



Scholarship *Programs Q&A*

Get Started!



January 1, 2026

Dear NFFF Scholarship Applicant:



When a firefighter dies in the line of duty, the family faces many challenges as they find their bearings and rebuild their lives. Oftentimes, children and spouses of these fallen heroes may not have the necessary funds that enable them to pursue their educational and career goals. Through the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's (NFFF) scholarship programs, the loved ones of the fallen can realize their educational dreams.

The NFFF online scholarship application period is open January 1 - March 1 for the 2026-2027 National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Scholarship Program. This program provides financial assistance to spouses, life partners, children, and stepchildren of firefighters honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. Please refer to the attached Q&A document for additional information about the online application and scholarship program.

To be eligible, children must be under age 30 presently and have been under age 22 at the time of their firefighter's death. All applicants must have a high school diploma or equivalency or must be in their final year of high school. Applicants must also be pursuing or planning to pursue undergraduate or graduate studies, a certification program or job skills training at an accredited institution and must be enrolled or planning to enroll as a full- or part-time student.

Scholarships are awarded for undergraduate and graduate studies, vocational-technical training, and certification and job training programs. They may be used for study at in-state or out-of-state public and private schools.

Together, with assistance from generous donors such as **Motorola Solutions Foundation**, the **Alan Patrick Sondej Memorial Fund**, the **Kenneth M. Hedrick Memorial Scholarship Fund**, and the **Sander Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund**, along with the NFFF partnerships with **MissionSquare Retirement**, **National Association of Fire Marshals**, **Global Health and Safety**, **Fire Engine Number Five Charitable Foundation**, the **Burton A. Zipser and Sandra D. Zipser Foundation**, and the Chief Elwood Banister Memorial Scholarship Fund, over \$7.3 million in scholarships have been awarded.

If you have questions or concerns with the application process or scholarship program, please contact Eric Nagle at enagle@firehero.org. We look forward to working with you to make the 2026-2027 scholarship award cycle a success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Victor Stagnaro".

Victor Stagnaro
Chief Executive Officer

About Our Scholarship Programs

#1 How many scholarship programs does the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) maintain and how does each program work?

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's scholarship program is completely dependent on support from outside donors. There are currently five different programs, although an applicant only needs to complete one application.

[Exhibit 1](#) summarizes the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation scholarship programs. For more detailed information, please visit our [website](#).

#2 What is the Motorola Solutions Foundation Enhanced Scholarship Initiative?

This is a program made possible by a generous donation from the Motorola Solutions Foundation. The program provides for larger, and in certain cases, full scholarships on an academic year-by-academic year basis. In order to be eligible for an award under this program, the applicant must be pursuing a major in a STEM subject or public safety. Awards under this program are made on a year-by-year basis and will be based on an assessment of financial need and academic performance using the composite scoring system described in #6 and #7 below.

#3 What is the Alan Patrick Sondej Memorial Scholarship Fund?

The Alan Patrick Sondej Memorial Scholarship Fund continues to provide four-year scholarships that are awarded based on an assessment of financial need and academic performance, using the same composite scoring system (see #7 and #8 below). In order to be eligible for an award under this program, the applicant must be pursuing a major in a STEM subject. Additional details concerning awards made under the AI Sondej Fund are contained in the applicant's award letter.

#4 What is the Kenneth M. Hedrick Memorial Scholarship Fund?

The Kenneth M. Hedrick Memorial Scholarship Fund provides four-year scholarships that are awarded based on an assessment of financial need and academic performance, using the same composite scoring system (see #7 and #8 below). In order to be eligible for an award under this program, the applicant must be pursuing a major in public safety. Additional details concerning awards made under the Kenneth M. Hedrick Fund are contained in the applicant's award letter.

#5 What is the Sander Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund?

The Sander Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund provides four-year scholarships that are based on an assessment of financial need and academic performance, using the same composite scoring system (see #7 and #8 below). In order to be eligible for an award under this program, the applicant must be pursuing a major in public safety. Additional details concerning awards made under the Sander Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund are contained in the applicant's award letter.

#6 What is the application period?

The application period for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation scholarship program opens on January 1 and closes on March 1.



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Submit Your NFFF Scholarship Application Between January 1 - March 1 | Visit: www.firehero.org/scholarships

Scholarship Award Criteria

#7 What are the award criteria for NFFF scholarships?

The award criteria for the NFFF scholarship programs are based upon a composite score. For more information on the Sarbanes Scholarship Program, the Motorola Solutions Foundation Enhanced Scholarship Initiative, the Alan Patrick Sondej Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Kenneth M. Hedrick Memorial Scholarship Fund, Sander Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund, and our partner programs, [visit our website](#).

#8 What is the composite score and how does it work?

The composite score is the tool that we will use to determine the relative size of the awards made under the general Sarbanes Scholarship Program, the Motorola Solutions Foundation Enhanced Scholarship Initiative, the Alan Patrick Sondej Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Kenneth M. Hedrick Memorial Scholarship Fund, and the Sander Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund.

