



Youth Serve Montana Scholarships

Presented by the Governor's Office of Community Service,
Montana Campus Compact and Reach Higher Montana

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Youth Serve Montana Scholarship

Q: What is the purpose of the scholarship?

A: The Youth Serve Montana Scholarship was created to promote volunteerism among high school students, to encourage youth volunteers to further their learning and provide tuition assistance for Montana students who wish to attend college in-state.

Q: How many scholarships are available?

A: Up to 100 with priority given to awarding one per high school.

Q: Can students count virtual and remote service in their service hours?

A: Yes. Virtual, remote, and COVID-19 response service hours are accepted and encouraged. COVID-19 response and related service will be taken into consideration and weighted during the application scoring process.

Q: Where can I find information, resources and safety guidelines for COVID-19 related service and remote service projects?

A: Go to <https://leadasap.ysa.org/resources/> for more information and guidance about virtual youth service.

Q: How is the scholarship funded?

A: The funds have been made available in partnership with Montana Campus Compact, a network of Montana colleges and universities committed to community service, and Reach Higher Montana, a nonprofit dedicated to helping students pursue and fund postsecondary education. The scholarships are administered by the Governor's Office of Community Service. For the past seven years, the Montana Campus Compact Board of Directors has partnered with the Governor's Commission on Community Service to provide the recipients of the Montana Youth Serve Scholarship with \$500 institutional matches, making the overall scholarship \$1,000.

Q: What is the Governor's Office of Community Service?

A: The [Governor's Office of Community Service](#) is a small state government office tasked with promoting and expanding service and volunteerism in Montana. The office administers federal funding for AmeriCorps State programs, expands grassroots emergency preparedness through the ReadyMontana Initiative, and provides technical assistance and support services to community service organizations and national service programs in Montana. The Governor's

Office of Community Service and the Governor-appointed Montana Commission on Community Service were created in 1993.

Q: What is the Reach Higher Montana?

A: Based in Helena, Montana, [Reach Higher Montana](#) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing students with the knowledge and tools to pursue and fund their postsecondary education. Reach Higher Montana uses proceeds from its business activities to offer a range of programs that include grants, scholarships, community outreach, money management counseling and training on education finance planning.

Q: What is Montana Campus Compact?

A: [Montana Campus Compact](#) (MTCC) is Montana's largest higher education network and it advances the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility. MTCC is one of 35 State Affiliates of Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents--representing over 6 million students--dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education.

Q: Which colleges are member institutions of Montana Campus Compact?

A: Montana Campus Compact membership typically changes annually, the most up-to-date list is always on the About Us-Campuses link on the website mtcompact.org.

Q: Is this scholarship related to the Governor's Best and Brightest Scholarship?

A: No, the Governor's Best and Brightest Scholarship is a different scholarship administered by the Montana University System and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. If you have questions about the Governor's Best and Brightest Scholarship, please call 1-800-537-7508 or email mtscholarships@montana.edu.

Q: Who do I contact if I have questions about the Youth Serve Montana Scholarship?

A: If you have questions about the scholarship application, please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service at 406-444-9077. If you have questions about how the scholarship will be applied to your tuition, please contact your financial aid officer.

Application Process

Q: How should I submit my materials?

A: The application form is now available to complete and submit online. If you are unable to access the online form, a PDF version of the application is available. Please email serve@mt.gov or call 406-444-9077 to request a PDF version.

Q: Will I receive notification if my application is incomplete?

A: No. The Governor's Office of Community Service receives many applications and incomplete applications will not be considered. Please call to confirm that your materials were received.

Q: Are home-schooled students eligible to apply?

A: Yes. The Governor's Office of Community Service reserves 5 scholarships for home-schooled students with senior status.

Q: Is my application scored differently if I am a First-Generation College student?

A: Because the Reach Higher Montana and Montana Campus Compact are working toward increasing enrollment of First Generation College students, some consideration may be given to applications from first generation college students.

