2027 Instructions for Applying for Branch County Community Foundation Scholarships

If you have any technical difficulties while filling out the application, you may contact our staff at 517.278.4517 or by e-mail: info@brcofoundation.org

General Eligibility

To be eligible for ANY Community Foundation scholarship you must be one of the following:

- U.S. citizen
- U.S. national (includes natives of American Samoa or Swain's Island)
- U.S. permanent resident who has an I-151, I-551, or I-551C (Permanent Resident Card)

Please note: You will be asked to provide documentation if you are the selected applicant for any scholarship.

Early Middle College (13th year)
If you will be in a college program while still enrolled in high school during the 2026/2027 school year, you are NOT YET eligible to apply for scholarships. If you have questions about your eligibility, please contact us.

Beginning the Application Process

1. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (https://fafsa.ed.gov/).
   PLEASE NOTE: We use financial need as one factor in awarding scholarships. Therefore, we cannot accept applications without the page of the Student Aid Report (SAR) that shows the Student Aid Index (SAI).
2. Get copies of your academic transcripts showing your **GPA**.
3. Write down your work history, including any volunteer work, and your volunteer and extracurricular activities.
4. Your personal resume includes a personal statement. **The resume MUST be in the format that is outlined on page 2.**
5. One recommendation form (Found on the BCCF website) from a teacher, counselor, employer, pastor, etc. Additional recommendation letters or forms may **also** be required for a few of our scholarships.
   PLEASE NOTE: the recommendation form MUST be the BCCF 2027 recommendation form. Any other form will not be accepted, and your application will be considered incomplete if you submit the wrong form.

**If this is not your first time applying for BCCF Scholarships, PLEASE make sure that you are using all updated and new information. This will include an updated resume, a new letter of recommendation, new essays, etc. Anybody who applies with a previously used resume, previously used letter of recommendation, or previously used essays will NOT qualify.

The application must be completed in its entirety and must be submitted online. You will not be able to submit your application unless all the required information has been provided. You may save your application at any time and return to it.

There are additional attachments that are required for some of our scholarships. A list of attachments is available on our website. Please note these are not required, however, if you submit any of the essays or other attachments that apply to your situation, they will qualify you for more scholarships.

Complete an Application Online

1. www.brcofoundation.org Click on this scholarship opportunities on the top bar.
2. Click learn how to apply.
3. Scroll all the way to the bottom. To start the application process, click on Start Your Application.

4. If this is your first time visiting the website, please create a new account. DO NOT USE YOUR SCHOOL E-MAIL ADDRESS. PLEASE USE YOUR OWN PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESS OR A PARENT'S EMAIL TO CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT. It will be important to use an address that will be valid throughout your college career for further communication from the Branch County Community Foundation's staff.

5. Fill out the information required to create your account and hit register.

6. You will be sent to an "My Opportunities Page". Find the 2027 Branch County Community Foundation Application and click on the "View" Button on the far left.

*Please note, if you need a BLANK application for any reason, please email info@BrCoFoundation.org and we will send you a fillable PDF of BLANK scholarship application.

7. Please read the Summary and Description, and when you are ready to start your application hit the Blue "Apply" Button.

Applicant Information

8. Under Applicant Information, please enter your personal information. All questions with a red asterisk (*) must be answered.

Educational Information

High School

9. Please enter your Educational Information. Please select the high school you are currently attending or from which you have graduated. If you are enrolled or graduated from a high school not listed, choose other and put the name of the school in the box below.

10. High School Diploma year is the year you are receiving (or did receive) your diploma.

11. Please enter your HS GPA.

Career/Technical Education

12. If you attended the Branch Area Careers Center for at least one year, please select yes in the drop down.

13. If you have attended a career or technical program Please complete: Name of school Issuing Certification, CTE Program completed and Career Pathway.

As a reminder, if you are not done, but need to stop here, you can save your application and return to it.

High School Dual Enrollment

14. If you were dual-enrolled in college while in high school, please enter your dual enrollment information, and attach a copy of your transcripts, if applicable.

Post-Secondary (College) Education

15. If you were dual-enrolled in college while in high school, or if you are a graduate and already in college, please enter your post-secondary information. Please attach a copy of your college transcript, if applicable. Click Next to continue to your work history.

Applicant Work History

16. Please enter all your work history beginning with the most recent position.

17. If you have had any volunteer experience, please enter it in the next section that is un-paid work.

18. If you are a teammate of the Asama Coldwater Manufacturing, Inc. or Gokoh Coldwater, Inc., or if you are related to an Asama or Gokoh teammate, please make sure to select yes in the drop down. It will prompt you to include the name of the teammate, please answer.

