SCHOLARSHIPS

Finding Money for What Comes Next

A practical workshop for students & families

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Tonight’s goal

By the end of 40 minutes, you should know exactly what to do next.

1 FIND

Know where to look — locally, nationally, through colleges, employers and community organizations.

2 FILTER

Turn your interests, experiences and plans into useful scholarship search terms.

3 APPLY

Build a reusable application toolkit, track deadlines and submit complete applications.

Scholarships are a process — not a lottery ticket.

Scholarship Myth or Fact?

Call it out: MYTH or FACT.

“Only straight-A students win scholarships.”	MYTH
“Small scholarships can still be worth applying for.”	FACT
“You should pay a fee to access the best scholarships.”	MYTH
“Trade and technical-school students can find scholarships too.”	FACT

Where scholarship money comes from

COLLEGES

Merit awards • Departmental Awards • Special Programs

LOCAL

Community Foundations • Civic Groups • Memorial Funds

EMPLOYERS

Student Employer • Parent/Guardian Employer • Professional Groups

NATIONAL

Foundations • Companies • Associations • Scholarship Platforms

Best practice: search in several buckets — not just one website.

Start local: Rochester Area Community Foundation

Local eligibility can narrow the competition — and one application can unlock many matches.

125+
Scholarship Opportunities

95
Associated with Monroe County

55+
Through the Consolidated Application

Search by what makes you eligible

County • student status • area of study • scholarship name

Key annual window

Consolidated Scholarship Application: December 1 – February 28

IHS example

Andrew G. Attinasi Scholar-Athlete Scholarship: for graduating IHS senior athletes planning to participate in intercollegiate athletics.

Source: Rochester Area Community Foundation scholarship pages (accessed Oct. 2026)

Four websites I use with students

Each one has a different role in the search.

1	**RACF.ORG**	**Start local**	Rochester-area scholarships and a consolidated application.
2	**SCHOLARSHIPAMERICA.ORG**	**Go national**	Browse open/upcoming awards and filter by student characteristics.
3	**STUDENTSCHOLARSHIPS.ORG**	**Broaden the search**	Explore a large mix of scholarship opportunities and deadlines.
4	**CAREERONESTOP.ORG**	**Search strategically**	Use a government-sponsored scholarship finder and filters.

Scholarship America: filter before you scroll

The goal is not to read 300 listings. The goal is to shrink the list to good-fit opportunities.

State / Territory | **Educational Status** | **Institution Type** | **STEM** | **Financial Need**

SEARCH → FILTER → OPEN THE SPONSOR PAGE → VERIFY ELIGIBILITY + DEADLINE

A useful habit

Save only scholarships you actually qualify for. A shorter, high-quality list is more useful than 50 random bookmarks.

Source: Scholarship America scholarship browser (accessed Oct. 2026)

Turn YOUR story into search terms

Scholarship searches get better when students stop searching only for “scholarships.”

CAREER

Nursing • Engineering • Education

ACTIVITIES

sports • music • volunteering

IDENTITY / NETWORK

First-Gen • Employer • Organizations

YOU

LOCATION

Monroe County • NYS • Hometown

EDUCATION PLAN

2-year • 4-year • trade / technical

SKILLS & INTERESTS

Art • Leadership • Service • STEM

Try it: build a search profile

JORDAN
IHS SENIOR

3.2 GPA
Monroe County resident
Works part-time
Varsity athlete
Community volunteer
Interested in nursing
Planning a 4-year college

What would YOU search?

Monroe County	nursing
healthcare	student athlete
community service	part-time employee
high school senior	New York

Audience challenge: name 3 more search terms.

Don’t Forget the College Itself

Outside scholarships are only one piece of the affordability puzzle.

- Check each college’s scholarship and financial-aid pages.
- Look for automatic merit scholarships AND competitive scholarships that require a separate application.
- Check academic departments, honors programs, alumni groups and special programs.
- Watch priority deadlines — some scholarship deadlines arrive before regular admission deadlines.

A college’s biggest scholarship may never appear in a national scholarship search engine.

Build a Scholarship Toolkit Once

Reuse strong materials — but customize where it matters.

ACTIVITY LIST

Clubs, sports, work, service, leadership

UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Keep an updated copy ready

BRAG SHEET

Accomplishments, goals, challenges, impact

ESSAY BANK

Save strong essays and adapt them

RECOMMENDERS

Ask early and give them context

FINANCIAL INFO

Have required family/student information ready

The Essay: *Specific* beats *Broad*

WEAK

“Volunteering taught me the importance of helping others and being a leader.”

Generic • Could Describe Anyone • Little Evidence

STRONGER

Tell one small story: what happened, what YOU did, what changed, and what you learned.

Specific • Personal • Demonstrates Impact

Recommendations: Make it Easy to Write a Strong Letter

Ask EARLY — and ask the right person, not just the person with the biggest title.

1

ASK

Give at least a couple of weeks when possible.

2

SHARE

Provide the scholarship description, deadline and your brag sheet.

3

REMIND

Send a polite reminder before the deadline.

4

THANK

Follow up with a genuine thank-you.

Never assume a recommendation was submitted — check the application portal.

Scholarship Scams: Pause When You See These

! **PAY TO APPLY**	Application or “processing” fees
! **GUARANTEED MONEY**	Promises that you will definitely win
! **PRESSURE**	Act now / limited-time payment demands
! **TOO MUCH DATA**	Requests for sensitive financial/banking info without a clear reason
! **NO SPONSOR**	Hard to identify who actually funds the award

When in doubt: stop, verify the sponsor, and ask a trusted adult or the Future Ready Center.

Scholarship Money ≠ The Final College Price

Always look at the whole financial-aid offer

Published cost	$45,000
Grants / institutional aid	– $18,000
Scholarships	– $5,000
Student/family responsibility	**$22,000**

Then compare **loans • work-study • payment options**

Illustrative example only

Track applications like a project

A simple tracker prevents missed deadlines and duplicate work.

Scholarship	Amount	Deadline	Status	Requirements	Next Step
RACF Consolidated	Varies	2/28	Started	Essay + transcript	Finish essay
Local employer award	$1,000	3/15	To do	Recommendation	Ask teacher
College merit award	$5,000	12/1	Submitted	Admission app	Check portal

Tip: set your personal deadline 3–7 days BEFORE the official deadline

A realistic weekly scholarship routine

Consistency beats one exhausting scholarship marathon.

MON

15 min

Find 2–3 possible matches

WED

20 min

Read eligibility + save the best

SAT

45 min

Work on one application / essay

SUN

10 min

Update tracker + plan next steps

About 90 minutes a week — broken into manageable pieces

What should you do TONIGHT?

Five concrete next steps

1. Create a scholarship tracker.
2. Write down 8–10 search terms about yourself.
3. **Visit RACF and identify at least 2 possible matches.**
4. Check the scholarship page for every college on your list.
5. Choose one adult you may ask for a recommendation.

Keep These Four Sites Handy

racf.org	LOCAL FIRST
scholarshipamerica.org	NATIONAL
studentscholarships.org	EXPLORE
careeronestop.org	FILTER + SEARCH

And remember: your colleges, employers, community groups and the Future Ready Center are scholarship sources too

QUESTIONS?

The best scholarship search is the one you actually start.

Future Ready Center
Irondequoit High School

Thank you for coming!