



### **What is Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars?**

Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars® is a local, volunteer-run, non-profit organization promoting post-secondary education by providing merit-based scholarships to graduating seniors from Belle Plaine, Minnesota. We work in partnership with organizations, businesses, and individuals to raise scholarship funds. Since its inception in 1991, Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars has awarded more than \$2 million dollars in scholarships. We are part of a network of 450+ affiliates of the Scholarship America Dollars for Scholars program. Scholarship America offers additional scholarships that can be applied for through their website directly. These scholarships may or may not be based on financial need and have their own set of criteria and deadlines.

### **Things to Know**

- Scholarships are different than loans - they do not need to be paid back.
- Scholarships can impact financial aid packages. Consult your school's financial aid office with questions on if/how they may affect any financial aid.
- Our scholarships can be used towards tuition, books, fees and supplies billed by the institution. Other school expenses may be considered on a case-by-case basis and would require prior approval from our board.
- Checks are made payable to and sent directly to the college.

### **Important Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars Dates**

- ✓ **Car Raffle Ticket Sales:** Week of March 2nd – April 7th, 2026
- ✓ **BP Dollars for Scholars Scholarships Open:** March 16th
- ✓ **Application Completion Deadline:** April 7th at 11:59pm
- ✓ **Car Raffle Drawing:** May 2nd (before Prom Grand March)
- ✓ **Awards Night:** May 20th at 7pm. Students must be present to receive their scholarship(s).
- ✓ **Scholarship Acceptance Deadline:** May 23rd at 11:59pm
- ✓ **Scholarship Redemption/Deferment Request Deadline:** 6/15/2027

### **Contact Information, Website and Social Media**

- Email us with any questions: [\*\*belleplainedfs@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:belleplainedfs@gmail.com).

- Find us on the web: [www.belleplainemn.dollarsforscholars.org](http://www.belleplainemn.dollarsforscholars.org)
- Scholarship America Scholarship Opportunities: [www.scholarshipamerica.org](http://www.scholarshipamerica.org) •

Check out & like our Facebook page: [@belleplainedollarsforscholars](https://www.facebook.com/belleplainedollarsforscholars) • Follow us on Twitter: [@BellePlaineDFS](https://twitter.com/BellePlaineDFS)

## **Scholarship Application Guide**

There are SIX steps in the scholarship process:

- 1) Set Up Your Profile Account
- 2) Complete Your Student Application
- 3) Search and Apply for Scholarships – **Deadline is 4/7/26 at 11:59pm**
- 4) DFS Awards Presentation – **5/20/26 at 7pm after HS Awards program** (must be present)
- 5) Accept Your Awarded Scholarships – **Deadline is 5/23/2025 at 11:59pm**
- 6) Request your Scholarship Redemption/Deferment - **Deadline is 6/15/27 at 11:59pm**

### **Step 1 – Set Up Your Profile Account**

- Go to <http://belleplainemn.dollarsforscholars.org>
- Click on the grey “**Students & Parents**” tab on the far right banner. Click the “**Click to Login**”.

To create a new account, click the link “**Don’t have an account yet? Create one here**”

- **The first screen will ask for your high school.**
  - Enter “Belle Plaine Senior High” in the “High School Name” box
  - “BELLE PLAINE SENIOR HIGH” should be highlighted in gray. Be aware there are 2 schools with this name. Make sure the correct one is highlighted.
  - Click “Choose This School”.
- **Fill out your Basic Information.**
  - Anything with a double asterisk (\*\*) is required to complete the profile.
  - County - Use the county of your permanent address.
  - School District - “Belle Plaine Public School District”
  - **Email address - Do NOT use your school email address.**
    - Your school email address will expire once you graduate. There will be important communications about your scholarships sent after graduation.
    - If you do not have another email address, you will need to create one. There are many free domains to choose from – Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.
    - **Email is the primary method of contact for BPDFS. Please check your email**

**regularly for important DFS messages and reminders.**

- Phone Number - **Use your cell phone number.** Indicate if this number is text-capable.
  - **Opt In for text reminders if you want to be included in text reminders.**
- Current Grade Level – Choose “Senior in High School”
- Year Graduated/Expected Graduation from High School – “2026”
- Intended College – You can skip this section for now.
- Race/Ethnicity – these fields are used by Scholarship America and when searching for national/private scholarships through them. The Belle Plaine DFS program does not use this data but it is required for your application.
  