19. If you are employed by Southern Michigan Bank and Trust or if you are related to an employee of SMB&T, please make sure you select yes in the drop down. It will prompt you to include the name of the teammate you are related to at SMB&T, please answer. If you are a current OJT student at SMB&T, you are considered an employee, and will you will need to put your own name down.

20. Click Next to enter information about the college or university you wish to attend or are attending.

College/University Enrollment & Career Information

21. It's now time to enter your current or future college information. Enter the semester and year you plan to enroll (for example, fall 2027), whether you are attending part- or full-time, the degree you expect to receive and the career the degree will help you obtain. If you do not have a career or degree goal, please make sure to select other/undecided.

22. If you are a high school student, please make sure to enter the college(s) you have applied to. Make sure to type in the State your College is located. Click the "Accepted" box, if you have any letters of acceptance, and make sure to attach them. For the Degree or Certificate, let us know if you expect to get a bachelors or associates degree or other type of post-secondary certification.

    If you are currently in college, you may enter the same college or if you are transferring to a new college, please make sure to enter the new college information.

23. If you are currently, or have been accepted to a nursing program, please make sure to attach your ***proof of acceptance into a nursing program*** to be considered for an additional scholarship, and **select yes in the drop down**.

24. At the bottom of this section, there are several check boxes for colleges that you may be attending. **Please make sure to check all that apply**. Click Next

As a reminder, if you are not done, but need to stop here, you can save your application and return to it.

Financial Information

Part 1: Cost of Degree and Plan to Finance

25. Under Financial Information, please enter the total cost of your college degree (Example - All four/two years to obtain a bachelor's degree/Associate Degree) and what your plans are to help you pay for the cost of your degree.

Part 2: Cost of Year One and Plan to Finance

26. Now please tell us what the cost of your *first* year of college is and answer all the other questions about the cost of your degree for the first year. **For these boxes you will not be able to use a dollar signs or commas. Please only put the numbers. For example, $100,000 will not be accepted, but instead you will need to put 100000.**
    - See below for an example of the Itemized anticipated income table.

Item

Anticipated amount of scholarships (if any)

Amount

1500

Item

Anticipated amount of grants (for example, Federal Pell)

Amount

2500

Item

Amount parents will contribute (if any)

Amount

2500

Item

Unmet need (cost of first year of attendence minus grants and scholarships)

Amount

24000

Amount

$34,500.00

Total Income	Remaining Balance	Unmet Need
$34,500.00	-$6,500.00	$28,000.00

27. Please let us know your plan to cover any remaining balance and give any mitigating reason you may not have worked to earn money for college. Although these questions are not required, the more information you give our scholarship committee members the better they will understand your circumstances. Click Next.

Scholarship-specific Attachments and Questions

Additional Attachments

The information requested for these attachments is ***not required*** to submit a basic application. If you do not wish to submit additional attachments, you must select no on each of the drop down boxes. On our website, we have provided a list of all the attachments and which scholarship these apply to. You are encouraged to submit as many essays and other attachments that are applicable to you **so that you have the opportunity to qualify for more scholarships**.

28. Listed are scholarship opportunities. Please select yes or no in each drop down. If you select yes please provide the required additional attachments.

Personal Resume

29. Please attach your personal resume In order to be considered for the Branch County Community Foundation Scholarships, applicants must use the format below for their resume. If they do not use this exact format, their application will not be considered for any scholarships.

The instructions in the scholarship application ask the applicant to attach a two-page **maximum** résumé the following format:

Name
Mailing Address
Personal Email Address (DO NOT USE A SCHOOL EMAIL ADDRESS)

Personal Statement/Profile
Tell us why you are attending college; your career goals; how your prior education, work, and/or volunteer experience prepared you for college and/or your chosen career; and why you believe you will be successful in college.

Education
Please list the schools you have attended starting with the most recent. Include certification or degree obtained and dates of attendance, and graduation date or anticipated graduation date.

Employment
List the last three PAID work experiences you've had, starting with the most recent job, and include position title, responsibilities, years of involvement.

Community Involvement
*List community **volunteer work** (outside of school) you are doing or have done. Be sure to list those that relate to your degree or career goal FIRST. Include position title, responsibilities, years of involvement.*

Activities
- ***List up to 5 organizations** you are a current member of such as … Student Council, Interact, 4H, etc, and include how long you have been involved and any current titles*
- ***If you participate in sports, music, arts, etc.** list those, how long you have been involved and any pertinent titles (ie. Captain)*

Awards
- *List any honors and awards received Include the year received in the last 5 years. You may include the nature of honor/award (in school or outside school)*

30. After uploading your resume, you will be asked to answer the following two required Yes/No questions:
    Question 1:
    My personal resume demonstrates an interest in promoting community or international understanding, as demonstrated by participation in internal exchange programs, community service, or multi-cultural programs.
        - If you answer Yes, you will be asked to provide a brief explanation of how your experience demonstrate this interest. Please include specific examples.
    Question 2:
    I am or was a member of the National Honor Society.

