9 Characteristics of an Ideal Scholarship

While every scholarship program is unique, research among scholarship providers and students[1] has identified common characteristics that contribute to an "ideal scholarship". By assessing your program against these criteria, you can identify areas for improvement and enhance your ability to meet the needs of students and donors.

Characteristics of Ideal Scholarships

1 Clear, well-communicated application and selection criteria are provided to all stakeholders, including students, donors, and evaluators.

2 User-friendly, trust-based forms and processes.

3 As broad eligibility as possible, given your purpose and intended recipients.

4 Multi-year, renewable funding.

5 Awards greater than the annual tuition cost at your local community college.

6 Coverage of any Cost of Attendance expenses.

7 Continuity of funding even when students' circumstances change.

8 Educated donors who understand students' needs and ways to support them.

9 Engaged donors, interested in getting to know students beyond simply announcing awards.

Our suggested #10: Education and scholarships are always evolving. Be ready and open to change! Lose things that don't work, and add those that do.

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[1] Scholarship Program Best Practices, Da Silva, J., 2018. https://tinyurl.com/3udjssej

How to use this workbook:

This workbook is editable! So you can type directly into it and save your changes. You'll need a PDF reader like Adobe Acrobat Reader (available for free here).

Open the worksheet in your PDF reader, type a few words, save or download it, close the PDF, and reopen to ensure your changes are saved.

While you can save your work directly in the PDF, you also have the option of using it as a guide for writing in a notebook or printing it out to complete it by hand.

Assessing Your Program & Driving Change

To effectively improve your scholarship program, assess its current strengths and weaknesses. By identifying areas for growth, you can take targeted action to align your program more closely with the ideal characteristics outlined in the guide.

Which of these characteristics do your scholarships already have?

What needs more time and attention?

What are the most pressing areas to focus on, based on existing goals and priorities?

What are some easy wins?

What action steps can you take in the next 3-6 months? In the next 6-12 months?

What might take 1-2 years to implement?

Which information do you need to gather, such as student stories or data, to support that?

Who can help and support you in this work? (Besides us - we're 💯% cheering you on!)

What's your immediate next step?