Q: May students from other states or international students apply?

A: No.

Q: Students in the past submitted their applications through the school guidance counselor's office. Do I need to do the same for my application?

A: No. To streamline the application process, students submit their applications directly to the Governor's Office of Community Service. The application must be validated by your high school Guidance Counselor, Principal, or Superintendent. It is your responsibility to confirm with your validating official that the verification paperwork has been submitted.

Q: How is my application validated?

A: Your application must be reviewed by your high school guidance counselor, principal or superintendent. If using the online application form, you will be instructed to enter an email address of your validating official. After you submit your application, an email will be sent to your validating official containing your application for their review. Applications submitted by home-schooled students must be validated by the County Superintendent. After review, the validating official must sign the application and follow the instructions to submit the paperwork by the submission deadline. The validating official will be certifying that the student volunteer hours submitted are accurate.

Q. How do I demonstrate financial need?

A. You show that you need financial help by including the confirmation email proving that you have submitted a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application. **Attach the confirmation page** you receive once you have completed a FAFSA online. You do not need to attach your financial aid award letter. The FAFSA website is: www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Q: What are the acceptable forms of proof of acceptance at a Montana Campus Compact member institution?

A: Letters of acceptance or letters of enrollment are both forms of acceptable proof.

Q: How will my application be evaluated?

A: Applications will first be evaluated for meeting the minimum requirements. These include:

- A completed and legible scholarship application form;
- Proof of acceptance to one of Montana's Campus Compact member institutions;
- Current senior status at the time of application;
- Documentation of a submitted FAFSA; and

- The student will use the scholarship funds for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Applications will then be evaluated by a selection committee based on secondary criteria. These include:

- Geographic diversity;
- Depth and breadth of service activities; and
- Student's personal and long-term commitment to service.
- COVID-19 related service response efforts.

Q: Is my high school grade point average included in the selection criteria?

A: No.

Q: How will the geographic diversity criterion be applied?

A: In order to offer the scholarship broadly across Montana, the selection committee will give priority to one student from each high school, plus five homeschooleders, to receive the scholarship.

Q: If the college that I plan to attend is not one of Montana Campus Compact's member institutions, am I still eligible for the Youth Serve Montana Scholarship?

A: No. The scholarship is funded in part through a match from Montana Campus Compact.

Q: Can I apply by email or online?

A: We have created a new online portal for submitting scholarship applications this year. We prefer that students use this portal for submitting the application, rather than using the PDF version available by request. The PDF is posted as an alternative option for submitting applications.

For students who do use the online portal, counselors, principals, and superintendents will receive a separate email for validating the student's volunteer hours. Instructions are outlined in the online application.

Volunteer Hours

Q: What are examples of service activities?

A: The ways to volunteer in your community are endless! Some examples of volunteer activities include: COVID-19 community response and support, peer mentoring, emergency preparedness activities, land restoration and trail maintenance work, and volunteering at community gardens. See the last page of the FAQ for more ideas.

Q: What activities are prohibited in the scholarship program?

A: Activities that include efforts to influence policy and legislation, participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, platforms candidates or elected officials, engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that conducts worship services,

constructing, operating or maintaining facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.

Q: I volunteer with my church. Can none of these hours be counted?

A: Volunteer hours with your church or religious institution can be counted if they are not considered “religious proselytization.” Examples of acceptable hours include food drives, providing daycare in the nursery, building schools or houses on a mission trip, serving food at a soup kitchen, collecting holiday presents for those in need, or visiting nursing homes. Examples of unacceptable hours include teaching Sunday school, building churches, assisting with worship services, or singing in the worship choir. Note that hours spent traveling, worshipping, socializing, and relaxing on mission trips cannot be counted. Please count only the hours spent volunteering in the local community.

Q: I volunteer with one of my classes at school. Can these hours be counted?

