Frequently Asked Questions

Application/Selection Process/Qualifications

Why is Build Dakota supporting full scholarships?
Several workforce categories have been identified as high need in South Dakota, which means there is a shortage of skilled workers. The Build Dakota Scholarship was created to be a catalyst to solve this problem. By providing full scholarships and creating industry partnerships, Build Dakota can get more skilled scholars into the state’s workforce. Build Dakota Scholars receive a free education, businesses gain employees, and South Dakota grows. We all win!

What are the requirements of the Build Dakota Scholarship?
A student must:
- Be accepted into a Build Dakota Scholarship eligible programs at one of the four South Dakota technical institutes.
- Be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national (Must meet citizenship eligibility requirements according to the federal financial aid regulations).
- Show financial need through completion of the FREE Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Please note that all income levels are encouraged to apply, the program does not specify a threshold of need and this is one component of the selection process.
- Applications are also reviewed for demonstrated work-readiness skills such as internships or work experiences, technical coursework and industry certifications.

What is the commitment if I accept the scholarship?
You will agree to:
- Enroll full-time in Build Dakota Scholarship-eligible technical institute program.
- Following graduation, work full-time in South Dakota in the field of study for a minimum of three years.
- Maintain a 2.5 grade point average.
- Complete the program on time.
- Industry requirements, if applicable. Industry partner awardees must also accept the matching industry partner’s additional commitments.

*A sample Scholarship Acceptance Agreement can be found on the Build Dakota Scholarship website. Please review it to understand the full in-school and workforce commitments.

When does the application open and close?
The application will be open from October 1 through March 31.

Can I still apply after the application cycle has ended?
No. However, you are welcome to contact the technical institutes to explore other possible funding sources.

What information do I need to submit my application?
You must apply for and be accepted in one of the scholarship approved programs at a South Dakota technical institute in order to apply for the scholarship. Because the Build Dakota Scholarship is offering scholarships in a wide-range of industries, submitting additional information outlined on the application is optional, but adds to the value of your application. The application allows you to upload current career
certifications and share your academic and work experiences. Just as in a job application, use the scholarship application to demonstrate your experience and skill in the program area for which you apply.

**How are Build Dakota recipients selected?**

Each technical institute is responsible for recipient selection in their eligible programs. As such, each school has specific selection criteria based on the needs and availability of their programs and students. Considerations are given, but not limited to:

- GPA
- Industry Partnerships (Please see the next paragraph.)
- Work Experience
- High School CTE Experience
- Awards and Certifications
- Financial Need
- Program Availability
- Early Applications (Awards are not offered on a first come basis; however, getting your application in early is important in the selection and award process.)

**What is an industry partnership and how does that work with the Build Dakota Scholarship?**

Because Build Dakota was created in response to a workforce need in South Dakota, businesses are working closely with the scholarship program to offer as many scholarships as possible and train skilled professionals for the high-need careers. Some employers pay for a significant portion of the scholarship expenses and the Build Dakota Scholarship pays for the balance. This extends the employers’ training dollars and they gain skilled employees. Please call the technical institutes or Build Dakota Program Manager to learn more about this exciting program.

**When will I be notified if I have received a Build Dakota Scholarship?**

If you are selected for a Build Dakota Scholarship, you will be notified by the technical institute and receive an email that will prompt you to review and sign the Scholarship Acceptance Agreement and Promissory Note in the scholarship management system where you applied. You will also be immediately notified if your application has been declined. Some applicants may be placed on a wait-list if further information is required or if they are still being considered for an award. Please log into your application account or contact your technical institute for further information regarding the status of your application.

**If I'm not planning to start my classes until the spring or summer term, can I still qualify for the scholarship?**

Yes. Applications open on October 1. The technical institutes may select and award recipients throughout the school year. Remember to complete the correct FAFSA for the award year in which you will begin your enrollment. Because so many technical programs are cohort-based, spring and summer term starts may not be available.

**Can I qualify for this scholarship if I'm currently enrolled in a SD technical institute?**

No. The Build Dakota Scholarship is only for students starting a NEW program at a SD technical institute. Beginning a new program is classified as starting in the first semester of a program.

**I've already graduated from a technical school. Could I still qualify for this scholarship?**

This depends on your individual circumstances. If you currently have a degree in a field that has not been designated as high-need, and you wish to get a degree in a high-need area, you may qualify for this scholarship. If you currently have a degree in a high-need field and wish to move to a different high-need field, it is not recommended. Please contact your technical institute so they can review your specific situation.

**Does everyone who applies receive a Build Dakota Scholarship?**

No. At this time, the scholarship program supports approximately 300 scholarships per year. For the 2015-2016 school year, less than 1/3 of the applicants received a scholarship. Build Dakota has partnered with the Department of Labor and Regulation to connect applicants to additional funding and employment resources. This information can be found on our website and will also be included in the notification email scholarship applicants receive. We also recommend you contact your technical institute for additional funding options and industry partnership opportunities.
Is there an initial GPA that I must have to qualify for this scholarship?
There is not a minimum GPA that applicants must have, but GPA is considered in the selection process. Work experience and career preparation courses are important, too. The scholarship application has optional forms to allow applicants to demonstrate capabilities in addition to GPA.

