Instructions for Iowa 4-H Scholarships 2026-2027
Applications Open December 1, 2026

GENERAL Deadline - February 1, 2027

VET MED Deadline – March 15, 2027

About the Iowa 4-H Scholarship Program

The Iowa 4-H Scholarship program is designed to encourage Iowa 4-H members to continue their education beyond high school. Iowa 4-H'ers participating in any 4-H and youth educational program are eligible to apply if they meet eligibility requirements. 4-H Alumni that are currently enrolled in college are also encouraged to apply. Applicants must enroll as a full-time student (minimum of 12 credit hours) to receive scholarship awards.

Scholarships are funded through donor contributions. The donors set the scholarship criteria. There are scholarship opportunities for current high school seniors, collegiate undergraduates and students attending veterinary school.

Scholarship Policies

1. The 4-H'er is responsible for completing the scholarship application. 4-H members must complete the application process, using their personal e-mail and password. Applications with the names of parents or guardians will be disqualified.

2. Online application materials, essays, transcripts and the required two reference reflections, must be submitted online through the Awards Spring system no later than 11:59 P.M. on February 1 to be considered.

3. Only one online application form is needed for all 4-H scholarships listed. The system will indicate the eligibility of the applicant for the various scholarships. 4-H'ers will be considered for all scholarships they are eligible to receive. Only **ONE** 4-H Scholarship will be awarded to a 4-H member in any one academic year.

4. Some scholarships may have additional questions or essays to complete once the eligibility has been determined. Applications are not complete until all additional questions/essays are submitted. Your application remains open for edits until 11:59 p.m. on February 1st.

5. Applications are evaluated utilizing an Olympic scoring system. (Please refer to the evaluation matrix at the end of this document.)

6. A note about AI: AI tools can be helpful for brainstorming, organizing thoughts, checking grammar, or editing writing. However, scholarship applications should reflect the applicant's own experiences, ideas, and voice. AI should be used to help communicate those ideas—not to write the applicant's story for them. Applications will be reviewed for AI-generated content. The use of AI is not automatically disqualifying, but applicants are expected to submit responses that authentically represent themselves, their experiences, and their perspectives. The goal is to get to know the applicant—not an AI-generated version of them.

7. All applicants will receive an e-mail notifying them of their status no later than March 20th. The e-mail address used in the application process will be the e-mail address used for this notification.

8. Those selected as a scholarship recipient or selected as an alternate will receive a letter via e-mail from the Iowa 4-H Foundation on or before March 10th. Vet Med Students by March 20th.

9. All scholarship recipients are required to write a thank you note to the scholarship donor. The original thank you note will be submitted to the Iowa 4-H Foundation who in turn will review it and forward it to the donor(s). Scholarship recipients will receive information about their donor in the letter from the Iowa 4-H Foundation.

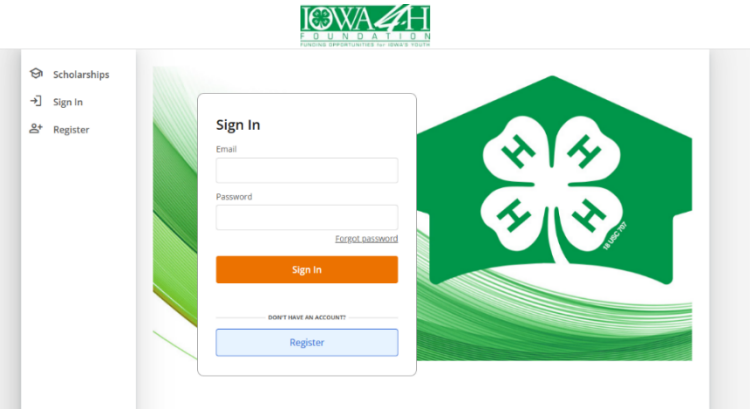
10. Scholarship recipients are recognized at the Scholarship Reception on April 18, 2027. Attendance is not required but is ***highly encouraged.*** Recipients will have the opportunity to interact with and thank the scholarship donors personally at this event.