- Data Utilization paragraph in RED – **READ this paragraph** and check the box authorizing your understanding of how your data will be used. You may have to scroll over to the right to see this box.
- Click “Submit”.
  
- **Check your email for the link to your new DFS account.**
  - This will be in the email you indicated in your initial profile set-up.
  - If you don’t see the email, check your spam or junk mail folder.
  - Follow the link provided in the email. This returns you to the main DFS log-in page.
  - Log in using your same email address and the temporary password provided. The temporary password is very long. We suggest you “copy” it from the email before you click on the link and then “paste” it into the password box.
  
- **Changing Your Password** – The box to create your new password will open.
  - Create/Confirm your new password. Click “Save Password”.
  - Verify your Student Profile Information is correct.
    - Make any changes if needed
      - If all information is correct including a non-school email – Click “Save & Continue”
      - If all information is correct but you need to change your email, choose the “Save & Change Email” button.
      - **After you log in with your email and new password, you will see the Dashboard. This is your homepage.**

**Dashboard** – the dashboard is comprised of two main sections

1) **My Information**

- Profile Completion Indicator and “Work on Profile” button.
- Status of Transcript Information & Recommendation - Use the quick links to access these areas.

2) **My Scholarships**

- Search for Scholarships – **Scholarships will open March 16th.** After that date and once your profile is complete, this is where you will search for any matching scholarships.

- We encourage you to apply for ALL of the scholarships you qualify for.
- Depending on the scholarship, you may be asked additional questions or asked to write a brief response when you apply to make sure you qualify for the scholarship.
- **Don't wait until the last minute to finish your application and apply to your qualified scholarships.** There are several with additional questions & brief responses.

## **Step 2 - Complete Your Student Profile** - Click on “**Work on Profile**” from your Dashboard

- Each section below corresponds to the “My Information” sections on the left hand menu.
- Once a section is 100% complete, it will go from red to green. Yellow indicates it has been started but is not yet complete. **Some sections will remain yellow since they contain fields that do not pertain to BPDFS scholarships.**
- At the end of each section, you can “**Save and Continue**” to the next section or “Save and Go To Dashboard” and come back at a later time.
- **All (\*\*) fields will need to be completed within a section before being able to use the “Save and Continue” button.**
- You can click on any section under the “My Information” and go directly to that section.
- Several sections will have some information prepopulated from what you initially entered when you created your account.
- If you intend to use this profile for national and/or private scholarships offered by Scholarship America, you may need to complete the (\*) fields.

## **Choose “Save and Continue” at the end of each section.**

### 1) **Basic Info:** Complete ALL fields that have a (\*\*)

- How did you find us? = Other
- Photo = BPDFS does not use photos
- **READ the consent statement and check the box.**

### 2) **Additional Info:** Complete ALL fields that have a (\*\*).

- **Demographics**
  - If you intend to use this profile for national and/or private scholarships offered by Scholarship America, you may need to complete the (\*) fields.
- **Other Information:** This section is optional, however, if you intend to use this profile for national and/or private scholarships offered by Scholarship America, you may need to

complete the (\*) fields.