31. You will be required to attach a **new** recommendation form with the current year (ie. For the 2026/2027 application year you MUST use the 2027 recommendation form). If you submit a form from a previous year, or a form that is not the BCCF recommendation form, it will NOT be accepted, and your application will be considered incomplete and will NOT eligible for any

awards. A copy of the recommendation form can be found on our website. Please make sure to give yourself ample time to request a recommendation from a teacher, counselor, employer, etc. As a reminder recommendation forms *cannot* be completed by you or by family members. Attach and upload the LOR.

32. From your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (*FAFSA),* please attach the first two pages of your Student Aid Report (SAR) which shows the **Student Aid Index (SAI)**. Attach and Upload.

33. Please also enter your SAI (Student Aid Index) number in the box (required).

Students who do not submit their official FASFA Student Aid Report (SAR) with their Student Aid Index (SAI) will be disqualified from receiving a Branch County Community Foundation scholarship.

34. Please attach your high school transcript. The transcripts uploaded for the BCCF Scholarship application must not be locked. If they are locked, BCCF will not be able to accept them and you will not qualify for scholarships. BCCF will accept unofficial transcripts, but you must download and save them not locked. Please contact your professional school counselor or the BCCF office if you have any questions.

35. Answer the three questions at the end of the application. The three questions must be answered in five sentences or less. **These are required for all applicants to answer.**
    - What motivates you to pursue your education and future goals? (describe what drives you and how this scholarship will help you achieve your goals)
    - How have you made a positive impact in your school, community, or family? (Share an example of how you've contributed or made a difference in the lives of others)
    - Who is someone you look up to or admire, and why? (Explain how this person has influenced your life or inspired your goals).

36. If you need to gather the attachments or need to consider your answers to the required questions, you can save your application and log back in at a later time to continue your application by using the login you created in the first step.

As a reminder, if you are not done, but need to stop here, you can save your application and return to it.

Submission Instructions

When you are ready to submit, please make sure you have attached all the documents. The system will NOT allow you to submit your application without the required documents.

To submit please click the blue "SUBMIT" button on the bottom right of the screen.

Once you submit you will receive an email confirming that BCCF has received your submission. If you do not receive an email confirming that we have received your submission within the first 24 hours, please contact BCCF immediately.

If you have any technical difficulties while filling out the application, Please contact our staff at 517.278.4517 or by e-mail: info@brcofoundation.org.

Due Date for Submissions
Scholarship applications are **due by 3:00 PM on March 5, 2027**

If you have difficulty applying electronically, please contact the Community Foundation for instructions---517.278.4517 or info@brcofoundation.org.

Paper applications or e-mailed applications WILL NOT be accepted.
Applications submitted after 3:00 pm on March 5, 2027 WILL NOT be accepted.

Final Tips

Scholarship selection committees may have hundreds of personal statements and applications to review. It is YOUR job to get their attention. Remember to:

- **Think before you write**. Brainstorm to generate some good ideas and create an outline to help you get going.
- **Be original and be creative in your answers**. Show, don't tell. Use examples to individualize your statement. Demonstrate the point you want to make. Avoid vagueness to make a strong impression.
- **Proofread.** This is very important! You do not want to have any typos on your statement. Check spelling and grammar. Share your statement with a friend, parents, or teachers. Another pair of eyes can catch errors you might miss!
- **Create your portrait.** By doing this on paper, you create a vivid portrait that will depict the person behind the grades, activities and awards. If a committee member feels like he or she knows you, you have done your job and created a powerful emotional connection that elevates your application, and makes it stand out from others.

If you have submitted your BCCF Scholarship application in error, please contact BCCF staff. We allow the application to be re-opened only once before 12:00 pm EST on the scheduled deadline date. Applications are allowed to be re-opened only one time. There will be no exceptions for re-opening a submitted scholarship application after 12:00 pm EST on the scheduled deadline date.

- **Gather attachments before uploading.** All BCCF applications will require the following attachments:
  - FAFSA form with Student Aid Index (SAI)
  - Current Resume (in the specified BCCF format, indicated in these instructions, with templates also available on BCCF's website)
  - BCCF Current Recommendation form
  - High School Transcript
  - College Transcript, if applicable
- **Review the Scholarship and Additional Attachments List.** Look and see if you would qualify for scholarship awards by reviewing the criteria for each additional attachment. (Ie. Open to Coldwater High School students, Open to St. Joesph County residents).