Resumes

Select the format of your choice, you can find samples here. Please save the document as PDF to ensure the formatting will stay in place. Label the resume with your name, i.e. Mary Clancy Resume.

Application Process

— Go to https://iowa4h.awardspring.com/ and create an account.



— Refer to the Scholarship Listing for individual scholarship eligibility requirements and special criteria.

— There will be an initial set of questions to be answered that will determine scholarship eligibility. Be prepared to include:
- A current, complete, official or unofficial grade transcript (including current fall grades). **NOTE**: If you have multiple transcripts, i.e. college courses while in high school, combine and upload as one document. Please label transcript before uploading accordingly, i.e. (Your Name) transcript
- Cost of tuition for one semester at college of choice
- Resume which includes involvement in 4-H school, church, community, and college. Not to exceed two pages. Please label resume before uploading accordingly, i.e. (Your Name) resume
- Email contacts for a **minimum of two references** for Reference Reflections: (to be submitted online by the reference). Applicants will have the opportunity to submit up to four references.
- High school seniors: One of the references **MUST BE an Extension staff member or 4-H volunteer that is not related to you**.
- College undergraduates: Both references may be academic advisors.

— All applicants will be required to complete the following essay questions. Some scholarships may require additional questions, which are listed at the end of this document.
  - In what ways has your time in 4-H helped you feel ready for your future? Share the experiences or lessons that have best prepared you for college, your future career, or other goals you hope to achieve.

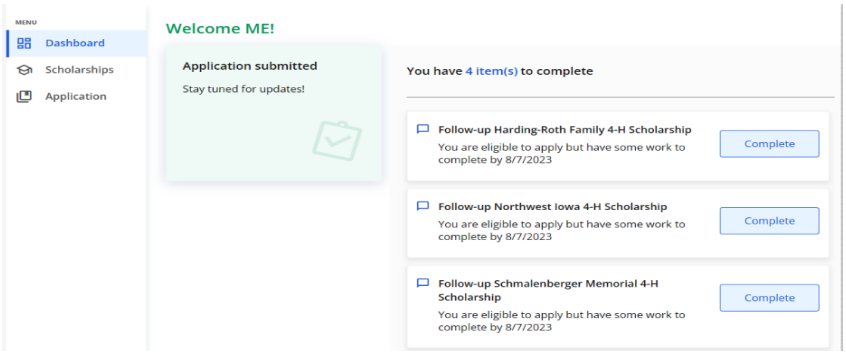
- Share a time in 4-H when you faced a challenge or setback. How did you respond, what did you learn about yourself, and how did this experience help you grow as a leader or community member?
- Describe how your 4-H involvement has helped you make a positive impact on your club, community, or beyond. What lasting difference do you hope your actions will make? How will continue to be involved in your community?
- Describe your spark, or what you are passionate about. How did 4-H help you discover, develop or share it? How does this spark influence your goals for the future?
- Looking back on your 4-H journey, what are the most important lessons you have learned about leadership? How will you use those lessons in the future?
- Provide any additional information you believe the selection committee should know when considering your application. Share any extenuating circumstances that exist. Tell us what makes you a qualified candidate for a scholarship.

— Reference Reflections must be submitted through the Awards Spring System. Applicants will submit the e-mail addresses of the appropriate references. The system will then send an e-mail requesting the reference reflections directly from the references. The references will receive an e-mail with instructions on how to complete the task