### 3) Schools

- **Grade in School**
  - Current Grade In School – **“Senior in High School”** (Even if in PSEO/CIS)
- **High School Information** – complete \*\* questions
- **College Information** – Please fill this section out. This information can be changed up until your final submission so fill in what your plans are as of now. Don’t worry if you aren’t 100% sure.
  - Intended College/Intended College App Status
    - Use the schools you are thinking of applying to or have already applied to. It is OK if you have not been accepted yet.
    - Indicate application status using the “Intended College App Status” button for each intended college listed.
  - Intended Major – PLEASE COMPLETE THIS! Many of our scholarships are based on the intended major so only choose the majors you are seriously considering.
    - **If you have no idea what you’d like to study, there is an “Undecided” choice you can select.**
    - There are 400+ majors to choose from so scroll through the pages to find the best description. Narrow your search by a general area of study. This will give you different options specific to that area to choose from.
  - **We do not consider PSEO or CIS classes for this application.**
  - SKIP the last 5 questions
    - College you are currently attending
    - College Application Status
    - School Start Date
    - College Student ID
    - Have you attended other colleges?

### 4) GPA: Only the \*\* questions are required

- GPA Information available = “I have high school GPA Information Only”
- My school uses weighted GPAs. = Do NOT check this box.
- My school used the same GPA scale for all grade levels = CHECK this box
- **SKIP - GPA by Grade(s) = Do not fill in the GPA per grade.**
- Cumulative HS GPA = This information is found on Infinite Campus>Documents>Academic Plan Progress Report>Detail (report type)>Select All boxes>generate the report and scroll to bottom. You can also ask one of the school counselors for assistance with finding your GPA. •  
**Cumulative HS GPA Scale = 4.0**

5) **Class Rank:** We do not use this class rank for BPDFS scholarships.

### 6) Test Scores

- If you have not taken any placement tests, choose the “I don’t have any test scores” button at the top.
- Click the “Enter Test Information” button at the top.
  - “Do you have any test scores to enter?” = Click “Yes”
  - Scroll through the list and choose any tests you have taken.
  - **If you took the ACT/SAT:**
    - Select “**ACT or SAT Composite**” – Do not enter any ‘superscores’ or scores for the different sections.
    - **Enter the composite score, date of exam, then “Save and Add Another Test” or “Submit”.**
    - If you have taken the ACT/SAT more than once, enter the test information for your highest composite score.
    - **The school can only verify your ACT score for the exam that was administered by the school during your junior year.** If you are using the score from an exam taken at a different location or date, please email us proof of your score to: belleplainedfs@gmail.com
    - We do not utilize ACT/SAT scores by area or the ‘super score’ - only the composite score.
  - **If you have taken the Accuplacer:**
    - Choose “Other”
    - “Test If Other” field: “Accuplacer – Subject Area” (Ex. Accuplacer – Reading”)
    - Repeat this process for each of the different Accuplacer tests you’ve taken

7) **Activities:** Include all school and extracurricular activities from grades 9-12 only.

- Participation in 7th & 8th grades CANNOT be included.
- List all years of the same activity as “one” activity.
- Click the “I don’t have any activities” button if you don’t have any activities to add.
- Click the “Enter Activities Information” button at the top if you have activities to add.
- Once you have entered an activity, click “Save and Add Another Activity” until you have completed all your activities.
- You may include the upcoming Spring season if you plan to participate.
- **There is a different list of activities for each activity type.**
  - If you are not sure what the “activity type” is for your particular activity, search the available choices in the associated list for the different activity types.
- **Activity Types**
  - **Athletic Activities**
    - List high school teams separate from any club or community-based teams

