



---

**Companion Document for building your Scholarship SOP**

While you are updating your Scholarship SOP, here are some things to think about:

1. Organization of your Committee:
  - a. The size of your committee will depend on the size of your club, the number of applications expected and the amount of money you want to distribute.
  - b. The make-up of this committee should be listed in your Bylaws. Follow those Bylaws or go through the steps to change them.
  - c. The people required to sit on your committee will also depend on your club's size. However, try not to put too many people from your board onto the committee; instead, look at club members who are interested in helping. There is a secondary benefit to reaching into your membership. Often, members that sit in smaller committees are then encouraged to serve on your club board the following year.
  - d. Your Judging Panel should be recruited by your Scholarship committee. The recommendation is that they NOT be board members. (See section below on Judging committees)
2. Judging Committees:
  - a. Some clubs build their own judging committee within their membership.
    - i. They would need some board members, some club members.
    - ii. Most of the time, it is best to recruit judges who have had recent experience with High School/College Students, so they fully understand what they are looking at when deciphering the applicants' courses, activities, involvement.
  - b. Many clubs set up their scholarship committee but then also set up a judging panel. The committee was responsible for finding outside judges to do the blind scoring. Such as someone from the school board, the president of the local college, someone from the Chamber of Commerce, the Installation Commander or Deputy Commander, or someone from the education center on the installation. We also asked our local congressman's spouse (who was an educator) to score them.
    - i. The Committee set up the rubrics, redacted the information, set up hard copy notebooks with separate tabs for each selection section (high school senior, returning college student, Spouse education) for each judge, delivered the notebook to the judges and set a time to come back and pick them up with the rubrics filled out.
    - ii. Using outside judges takes away any chance of favoritism, but it is also a great way to include your community leaders in giving away your money. Many times, they will also attend the scholarship ceremony as well, which makes it even more meaningful for the recipients!
    - iii. It is also possible to provide the same information via a google drive and save on printing expenses. Set up a folder for each division (HS, continuing educations etc.) and then redacted folders for each applicant. Password protect the drive so that you can send the link to judges without compromising the security of the information.
    - iv. Another option is to load everything redacted onto a memory stick and deliver the memory stick to your judges so that there is no need for multiple copies of the information.



- c. Be sure to have a rubric that allows for easy scoring. It will need to be different for each category (Mom or working spouses trying to continue their education will have less time for extracurricular programs!) Have multiple categories so that there is a variety of ways for applicants to gain points.
  - d. If you have many applications in three different areas, it is best to get different judges for each category so that they don't get fatigued as they read through all the applications. A good rule of thumb is to not have a judge read more than 20 applications.
  - e. If you want to save paper but have an in-person scoring session, you can set up a judging session where judges sit in a specific order with their rubrics. You have one copy of each application. The judges read and score whichever application they start with, and then pass it on to the next person while keeping their score sheet for only them to see until the end when they turn it into the scholarship committee. You will want to have each judge start with about 3 because some judges will be faster than others and you don't want people waiting around.
3. Deciding on Award amounts – usually done by the Scholarship Committee. Once the scores are completed and tabulated, the committee takes the scores from each category and assigns the \$ amounts based on the applicants scores in the categories.
- a. The total \$ amount was set by the club, but the allocation to each category and then the allocation to each recipient was decided after the scores came back by the committee.
  - b. There were often easy groupings to follow when the committee could see all the scores lined up. *\*\*Like the top 3 scores were within 3 points of each other, but the 4th was 10 points lower. Then they decided to give the same \$ amt to the top 3 people rather than graduated amounts for the top winner and down. This concept is hard to set up in advance of seeing the scores, but you will see natural breaks once the scoring is complete.*
  - c. If you have three scoring categories, like High School Senior, Returning College Student, and Adult Education, the committee should decide how much of the available funds should be awarded to each group. Most of the time this is done by percentages. If you have 100 total applicants, 50 are HS Seniors, 25 are returning college and 25 are Adult Continuing Education, and you have \$50,000 to give away, the committee will take \$25,000 for the High School Category and \$12,500 for each of the other 2 categories.
4. Applications:
- a. Be sure to list up front exactly what you are looking for in an application.
  - b. Be clear about who can apply.
    - i. If you decide to have anyone associated with the installation (i.e. including civilian employees and their family members), be sure you are clear on this before someone applies.
    - ii. If you say those with parents stationed within 55 miles of your location, be sure to publish what you plan to do for divorced parents when the applicant lives in a different state than their parents stationed at your installation.
    - iii. If the expectation is that the money will all be used in the fall semester, list that. If it can be saved until Spring semester, state that.
    - iv. If you will not give money to those going to a service academy or getting a full ROTC Scholarship, make sure this is stated up front. People may still apply because the due date may be before they hear about their scholarship. They need to know that if they are selected for a full scholarship from a different organization, that this scholarship will be rescinded. (If that is what you decide up front!)
-



