



CFNIL 2021 - 2022 Scholarship Cycle Process & Timeline

Learn the steps in the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois' scholarship process! CFNIL's scholarship application opens December 1st and closes February 1st every year. Find out more and start your application at cfnil.org/scholarships.

BEFORE THE APPLICATION OPENS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Step 1
October 1st | 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
October 4th | 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
October 11th | 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
October 18th | 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
October 25th | LEARN ABOUT OTHER LOCAL SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
Visit scholarshipsni.com to find a list of all scholarship opportunities for local students. |
| Step 6
November 1st | WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT
Write a paragraph explaining your future educational and career goals and why you want to pursue them. |
| Step 7
November 8th | 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
November 15th | 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
November 22nd | CREATE ACCOUNT ON CFNIL'S SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION PORTAL
Visit cfnil.org/scholarships and click "Access the CFNIL Scholarship Application Portal" to create a login. You can register at any time. |

WHILE THE APPLICATION IS OPEN

Step 1 December 1st	APPLICATION OPENS Start working on the “Contact Information” and “College Plans & Educational Background” sections of the application and familiarize yourself with the application portal.
Step 2 December 7th	ATTEND THE COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP FAIR This year the fair is going virtual! Visit ScholarshipsNI.com/communityfair for more details. Learn about the many local scholarship providers and their application requirements. A CFNIL representative will present a details walk-through of the CFNIL scholarship application.
Step 3	COMPLETE THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND MATCHING QUESTION SECTIONS If you indicated 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 from your FAFSA. Your answers on the matching questions section narrows down the number of scholarships for which you fit all criteria.
Step 4	COMPLETE THE REFERENCE SECTION 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 containing a link to the online form. Remember—no letters of recommendation or paper recommendations will be accepted.
Step 5	SCHOLARSHIPS ARE SELECTED 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 6	WORK ON ESSAYS FOR EACH SCHOLARSHIP YOU'VE SELECTED 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 7 Before February 1st	SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATIONS After reviewing everything on your application(s) for completion and accuracy, it is time to submit!
Step 8 February 1st	APPLICATION DEADLINE Applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 1st. No late applications will be accepted.
Step 9 February 2-22	CHECK IN WITH YOUR REFERENCE 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 Tuesday, February 22.

AFTER THE APPLICATION CLOSES

Step 1 February	STAFF SCREENS THE APPLICATIONS CFNIL staff members screen each application for completion and accuracy.
Step 2 March & April	SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEES & TRUSTEES GO TO WORK 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 April 25th	RECIPIENTS ARE NOTIFIED BY LETTER CFNIL will send out letters to all students who have received scholarships.
Step 4 May 1st	APPLICANT STATUSES ARE POSTED ON THE APPLICATION PORTAL CFNIL updates the online application portal with the status of your application(s) and sends an email notification.
Step 5 May 27th	SCHOLARSHIP ACCEPTANCE FORMS ARE DUE Use the form found on the online application portal to confirm your attendance at the school indicated in your scholarship.
Step 6 June 9th	SCHOLARSHIP AWARD NIGHT Donors, recipients, and CFNIL volunteers gather for a scholarship celebration!
Step 7 July	CHECK LETTERS ARE SENT TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CFNIL will mail the scholarship check directly to your college or university.