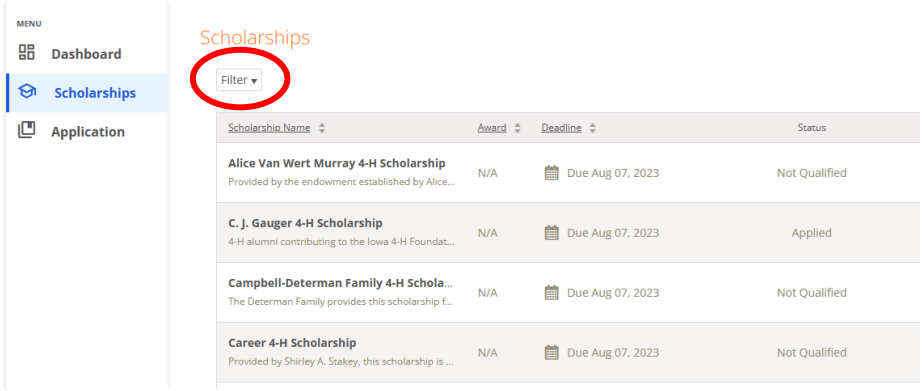
— Once all questions for the scholarships have been completed, hit the "Submit Application" button at the bottom. **Clicking on SUBMIT APPLICATION does not mean the application is closed. Your application remains open for edits until 11:59 p.m. on February 1st.**



— Once the initial application is complete, return to the "Dashboard" to see the scholarships you are qualified to apply to. Some scholarships will have additional questions to complete.



— You may filter for "Applied" and "Qualified."



— Your application will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on February 1st. You can make changes to your application until the deadline. You can also check to see if your reference reflections have been submitted and follow up if needed.

Need Help?

Direct scholarship specific questions to Iowa 4-H Foundation Scholarship Coordinator Mary Clancy, clancy@iastate.edu, (712) 830-1321. Please feel free to call or text any time between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

Application platform related questions can be directed to the Award Spring Support Line at; support@awardspring.com or call 888.258.5628, option 2.

Helpful Hints for Preparing Iowa 4-H Scholarships Applications

- Your attention to detail and inclusion of specific information will help the selection committee consider each application and identify all worthy applicant(s).
- Gather all needed information before starting the online application.
- Include current, complete grade transcript (include current fall grades/classes if possible). **NOTE**: If you have multiple transcripts, i.e. college courses while in high school, combine and upload as one document.
- Each field throughout the application will need to have something in the field to advance to the next step. A "00" or "N/A" will suffice for those questions that do not apply to the applicant or they do not know the answer.
- Financial need— Describe family income, unemployment, special circumstances, health, or other unexpected financial concerns. Include any facts you can to tell your financial needs and plans for financing advanced education.
- Reference Reflections - confide in those who provide recommendations for you the specific information that will help them more effectively support your application. Remember:
    - The references must have a valid and working e-mail address. DOUBLE CHECK YOU HAVE ENTERED THE EMAIL ADDRESS ACCURATELY.
    - Once the proper e-mails have been inputted into the system, the system will generate an e-mail to the references providing them with instructions on how to submit the reference reflections into the system.
    - On occasion, the e-mail sent to the reference will land in their spam e-mail. Applicants should notify the references in advance of the request so that they can be looking for the e-mail.
- Essay questions: you might consider writing your essay question responses in a word document and then transferring them into the system. This will allow you to check for spelling and grammar errors.
- When writing your essay questions, you can see your entire entry into the text box by using the two diagonal lines in the lower right-hand corner as seen below. Hold and pull down to expand the box.



- It is important to plan when completing the application and submitting the required documents, including the reference reflections. Waiting until February 1st to begin this process is NOT RECOMMENDED.