In determining awards under these programs, each applicant will be assigned a composite score representing the sum of that applicant's financial need score and academic performance score.

Applicants with higher composite scores will receive scholarship awards that are enhanced relative to applicants with lower composite scores.

Financial Needs Assessment

#9 How will financial need be assessed?

Spouses and life partners are automatically assigned the highest possible financial need score and need not submit financial information.

For all other applicants, financial need will be assessed based upon an evaluation of the applicant's reported gross family income determined without regard to any firefighter pension or line of duty death benefits plus an evaluation of the applicant's FAFSA® Student Aid Index which should be submitted in connection with the NFFF scholarship application form. **No applicant needs to submit any financial information other than the FAFSA® Student Aid Index, although if an applicant wishes to provide additional information for consideration, she or he is welcome to do so.**

#10 If I do not submit financial information, how will that affect my scholarship award?

Because spouses and life partners are automatically assigned the highest possible financial need score and need not submit financial information, these applications will not be affected by the lack of financial information.

Other applicants will continue to be eligible for a scholarship award, and will receive educational funding at some level, even if they do not submit financial information. Applicants should note, however, that scholarship awards vary based on a composite score that represents the sum of an applicant's financial need score and academic performance score. Because the composite score assigns more weight to the financial need score than the academic performance score, applicants who do not submit financial information will have lower composite scores than applicants who do submit financial information. A lower composite score may lead to a lower scholarship award than would otherwise have been the case.



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Academic Performance Assessment

#11 How will academic performance be assessed?

Spouses and life partners are automatically assigned a top tier score on academic performance.

For all other applicants, academic performance will be assessed based on an evaluation of factors, including: (i) whether the student is pursuing a major in either public safety or a STEM subject in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; (ii) the nature of the student's course load and the student's most current GPA as provided on the most current academic transcript submitted with the application; and (iii) the student's tuition load relative to the anticipated employment prospects of the chosen major.

#12 Do I need to be a STEM or public safety major in order to receive a scholarship award under the general Sarbanes Scholarship Program?

No. We award funds under the Sarbanes Scholarship Program for any undergraduate or graduate studies, a certification program, or job skills training at an accredited institution, online college, or university.

#13 How do I know whether my major is a STEM or public safety major?

In certain cases, the status of a course of study as STEM or public safety will be obvious. For example, majors such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology, engineering, computer science, environmental science, and agricultural science are clearly STEM majors. Likewise, majors such as criminal justice, public safety administration, public safety and security, and emergency management are clearly public safety majors.

In situations where the status of a course of study is less clear cut, we will analyze the core curriculum and graduation requirements to determine whether or not the applicant's proposed course of study qualifies as either STEM or public safety.

We are happy to let you know in advance whether we will consider your proposed course of study to be STEM or public safety. Please direct all inquiries to Eric Nagle at enagle@firehero.org.



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Scholarship Programs Summary

Exhibit 1

	Sarbanes Scholarship and Partner Programs	Motorola Solutions Foundation Enhanced Scholarship Initiative	Alan Patrick Sondej Fund	Kenneth M. Hedrick Fund	Sander Cohen Fund
Who is eligible to apply?	Spouses, life partners, children, and stepchildren of firefighters honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. Children and stepchildren must be under age 30 and have been under age 22 at the time of the firefighter's death				
What course of study or major must an applicant be pursuing?	Any undergraduate or graduate studies, a certification program, or job skills training at an accredited institution, online college, or university	Public safety or STEM major at a four-year accredited not-for-profit university	STEM major at a four-year accredited not-for-profit university	Public safety major at a four-year accredited not-for-profit university	Public safety major at a four-year accredited not-for-profit university
Award Criteria	Composite score that takes into account financial need and academic performance, with an emphasis on financial need				
Single Year Award or Multi-Year Award?	Single year award	Single year award	Four-year award, subject to ongoing academic performance and course-of-study requirements	Four-year award, subject to ongoing academic performance and course-of-study requirements	Four-year award, subject to ongoing academic performance and course-of-study requirements

Submit Your NFFF Scholarship Application Between January 1 - March 1 | Visit: www.firehero.org/scholarships



Apply Now!



Scholarship Application Checklist

- ☐ Photo (.jpg or .png) or PDF of Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) Student Aid Index (SAI) – not required, but strongly recommended
- ☐ Photo (.jpg or .png) or PDF of official transcript
- ☐ Letter of recommendation #1 from a member of the fire service
- ☐ Letter of recommendation #2 from a former or current teacher or employer
- ☐ Professional Headshot
Please provide a clear, high-quality photo that reflects professionalism. Ensure the image is taken in a well-lit, neutral setting with minimal distractions. Dress appropriately for your career aspirations—for instance, wear scrubs or a lab coat if pursuing a healthcare career. The photo should focus on your face and shoulders, without filters or special effects, and must not be cropped from a group photo.

**Complete the online scholarship application
by 11:59 pm on March 1, 2026**