

# Hills Bank Leadership Program

**Due Date: March 1, 2023**

The Hills Bank Leadership Program is for juniors in high school in the Hills Bank Service Area. This area includes the following counties: Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Keokuk, Linn, Louisa, Muscatine, and Washington. Potential Participants apply as juniors, and participate in leadership training sponsored by Hills Bank. Upon completion of the leadership courses, each participant receives a \$1,000 scholarship. The scholarships are for students applying to a two or four year college or university in the state of Iowa. Twenty students are selected for the program.

Students of Hills Bank employees are not eligible for the Leadership Grant.

The Hills Bank Leadership Program utilizes the same on-line application system as the Iowa 4-H Scholarships. Applicants will see directions for the Hills Bank application as well as the Iowa 4-H Foundation Scholarships. Please keep in mind that they are two separate programs utilizing the same on-line system.

Please note that the Hills Bank leadership program is for current **JUNIORS** in high school. The Iowa 4-H Scholarships are for incoming college freshman or current college undergraduates.

The Link to the Award Spring application site is <https://iowa4h.awardspring.com/>



A screenshot of the Iowa 4-H Scholarship and Hills Bank Leadership Application Process website. The page has a light gray background. On the left, there is a vertical sidebar with four menu items: "Scholarships" (with a graduation cap icon), "Donors" (with a gift icon), "Sign In" (with a right-pointing arrow icon), and "Register" (with a person icon and a plus sign). The main content area is white. At the top center, there is a dark gray banner with white text that reads "Welcome to the Iowa 4-H Scholarship and Hills Bank Leadership Application Process." To the right of this banner is a photograph of three people (two women and one man) standing in front of a green and white patterned backdrop. Below the banner, the "Sign In" section is visible, featuring two input fields for "Email" and "Password". A yellow "Sign In" button is positioned below the password field. A link for "Forgot password" is located to the right of the password field. Below the sign-in section, there is a "Don't have an account?" section with a yellow "Register" button.

Online application materials, essays, transcripts and the required 2 reference reflections, must be submitted online through the Awards Spring system no later than 11:59 PM March 1 to be considered. It is important to plan ahead in regards to completing the application as well submitting the required documents, including the reference reflections. Waiting until March 1st to begin and complete these tasks is NOT RECOMMENDED.

The following items are required with application: (all items will be submitted online)

a. Current, complete an UNOFFICIAL grade transcript (include current fall grades) to be uploaded with application.

- For Freshman Application, if college courses were taken in high school and are not listed on the uploaded high school transcript, upload a separate list of courses taken with known grades, or upload a copy of college transcript(s) or student grade report(s).

NOTE: Multiple transcripts can be uploaded on a single application form.

b. Two letters of recommendation: (to be submitted online by the reference). Letters may come from a school/college academic advisor, teacher, community or civic leader or other individual of the applicant's choice.

- All reference reflections will be submitted electronically through the Awards Spring system by the references. The references must have a valid and working e-mail address.
- 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 complete the reference reflections in the system.
- Applicants can submit up to six references, but need a minimum of 2.
- 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.
- See Components of a Good Reference Letter at the end of this document. References may submit a letter of recommendation along with the reference reflections.

**Reference reflections must be submitted electronically and come directly from your reference. Please note that the reference reflection requests may land in spam or junk mail of the references. It might be helpful for applicants to contact the references personally. Some of the references may not be able to complete the process due to firewalls on their computer. Suggest trying another computer or smart phone and the letters will probably go onto the system without issue.**

**Applicants must follow up with their references to ensure that the reference reflections have been submitted. Each year 30 to 40 applications are eliminated simply because they only have 1 reference complete the process rather than the 2 that are required. Remember your account stays open until 11:59 p.m. on March 1st – you can check to see if your reference reflections have been submitted in a timely fashion.**

c. An uploaded spreadsheet that shows school activities, community involvement, and work experience.