Additional 4-H Essay Questions by scholarship

- *4-H Art & Design 4-H Scholarship* – Describe activities or life experiences that have influenced your interests in pursuing a career in the field of arts and design. As you reflect on your 4-H experiences, how do you hope in the future to pay it forward to either 4-H or your community?
- *All Iowa Shaver Family Memorial* - Describe a personal experience that demonstrates your leadership abilities and commitment to good citizenship. Explain how the experience became an opportunity for growth, personal responsibility, or continuous learning.
- *All Iowa Shaver Family Continuing Education* - Describe a personal experience you encountered after high school that demonstrates your leadership abilities and commitment to good citizenship. Describe your specific plan working towards graduation, including a list of courses which meet the academic requirements for your degree or certification.
- *Colvin* – Describe your biggest adventure that you experienced through 4-H.
- *Colvin Women in Ag* – 1) Describe how your experiences in 4-H have shaped your interest in agriculture, sustainability or the creative use of agricultural products and natural resources. Share a specific project, experience or lesson that influenced your perspective. 2) Sustainable agriculture is about more than growing food. It can help provide clothing, shelter, energy, health and other resources that sustain individuals and communities. How do you see sustainable agriculture playing a role in your future education, career or community? What ideas, innovations or alternative uses of agricultural products and resources interest you, and how might they make a difference?
- *Darla Merwald Memorial "Passion for Horses"* – Describe how your experience and knowledge of the horse industry and how will advocate for that industry in the future. Describe your love of horses and share your favorite experiences and memories. List the years you exhibited horses at the Iowa State Fair. What was your favorite class and why? What does giving back to 4-H mean to you?
- *Delores & Gail Nelson* - How would you encourage a younger 4-H'er to become engaged in the leadership project area?
- *Donald and Ruby Godfrey* - Please describe what you hope will be your contribution to agriculture.
- *Excellence in 4-H Veterinary Medicine* – What type of veterinary medicine do you plan to practice upon graduation? What does giving back to 4-H mean to you?
- *Goering* – Describe the strongest attribute you have gained through the 4-H Communication Project.
- *Industrial Engineering* – Describe a time in 4-H when you shared knowledge, taught a skill, or explained a project to others outside of your family. How has that experience prepared you to study industrial engineering and communicate solutions effectively? Industrial engineers improve processes by making those processes better, faster, cheaper and safer. How as your project in 4-H interested you in doing this for your career?
- *Janet Dane & Francis T. Driscoll Endowed 4-H Scholarship* – Briefly describe your efforts to complete a 4-H record each year. What have you learned about the importance of keeping records and how will that benefit you in the future? Briefly describe your participation in 4-H communications and at what events. What have your learned and how have your skills grown as a communicator through your 4-H experience?
- *Kiser* – Describe your participation and leadership in the 4-H Horse project area.
- *Melvin and Irene Neppl Memorial* - Briefly describe your efforts to complete a 4-H record each year, or similar record keeping system? What have you learned about the importance of keeping records and how will that benefit you in the future?
- *Oster* – Describe your experience in journalism.
- *Pence Communication* – Describe your participation and leadership in the 4-H Communication project.
- *Pence Visual Arts* – Describe your participation and leadership in the 4-H Visual Arts project. Describe the strongest attribute you have gained through the 4-H Visual Arts Project area.
- *Persinger-Asmus-Ferrin* - Please tell us how you have participated in communications in 4-H as well as your college activities.
- *Peterson* –Describe the biggest adventure that you experienced through 4-H.