- Level of Involvement = for HS participation, list your highest level played
  - Activity Description = example “HS (sport name) team”. You do not need to describe how you play the sport.
  - Spring activities – you can include the spring season of your senior year if you are planning on participating in the activity even though it hasn’t started yet.
  - **Clubs and Organizations**
    - Activity Description – example “HS (club name)”. You do not need to describe how you participated or what the club does.
  - **Volunteer Activities**
    - This is anything you volunteered for in the community that you were not paid or compensated for.
  - **Church/Religious Activities**
    - Volunteering at church goes under this activity type.
  - **Music/Theater/Arts Activities**
    - List high school choir/band/art class here
      - List core classes separate from “extra” participation groups.
        - Concert band is separate from Pep band or Jazz band.
        - Girls/Boys/Concert choir is separate from Chamber choir.
- Number of Years = number of years you participated in the activity (ex. 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade would be 4 years)
- Total Hours Spent (if question is listed) = do your best to estimate the amount of hours
- Current Activity = Choose yes if you are currently in the activity
- Activity Start Date = Use the date you first started participating. Use the August date for the start date for Fall activities that start early.
- **“Awards/Honors/Offices”** section for each activity you enter - Use this to list any office, award or honor for that activity. Below are some examples for the three types:
  - Office – President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Chair, Co-chair
  - Award – Varsity letter, MSHSL Awards, Volunteer of the Year
  - Honor – Captain, MRC All Conference Honors

8) **Awards** – this section records all financial and academic/merit awards from **9<sup>th</sup> grade or later**. These should be independent of awards received with your participation in an activity that was entered under “Activities”.

- Click the “Enter Awards Information” button or the “I don’t have any awards”.

Do not enter any financial awards you have received.

- **Choose “Other” to enter any academic awards**

- Example – AAA award, Excel award, honor roll, district academic awards

9) **Employment:** this section records any employment you held from **9<sup>th</sup> grade or later** even if you started working there before 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

- **Only \*\* questions need to be completed**

- Click “Enter Employment Information” button or “I don’t have any employment” button. •

**Employer = list the name of your employer or company** (not the name of your supervisor) •

Position – this is optional

- Start Date

- **Current Position?**

- “Yes” if you are still working there.
- **“No ” will add an “End Date” question.**

- Hours per Week – use an average if this changes week-to-week

- **Total Months of Employment** – total months of employment may be different than the time between the start and end dates. For ex) a student may work a summer job for 3 years, but the total number of months worked is only 6 months.

- Amount Earned – LEAVE BLANK

- Use the “Notes” section if you want to provide any other information

10) **Documents:** We do not require any documents. Click on **“I don’t have any documents”**.

11) **Parent/Guardian Info:**

- Consent is not required for the scholarship process if you are over 16.

- **Read section statement. Enter parental information or select the “I choose not to include parental information” button at the bottom.**

12) **Financial Info:** Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars does not require financial information. You will see there is nothing to fill out. Please note: if you are applying for national scholarships through Scholarship America, they may require financial information in their applications.

13) **Goals Essays:** This is **REQUIRED** to qualify for a scholarship

- **Do not include your name or any other person’s name that would identify you.**
- If this essay is not completed, your application will be considered “incomplete” and you will be ineligible for any of our scholarships.
- Keep to **250 words or less** - longer does not mean you will get more points.
- **The essay is scored on describing your plans as they relate to your educational and career objectives and future goals. Do not tell us what you achieved in high school.**
- We are looking for progression of **clear, concise and complete statements of future goals** – NOT on general philosophical statements.
- You can copy and paste your essay into this section from another source (Word, Google Docs).

14) **Unusual Circumstances Essay:** This is **NOT** required. Complete this essay only if applicable to

you.

- **Do not include your name or any other person's name that would identify you.**
- In **250 words or less**, describe how and when any unusual family or personal circumstances have affected your achievement in school, work experience, or your participation in school and community activities.
- **COVID-19** – everyone has been negatively affected by COVID in some way. If you choose to write about how COVID has negatively affected you, your essay must be tied very specifically to an unusual circumstance. See example list below.
- **Examples of an unusual circumstance:**
  - Significant health issue or disability
  - Academic struggles due to unique situation
  - Extreme family situation (teen parent, long term parental/guardian job loss, homelessness, death of sibling/parent/guardian)
- You can copy and paste your essay into this section from another source (Word, Google Docs).

15) **Transcripts:** This is **REQUIRED** to qualify for a scholarship. Complete this section as soon as possible.

