



## 2026 Community Service Scholarship Guidelines

The Desert Financial Community Service Scholarship rewards students who have dedicated exceptional time and effort to serving their communities.

In 2026, thirty applicants will be selected to receive \$3,000 each in scholarship funds distributed directly to the Arizona-based college or university of their choice.

### Scholarship Requirements

- Be a graduating high school senior (spring of 2026)
- Have a 3.00 or higher cumulative weighted GPA
- Plan to attend an Arizona college or university
- Be a current member or a relative of a member in good standing (i.e., hold a share (savings) account with a minimum balance of \$25 and no delinquencies)
- Provide Student Aid Index score from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Complete 50 or more hours of community service between 1/1/2025–12/31/25 (see service criteria qualifications below)
- Write essays describing your current educational goal and community service experience.

### Service vs. Volunteering (Community Service Criteria)

Supporting a variety of volunteer activities to serve others is important; however, not all volunteer hours qualify toward our community service scholarship requirements. Please note that for this scholarship, we are seeking volunteer service that demonstrates leadership and a commitment to transforming communities through service to others in need. We request **hours only with IRS-designated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations or other qualifying groups**, such as National Honor Society, Girl Scouts, Key Club, Rotary Club, and others, as applicable.

The following are examples of service that **would not qualify**:

- Assisting peers, your high school, or neighbors (who have no financial need)
- Playing a role in worship services (as this is a normal course of action in being a member of your worship community)
- Participating in religious-related activities that only benefit the congregation
- Giving time to a political campaign (i.e., support or oppose a candidate for elected office; however, issue-based advocacy may qualify)
- Raising funds for a student group or an organization of which you are a member (for the direct benefit of the group participants – trips, activities, events, etc.)

Some of these activities can be explored in different ways to meet the community service requirement for this scholarship. A few eligible activities include: being a peer tutor in a low income school or community; helping your school that lacks resources for activities or programs; supporting a program at your house of worship that helps people of lesser means (not within their membership); civic engagement focused on local community improvement; or raising funds through a student group to benefit an external non-profit (food drive, cards for Veterans, diaper drive, charity fundraisers, etc.).

## Application Process

Before you start your application, there are a few things you should know. First, the application does not save or allow you to return later to complete it. You will need to have all your information ready before you start, so you can complete the process in one sitting. Second, if you are selected to proceed in the selection process, you will receive an email requesting additional information, which is due by February 27th. This will include a certified transcript as well as your Student Aid Index score from your FAFSA. We will also be contacting the volunteer coordinators to certify your service hours and gather feedback on your service. Please review the checklist below before beginning your application.

## Application Checklist

*The following is a list of items you should gather or be aware of **before starting your application**.*

### General:

- ☐ Desert Financial account number and the member's first & last name
- ☐ High school name and state
- ☐ Cumulative weighted GPA
- ☐ In-state college choices
- ☐ Current certified transcript
- ☐ Student Aid Index score from your FAFSA

### Community Service Activities

You'll be asked to provide the following information for your volunteering efforts at all qualified organizations. Combined volunteer hours must be equal to or greater than 50 hours across all organizations. **Qualifying organizations must be designated as an IRS-designated 501(c)3, and qualified volunteer time must meet the criteria found in the "Service vs. Volunteering" section (above).**

- ☐ Name and State of the Organization(s)
- ☐ Activities Performed
- ☐ Type of Population Served
- ☐ Total Hours Performed
- ☐ Supervisor Name, Email, and Phone

### Essay Questions

You will be asked to submit essay responses to the following questions. These essays provide an opportunity to highlight your current and past community service experiences and to reflect on how these experiences have shaped your life and influenced your future career goals. Each response may be up to 2,000 characters.

- ❑ **Educational Plans & Career Goals:** How will this scholarship advance your educational and career goals? What is your intended path of study and/or major?
- ❑ **Community Service & You:** What inspires you to be involved in community service? How has performing community service activities enriched your life and influenced your future career goals?

### **Important Reminders**

Please gather all the information needed before starting the online application – partial applications cannot be saved.

Applications must be submitted by **February 20, 2026**.

***WAIVER OF LIABILITY/PUBLICITY RELEASE:*** By submitting your information for the award, you grant Desert Financial the right to use your name, image, voice, statements and/or other likenesses and information for advertising, promotional, trade and/or any other purpose in any media or format now known or hereafter devised, throughout the world, in perpetuity, without limitation and without further compensation, consideration, permission or notification, unless prohibited by law.