A: Volunteer hours with school can be counted if they are not part of your typical class time. Helping with sporting events, peer tutoring, trash cleanups, recycling drives, and helping with special events are all acceptable volunteer hours. Volunteer hours mandated because of detention or disciplinary action cannot be counted. Check with the school official signing your application to see if your school-related hours are acceptable.

Scholarship Payment Process

Q: I’ve received a scholarship. How does it get to my school?

A: The Youth Serve Montana Scholarship payment will be sent directly to your institution’s financial aid office before school starts fall semester. The financial aid office will verify your enrollment and will apply the payment to the student account upon verification.

Q: Who do I contact to verify the scholarship has been applied to my tuition?

A: After enrollment in the fall, recipients should follow up with their institution’s financial aid officer to find out when the matching funds have been applied to their tuition. Please notify the campus that you are receiving a Youth Serve Montana Scholarship upon enrollment. Note that your account might show a balance until the scholarship payment is received at the start of the school year.

Q: How is the scholarship applied to tuition? Is it split between semesters?

A: The scholarship is applied directly to the student’s tuition, and is split between semesters, with \$500 applied to each semester’s tuition. Check with your financial aid officer for more information or assistance.

Q: What happens if I transfer schools after receiving the scholarship?

A: If you decide to attend a different Montana Campus Compact school than what was listed in your application, please notify the Governor’s Office of Community Service prior to August 1, 2021. If you transfer schools after September 1, notify your financial aid officers at both schools to inform them of your transfer and to ensure that the matching funds are properly applied. You should also notify the Governor’s Office of Community Service.

Q: Am I required to maintain a grade point average at college?

A: The Governor's Office of Community Service does not require a minimum grade point average after enrollment but check with your college's financial aid officer to find out about specific requirements that your campus might have.

Q: What if the volunteering I do is mostly informal, like volunteering at community events, shoveling snow and raking leaves for elderly people, etc.?

A: This sort of volunteering can be counted for the scholarship, it just requires that someone with firsthand knowledge of your commitments, and *who's not a family member* verify those hours.

Q: What can a Youth Serve Montana Scholarship be used for?

A: The YSM scholarship can cover costs of attendance, which typically refers to tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation and personal expenses and is determined by each institution. If full costs of attendance are already met, some institutions may not be able to provide scholarship match, and therefore the full \$1000 scholarship may not be available.

Examples of Service Activities

Places and Organizations that offer volunteer opportunities:

- 4-H
- Adopt a Grandparent/Homebound Elderly Companions
- Adopt a Highway
- Afterschool programs
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Boy Scouts
- Career and Technical Student Organizations
- Community Gardens
- Conservation Districts
- Family Career & Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)
- Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- Food banks and soup kitchens
- Girl Scouts
- Habitat for Humanity
- Historical Societies
- Hospitals
- Humane Society
- Hunter's Education Classes
- Libraries
- Literacy Programs
- National Honors Society
- Nursing Homes
- Meals on Wheels
- Master Gardener Programs
- Museums, Art Galleries and Monuments
- Pow-Wow Events
- Preventative Drug, Alcohol, Violence, Abuse Programs
- Red Cross (Blood Drives, Emergency Preparedness Training, etc.)
- Ski patrol
- Student Council
- United Way
- Volunteer Fire Departments

- Youth Justice Council

- YMCA and YWCA

Types of Service Activities:

- Virtual mentoring
- Check-in calls to elderly/disabled individuals
- Making care packages for socially isolated individuals & essential workers
- Make and donate face masks
- Book drives
- Recycling & [environmental service projects](#)
- Coaching
- Coat collections
- ESL tutoring
- Food drives
- Fundraising for nonprofits

- Global Youth Service Day activities
- Highway cleanups
- Home weatherization
- Invasive plant removal
- MLK day activities
- Peer mediation
- Collecting and donating food to homeless shelters
- Trail building and maintenance
- Tutoring
- Serving as a hospital aid
- Bake sales for school clubs
- Helping at animal shelters
- Visits to senior homes

Find more service examples and ideas [here](#).