The spreadsheet will look like this

<b>Hills Bank and Trust Company Leadership Grant Application</b>				
<b>Student Group Activities</b>				
Activities				
	<b>Local</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>State</b>	<b># of Years</b>
<b>Community Service</b>				
List Organization/Groups				
	<b>Local</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>State</b>	<b># of Years</b>
<b>Work Experience</b>				
Please list jobs, including summer employment, that you have held in the past three or four years				

- Please LIST any student group activities
  - Example: National Honor Society /Local/ 2 years
- Please LIST any community service activities
  - Example: Barnstormers 4-H Club/ Local/ 8 years
  - Example: St. Mary’s Church Alter Server/ Local/ 4 years
- Please LIST any jobs you have held
  - EXAMPLE: Grocery Clerk at Pops Shop – January 2019-February 2019 – 20 hours/wk
  - EXAMPLE: Receptionist at XYZ Company – June 2018-August 2018 – 30 hours/wk
- Please explain why you should be selected as a recipient of the Hills Bank Leadership Grant.
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- **Even though you have hit Submit, you can return to your application until the 11:59 p.m. March 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.**

Direct questions to Mary Clancy, [clancy@iastate.edu](mailto:clancy@iastate.edu), (712) 830-1321. Please feel free to call or text any time between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

Computer related questions can be directed to Award Spring Support Line Email [support@awardspring.com](mailto:support@awardspring.com) | Phone 888.258.5628, option 2

## Components of a Good Letter of Recommendation

- Stay positive, honest and personal.
- Qualify yourself early in every reference letter you write. Say what qualifies you to give such a reference and testament about the person. Be sure to write about when you met and how long you have known the person.
- State the nature of relationship you have had with the individual you are writing about. Were you a boss, a mentor, or a peer?
- State why the opportunity to support this person excites you and say how you feel about being asked to write this reference letter.
- Identify which 2 or 3 specific behaviors and qualities which, in your opinion, are most meaningful about the person. Be sure to use key words and phrases that truly demonstrate key characteristics of that individual.
- Why would this person be a good fit for the task at hand? How could they bring value to the process? Identify a specific example of the type of contribution they could make.
- Write about your willingness to work with this person again..
- Share your availability for follow up with your contact information.
- When writing a reference letter, it is not the time to err on the side of brevity, be superfluous, or be long winded. Be relevant.

## Components of a Good Thank you Note

1. **SWIFTLY SENT:** Sending a timely thank-you note is both prudent and polite. The thank-you note must always come as proximate as possible to the gift for it to have the most impact.
2. **SHORT & STRATEGIC:** Although it should read as if it were effortless, the personal thank-you note requires significant thought and effort. Keep It brief, effusive, and neatly written on quality stationery. If executed properly, your 25 or so carefully chosen words can make a huge impression on your donor. It should be personal and emotional (for example, “Sue, I am so moved by your continued generosity”). You can deepen engagement by evoking donor feelings of importance (“Stan, what would we do without you?”), or belonging (“Sally, Thank you for being a valued member of our community”).
3. **SINCERE & SINGLE-PURPOSED:** A thank-you has one purpose: to let a donor know their gift was received, sincerely appreciated, and will be put to good use. The emphasis is on gratitude and the work the gift supports. Keep it simple; stay on message.
4. **Mention a few things about yourself:** Your personal traits and achievements played a significant role in helping you win that scholarship. Mention a few of those to give your donor a brief peek into who you are. Tell them how this scholarship will benefit you and help shape your future life and career.

5. **SOLICITOR/SENDER:** With few exceptions, thank-you notes should come directly from the person who received the gift. A thank-you coming from the recipient first hand provides the most impact.
6. **SELECTIVE & SPECIAL:** A thank-you note for a gift is an extraordinarily easy way to make a donor feel special, and to let them know how much their gift is valued.
  - In the first sentence, say “thank you for” and state the gift you’ve been given.
  - Next, express a further detailed appreciation by remarking on qualities about the gift.  
Example:
  - Share specific reasons why you like the gift.
  - In the closing sentence, sign is pleasantly and friendly. And you can even add “Thanks again!” before your signature.

Another Pathway to a Successful Thank You note is from Michigan State University Extension 4-H publication – *Seven Steps to a Great Thank You Note*.