- **Check your spelling** to ensure you have entered the information below correctly or the request won't be received.
- **The transcript request NEEDS to be completed through your application**. Do NOT email her or stop in her office to request this.
- Click "Add School Official Information" button.
  - School Official First Name: **Melissa**
  - School Official Last Name: **Smith**
  - School Official Email: **masmith@belleplaine.k12.mn.us**
  - School Official Phone: **952-873-2403**

16) **Reference Request:** This is not required but highly recommended.

- **If not completed, you will be missing a large number of points from your overall application score.**
- Your reference/recommendation needs to be from a teacher, employer, mentor, coach or activity leader. **It may not be a relative or friend** even though this option is in the list.
- **It is important that the person you would like to use as a reference is aware of your request and has agreed to be a reference for you BEFORE putting their name and email address in.**
- Click "Add Reference Information" button. Enter the name and contact information of the reference you would like to use. **Check the spelling to make sure you have entered their**

**email address correctly or they won't receive your request.**

- Your reference will be sent an email with an online form to complete their recommendation.
- **It can only be requested and completed through the DFS application.** It cannot be requested/received in any other way.
- **The “reference request” should be sent as soon as possible** to allow them adequate time to complete & return the recommendation by the April 3rd deadline.
- Use the “**Send Reminder Email**” button available if the recommendation hasn't been received. Check back frequently to allow enough time for follow up before the April 3rd deadline.

### **Step 3: Search and Apply for Scholarships**

- **Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars scholarships will open on March 16th.**
- After this date AND after your application is complete, you can search for scholarships that you “match to” based on the various criteria set by our donors for their scholarships.
- **Please apply for every scholarship you match to.** This gives us a larger pool of scholarships to consider you for.
  - From your **Dashboard**, in the “**My Scholarships**” section - **Click on “Search for Scholarships”**

### **My Scholarships Page - Apply For Your Scholarships**

- This page has several sections. **Read the directions for each section.**
- The Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars Scholarship(s) you qualify for will appear here.
- **You MUST apply to each matched scholarship to be eligible for that scholarship.**
- If no further information is required for the scholarship, the “Apply” button will be active and available to click immediately.
- **If additional information is required to determine further eligibility:**
  - The “Questions” button will be active and the “Apply” button will be greyed out.
  - Once the questions are answered and if you are still eligible, the “Apply” button will then become active.
- Click on the “**Verify Eligibility for All Scholarships**” button at the top of the page each time you are coming back to check for new scholarship matches.
- Click on the “**Apply to all scholarships with a red Apply button**”. Read and Sign the acknowledgement.
- You can also apply for Scholarship America Partner Scholarships on this page.

- All scholarships you have applied for will appear in the “Scholarships I’ve Applied For” section.
- **Belle Plaine Dollars for Scholars scholarships need to be applied for by April 7th by 11:59PM.**  
The system will not allow you to apply after this time, so plan accordingly.

#### **Step 4: DFS Awards Night – May 20, 2026 – In person ceremony is planned.**

- Attendance is required to receive your scholarship – plan accordingly.
  - Watch your email for updates.
  - Our ceremony typically follows the HS Awards program – approximately 7pm. • Invites with specific details will be emailed/mailed in mid-May to students that have earned a scholarship.

#### **Step 5: Accepting Your Awarded Scholarship(s)**

- All awarded scholarships will appear in the “Scholarships I’ve Been Awarded” section.
- All awarded scholarships need to be electronically accepted on your dashboard by **May 23rd at 11:59pm**.
- **Failure to accept scholarships by the deadline forfeits any monies awarded.**
- From your **Dashboard**, click the “**Accept Scholarships**” button
- Scroll down to the “**Scholarships I’ve Been Awarded**” section on your “My Scholarships” page.
  - Click on the “**Accept Scholarship**” button after each scholarship to officially accept your award. Complete any additional information requested.
- **Send “Thank You” card(s) to your scholarship donor(s).** Their contact information will be printed on the bottom of your award certificate.