Can I apply at more than one technical institute?
You may apply for a program at more than one technical institute, however, you may apply for a Build Dakota Scholarship only in the eligible programs in which you have been accepted. The online scholarship application requires you to indicate the technical school where you have been accepted and the program you intend to complete. It is recommended that you have this decided prior to applying.

Can I apply for Build Dakota before I apply for admission to a technical institute?
No. You must submit a program application and be accepted to an eligible technical institute program before you can apply for the Build Dakota Scholarship. The online scholarship application system will ask if you have applied and you will not be able to complete the application if you have indicated “no”.

Why doesn’t the program I’m enrolled in qualify for the Build Dakota Scholarship?
The Build Dakota Administrative Board, SD Technical Institutes, and Department of Education have worked closely with the Department of Labor and Regulation to determine which industry areas are classified as high-need in South Dakota. The full eligible program list can be found on our website and is evaluated on a yearly basis.

If I have already earned credits that prevent me from being full-time for a given semester, can I still receive the scholarship?
This will not prevent you from receiving a Build Dakota Scholarship. We recommend you contact your technical institute regarding your specific circumstances.

Can I qualify for this scholarship if I am in default on a federal student loan or owe a financial aid overpayment?
This is considered a disqualifying event, feel free to apply once the default has been made current.

**Expenses/Financial Aid**

Do I need to apply for financial aid?
Yes. The FAFSA is part of the Build Dakota Scholarship application. It is beneficial to complete the FAFSA as you may be eligible for grants that can be used for living expenses. The FAFSA should be completed every year you are in school.

If I receive a Pell Grant, how does that affect my Build Dakota Scholarship?
Pell grants do not affect the amount awarded for Build Dakota Scholarships and can be used for living expenses while attending school.

How do military benefits affect the Build Dakota Scholarship?
Please contact the financial aid office at your technical institute with questions for further details regarding your individual situation.

Can I receive other financial aid and scholarships if I receive this scholarship?
Yes, however, because there are certain regulations tied to certain types of funds, it is recommended you contact the technical institute financial aid department for questions regarding your individual situation.

What expenses does the scholarship cover?
The Build Dakota Scholarship covers any expenses directly related to program requirements. This includes tuition, fees, books, laptops, equipment and tools. These purchases must be required by the technical institute program. If a student wishes to purchase additional or optional equipment, books, or tools, it is at his or her own expense. The Build Dakota Scholarship does not pay for any housing or living expenses.

**How do I get the required tools or computer for my program?**
We recommend you contact your technical institute for further details.

**Does the scholarship cover remedial, preparatory coursework, or other classes that are not part of my program?**
If the remedial or preparatory courses are required prior to the start of a Build Dakota eligible program, they are not covered by the scholarship. If these courses are required by all students within the Build Dakota eligible program, they can be covered by the scholarship. If they are additional to the normal program requirements, they must be paid by the student.

**If I fail a class and need to retake it, will Build Dakota pay for the repeated class?**
No. Any cost for failed and repeated classes must be paid by the student.

**Awarded/In-School Status**

**How long do I have to complete my program and still remain eligible for the scholarship?**
Program completion dates will be indicated in Scholarship Acceptance Agreements. If Build Dakota Scholars experience truly extenuating life circumstances that result in taking longer than anticipated, we recommend you contact the technical institute staff. These situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis and ongoing communication is highly encouraged. As a general rule, diploma programs take one year to complete and degree programs can be completed in two years.

**Can I transfer my Build Dakota Scholarship to another technical institute or university?**
No. The Build Dakota Scholarship will only be available during your attendance at the school that issued your award.

**What happens if I decide to change programs after I’m in school?**
Since personal situations and classes vary, we recommend you contact your technical institute for questions regarding your specific circumstance.

**I understand I must keep a minimum GPA of 2.5, but can I regain eligibility if my GPA falls below 2.5?**
Technical institutes may offer one probationary semester, but this is not guaranteed. Contact your technical institute staff regarding any questions on your continued eligibility.

**Loan Conversion**

**Under what circumstances would the scholarship convert to a loan?**
The terms of the contract can be found on our website in the sample Scholarship Acceptance Agreement. If a student does not complete the terms of his or her contract, it will be converted to a loan and the funds allocated for that student will be used to provide a scholarship to a new scholar.

**What is the interest rate if my scholarship converts to a loan?**
Scholarships converted to loans through June 30, 2020, will have a 4% annual interest rate. A copy of the loan promissory note can be found on our website.
How is the three-year employment commitment tracked?

The Build Dakota administrative staff will conduct yearly employment verification with Build Dakota Scholars, the SD Department of Labor and Regulation and the employers of Build Dakota Scholars. Details regarding this system are being determined. The Build Dakota website will be updated as details are finalized. The Build Dakota staff will also provide exit counseling to all Build Dakota recipients prior to graduation to ensure that expectations and procedures have been communicated.