



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 help 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 program 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 individuals at all income levels are encouraged to apply. The program does not specify a threshold of need; 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 program at a South Dakota technical institute (Lake Area Technical Institute, Mitchell Technical Institute, Southeast Technical Institute, or Western Dakota Technical Institute).
- Following graduation, work full-time in South Dakota in the field of study for a minimum of three years.
- Maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average.
- Complete the program on time. Diploma programs typically require 1 to 1.5 years to complete and AAS degree programs require two years.
- Industry requirements, if applicable. Industry partner awardees must also accept the matching industry partner's additional commitments.

What is considered full-time?

Students are considered full-time if they take sufficient classes to graduate in the allotted time. Please check with your technical institute regarding questions about your individual circumstances.

When does the application open and close?

The 2019-2020 application will be open from January 1, 2020, through April 15, 2020.

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 such as the Department of Labor's workforce training programs or other scholarships available at the technical institutes.

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. 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 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

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 high demand careers. Some employers pay for a significant portion of the scholarship expenses and the Build Dakota Scholarship pays 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 with further instructions on how to complete the acceptance process. Most applicants will be notified before June 1, 2018.

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

Yes. 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. Check with the technical institute for further information.

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 not currently enrolled in a SD technical institute and starting a NEW program at one of these schools. 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, 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. Based on applicant submissions from previous years, less than one-third of the applicants will receive an award. 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 the Build Dakota website. 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. Scholarship recipients will be required to maintain a minimum 2.5 cumulative 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 be awarded only one scholarship in the eligible programs in which you have been accepted. If you intend on applying at more than one technical institute, you will have to visit the website of each technical institute and create separate applications.

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.

Why doesn't every technical institute program 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 have the highest need for skilled professionals in South Dakota. The full eligible program list can be found on the Build Dakota website and is evaluated each year.

If I have already earned credits that prevent me from being full-time for a given semester, can I still receive the scholarship?

Entering a program with credits that apply toward graduation 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?

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 covered by the scholarship, but the need for these courses must be determined and recommended by the technical institute. You will not be reimbursed for any courses completed prior to acceptance into the Build Dakota Scholarship program.

Will Build Dakota pay for test-out fees?

Yes. Any cost for fees associated with testing out of classes will be paid by Build Dakota.

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 their education taking longer than anticipated, they must contact the technical institute. 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 start 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 or self-pay semester, but this is not guaranteed. Contact your technical institute regarding any questions on your continued eligibility.

Debt Conversion

Under what circumstances would the scholarship convert to a debt?

If a student does not complete the terms of his or her contract, it will be converted to an interest bearing debt and the funds allocated for that student will be used to provide a scholarship to a new scholar.

What if I quit school during the first month of enrollment?

If any of your tools, books, or other materials can be resold as new, you will not be required to repay those expenses. If they have been used, you will keep them and be required to repay any expenses paid on your behalf.

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.

Can I appeal the decision to convert the scholarship to a loan?

All scholars have the right to request an appeal by the technical institutes. Requests must be submitted within the 10 days following the date the scholar was notified of the decision to convert the scholarship to a debt. Contact the technical institute or Build Dakota program manager for more information regarding an appeal.

After Graduation

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.

How will I know what to do after I graduate?

The Build Dakota administrative staff will visit each technical institute to meet with Build Dakota scholars prior to graduation to make sure graduates understand how to comply with the employment requirements. It is the responsibility of the scholar to make sure they attend this meeting.

How long do I have to secure a job after graduation?

Scholars have 6 months after graduation to begin employment.

Can I be self-employed?

Self-employment will be approved in some circumstances; however, the scholar must be prepared to submit legal documentation of self-employment on a full-time basis.

What type of job is required after graduation?

Scholars must work in the exact field of the Build Dakota sponsored degree.

What if I can't find a job after graduation?

Build Dakota Scholarship programs have been specifically chosen to fill high-need areas in South Dakota and open positions usually exceed the number of applicants. The technical institutes have very high placement rates so most scholars will be employed prior to graduation. The Build Dakota website has a list of industry partners looking to employ skilled scholars. The Department of Labor offices are also remarkable resources for helping job seekers secure employment. A list of local offices can be found here: <http://dlr.sd.gov/localoffices/default.aspx>

What if I don't fulfill the three year work commitment?

The requirements of the work commitment are outlined in the student agreement. If the scholar does not complete the terms of the agreement, the scholarship will convert to an interest bearing debt. If the scholar completes a portion of the work commitment, the scholarship payback amount will be pro-rated based on the amount of time worked.