#### **Step 6: Scholarship Redemption & Deferment Requests**

- **Redemption requests or deferments are due by 6/15/2027**
- Redemption instructions will be emailed to you, are on the back of each award certificate and are available on our website. [www.belleplainemn.dollarsforscholars.org](http://www.belleplainemn.dollarsforscholars.org)
- Funds may be requested after 8/01/2026 for your Fall 2026 semester.
- **All checks are made payable to and mailed directly to the college/school.**
- Our scholarships can be used towards tuition, books, fees and supplies billed by the institution. Other school expenses may be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require prior approval from our board.
- For those attending technical/vocational/trade programs, funds can be used towards tools if they are billed through the school.

- **You need to be enrolled/registered in the current semester for a school to accept scholarship money.** You cannot request redemption for a semester if the semester is over. (Ex – request in June for the previous spring semester).
- **Most schools will equally split your scholarship between semesters if you do not specify differently.** You can request it be applied ‘in full’ to either semester. Please include this in your redemption request to us. If you do not specify, the funds will be distributed based on your college/program’s policy.
- **Deferment** - If you end up not going to college or taking classes right after high school, you can defer your scholarship automatically for one year.
  - Your deferment request must be received by the same June 15, 2027 deadline or it will be forfeited.
  - We do allow a longer deferment for those going into the military. Please email us with any questions about the deferment process.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What if I forgot my password?**

Use the “Forgot Password?” link in the Student Log In section. You can also use the grey “Support” tab which sends a message to Scholarship America. They typically respond via email in 24-48 hours.

### **How do I get help if I am having trouble filling out my application?**

Use the grey “Support” tab which sends a message to Scholarship America. They typically respond via email in 24- 48 hours. You may also email us at belleplainedfs@gmail.com

### **How do I contact the local Dollars for Scholars chapter?**

Please email us at: belleplainedfs@gmail.com.

### **What if my email address changes?**

Log into your account. Go into your profile. At the top of the page is a button that says, “Click Here” to change your email address. Make sure to use an email that you check frequently. As a reminder, do not use your Belle Plaine district email. Once you graduate, this email will be deactivated.

### **What happens if I miss the application deadline?**

You will not be eligible for our scholarships. Start early to make sure you have plenty of time to complete the steps.

### **Do I need to provide financial information?**

Our awards are merit based. We do not use any financial information in our application.

### **If I apply, will I automatically get a scholarship?**

Yes – as long as you meet all requirements & meet all deadlines.

### **How does scoring work?**

All sections of your student profile, except for the essays, are scored automatically by the computer using a rubric and following guidelines set by Scholarship America. Point values are awarded to each section of your application based on its content and completeness. To score the most available points, it is important to be as complete and thorough as possible. The essay(s) are scored anonymously by community volunteers & board members of the Dollars for Scholars chapter using a specific scoring rubric.

**How are award amounts determined?**

Award amounts are determined by the number of eligible students, amount of monies raised through the annual fundraisers and the student's scoring rank from their completed application.

**How are the different scholarships awarded?**

Each scholarship targets what is important to the donor. Students are anonymously matched to the scholarship based on what information has been entered into their application and what criteria are chosen by the donor. We have scholarships for academics, athletic interests, fine arts, choir/music/band, church involvement, major or career interests, volunteer accomplishments, school types and for any student pursuing post-secondary education.

**Who has access to my information?**

The information you provide on the student profile is NOT public. Only certain members of the Dollars for Scholars chapter will see your information for the purposes of checking eligibility and final verification of awards once they are awarded by the Scholarship Committee. The identifying information in your application profile remains anonymous to all members of the Scoring and Awards committee. The national office of Scholarship America Dollars for Scholars can view your information. When you start the student profile, the permissions the student's agree to with the online profile prohibit anyone but Scholarship America or its affiliates from having access to the information.