Step 5

SCHOLARSHIP ACCEPTANCE FORMS ARE DUE

May 29

Use this form, found on the Web Portal, to confirm your attendance at the school indicated in your scholarship application.

Step 6

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD NIGHT

June 11

CFNIL will gather donors, recipients, and CFNIL volunteers for a scholarship celebration.

Step 7

CHECK LETTERS ARE SENT TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

July 1

CFNIL will mail the scholarship check directly to your college or university.