- *Peyton* - How would you encourage a younger 4-H'er to become engaged in leadership projects? What does giving back to 4-H mean to you?
- *PIC I & II* - Please explain your experience and interest in and aspirations to enter a career in the various aspects of the animal industry.
- *Schmalenberger* - Please describe what you hope will be your contribution to agriculture.
- *Siggelkow* - How would you encourage a younger 4-H'er to become engaged in leadership projects?
- *Sonya M. Colvin Women for Sustainable Agriculture Endowed 4-H Scholarship* - Describe how your experiences in 4-H have shaped your interest in agriculture, sustainability or the creative use of agricultural products and natural resources. Share a specific project, experience or lesson that influenced your perspective. Sustainable agriculture is about more than growing food. It can help provide clothing, shelter, energy, health and other resources that sustain individuals and communities. How do you see sustainable agriculture playing a role in your future education, career or community? What ideas, innovations or alternative uses of agricultural products and resources interest you, and how might they make a difference?
- *Stakey* - Please share why you selected the College of Human Sciences for your future studies.
- *Steve and Sue Wolken* - What is your fondest memory to date from your State 4-H Council experience and why? What is the most important attribute that you personally gained from being on State 4-H Council.
- *Tobin* - How would you encourage younger 4-H'ers to become engaged in leadership projects? Please share what leadership means to you. If you knew someone who knew nothing about 4-H, what would you tell them about the organization?
- *Trans Ova* - Please explain your experience and interest in and aspirations to enter a career in the various aspects of the animal industry.
- *Mahr Family Scholarship* – Please describe what you hope will be your contribution to agriculture.
- Please see examples from past projects.
    - Mahr Community Service Example #1 - Scholarship recipient led the planning and development of the Ames Pet food Bank to provide pet food commodities for area qualified families to help care for their family pets. An immense amount of coordination was necessary to provide physical space, sourcing and stocking of animal food products, and identifying the people and equipment needed to establish the pet food bank and make it accessible to families in need.
    - Mahr Community Service Example #2 - Scholarship recipient developed a time management plan designed for students to utilize their time in the most efficient manner to optimize their needs for study, extracurricular, and personal time. This plan was presented to student groups on the campus of Iowa State University that emphasized excellence in student leadership.
    - Mahr Community Service Example # 3 - Scholarship recipient utilized her abundant energy and leadership skills to organize a day for young women to gain information on becoming involved in the study of agriculture science and becoming leaders in the agriculture community at all levels. These events were developed as a day-long production of FARM-HER for high school and beginning college students, and have been presented on agriculture college campuses.

4-H Scholarship Scoring Matrix 2027 - 60 possible points	
4-H Participation/Service Listed on Resume - 25 points maximum	
(1 to 15 pts.)	* 4-H at the CLUB LEVEL - Listed project areas. Participation at the club level includes offices held, being a committee members or chair, and participating in workshops, events, camps, judging teams, communication events, service activities.
(16 to 20 pts.)	* 4-H at the COUNTY LEVEL - Participation at the county level, i.e. county council, county workshops, assisting with county clover kids, county communication events, county community service activities, demonstrated project depth & breadth of projects over the years of participation, county awards if applicable, CWF participation, county camps etc.
(21 to 25 pts.)	* 4-H at the STATE LEVEL - Participation at the state level through attending state conference, applying for state awards, state fair participation, applying for state council, or other state or national level opportunities. (If college applicant, involvement in Collegian 4-H)
Goals and Future Plans – 5 points maximum.	
(1 to 3 pts)	* Personal goals for the future are clearly defined. Describes how 4-H project goals and participation influenced future efforts.
(4 to 5 pts.)	* Clearly stated insight into the impact 4-H had on helping to define their future educational or career goals.
School Activities Listed on Resume 5 points maximum.	
(1 to 2 pts.)	* Involvement in school activities such as band, drama, athletics, etc.
(3 to 4 pts.)	* Extra effort made in school activities, perhaps taking on leadership roles in those activities such as captain, chair, co-chair, lead, etc.
(5 pts)	* 4-H'er has a GPA of 3.0 or higher in partnership with those extra-curricular activities.
4-H Narrative/Essays in Application – 10 points maximum.	
(1 to 6 pts.)	* Clearly stated the impact of their 4-H experiences.
b(7 to 10 pts.)	* EXCEPTIONAL ESSAYS - demonstrating intra-personal understanding of their 4-H experiences. Majority of the essay content used correct spelling and grammar.
Character as provided by Reference Reflections – 10 points maximum.	
(5-7 pts.)	* Reference Reflection indicates 4-H member in good standing with potential for the future.
(8 to 10 pts.)	* Reference Reflections indicate EXCEPTIONAL character in both school and community with wonderful promise for the future.
Financial Need - 5 points	
(1 to 3 pts.)	* Over 50% of educational Costs using grants, loans and scholarships
(4 to 5 pts.)	* Extenuating circumstances (illness, natural disasters) causing undue financial hardship on family/4-H'er