# COUNCIL

FOR MILITARY SPOUSE CLUBS

- 
- v. Bottom line – try to think of every situation that may come up and have a decision already made.
  - c. Make sure your application gives clear guidance about what you are looking for in their responses and submissions.
    - i. Heavy on academics? Heavy on Community Involvement? Letters of Recommendation? Etc.
    - ii. Be sure to give all the cues they will need to put forth a successful application and let them know that you will not even review applications that are incomplete by the deadline.
    - iii. See sample application listed in this scholarship packet.
  - d. If you are requiring a Letter of Recommendation from a Counselor or Advisor, think about providing a “Checklist” with many questions (at least 20) that allow the recommender to rate the applicant on a scale of 1 to 10 for each question so that Counselors do not have to invest too much time in writing the letter. Still allow for notes/write in responses if a Counselor is compelled to say more, but with a scale for each question, it will be easy for the judges to take the output and factor it into the overall scoring.
5. Payment of Award:
- a. Decide how the money is going to be paid. Most committees send the money to the Bursar’s Office of the School and the money goes onto the student’s account.
  - b. Some clubs are willing to let the money cover student activity fees and not just tuition – especially if the applicant already had tuition covered through another scholarship. If you choose to have scholarships for use for more than just tuition and books, then it is no longer a tax-free scholarship; it becomes a taxable donation and must be reported as income on the recipient's income tax return. The Club must provide 1099 to those recipients. Because of this stipulation from the IRS, most clubs choose to only allow the scholarship to be used for educational expenses (tuition and books).
  - c. If you include service academy supplemental fees/ and ROTC full scholarship school fees as acceptable payment for your scholarship, you must ensure you can generate an IRS Form 1099 for each payment. Since the award would be sent to the recipient, not the college and therefore it would not be for tuition, it would be considered taxable income for that cadet to report on their personal income taxes
  - d. When you are deciding when the money is allowed to be used, keep in mind your club’s fiscal calendar and when you need to close the books for your audit. This may need to drive the timing. (i.e... are you willing to send the funds for the second semester or is it only going out in the beginning of the school year?) This is not a problem if you have a plan to report the funds correctly, just make sure you have a system set up in your SOP.
  - e. If someone does not use the funds within 12 months of receiving the funds, you may want to put the funds back into the pot for the next year and have that person reapply. This is something you should decide in advance and have written into your SOP and listed on your application.
  - f. If you give an award that is for \$5000 or more, the information needs to be reported on your clubs 990 Tax Forms for that year with the recipient’s information.
6. Electronic Submissions



# COUNCIL

FOR MILITARY SPOUSE CLUBS

- 
- a. If you would like to have everything come in electronically, things are a lot easier to track with time stamps and places where the applicant can upload supporting documents. However, there are a few things to keep in mind.
    - i. You might need to get the transcript and the letters of recommendation in sealed envelopes – which can't be uploaded by the applicant.
    - ii. They are still responsible for getting those documents mailed to you. When they arrive, you can manually black out the identifiable information, label the documents with an applicant number, then scan and upload those documents into a file in google drive or Sharepoint or dropbox, etc.
    - iii. Have a folder for each applicant with a check list that you can track to make sure the applicant has everything required to apply. The folder would be Applicant #1, then another folder for #2, etc.
    - iv. You would then give access to the Judges via an electronic filing system for them to read through and judge online. They would keep their own score sheet based on the rubric you supplied just like if you had made paper copies, but this way it is a lot cheaper and easier because you don't have to make so many copies of everything.
  - b. Be aware that if you allow applicants to upload their own documents, it is fairly easy to "cheat" and possibly change the reported information prior to the upload.
    - i. One way to avoid this is to ask for electronic transcripts to be sent directly to your scholarship email system if it is possible.
    - ii. You can also send an email directly to a requested reference and receive a signed letter that the reference has written, signed, and uploaded themselves. OR, you could do a google sheet or Microsoft form for them to fill out and it will automatically be sent back to you. The problem with this is email. It is best to require the email to be an "official" email not a personal one. (Someone could cheat and answer their own reference without anyone knowing if you used any personal email address – for example, require [Counselor@yourhighschool.com](mailto:Counselor@yourhighschool.com) vs. [Suzy.Smith@gmail.com](mailto:Suzy.Smith@gmail.com))