* OPPORTUNITY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP *

Open to every family!!!!

2027-2028 SCHOOL YEAR

READ THE INFORMATION BELOW
Education Scholarship Trust Fund Program

The Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) Program is administered by the South Carolina Department of Education that allows qualifying South Carolina families to apply for a scholarship. For the 2027-2028school year, the awarded amount will be $7,795.

The application for the 2026-2027 school year has been closed, but you can still join the ESTF program Wait list below. Registering for the waitlist will make sure you receive updates on the application for the 2027-2028 school year.

2027-28 Application Windows
 November 1, 2026: Returning ESTF Families
 January 15, 2027: Priority Application Window
 February 16, 2027: General Application Window

To qualify for the scholarship for the 2027-2028 school year, the student must:

 Be a resident of South Carolina.
 Must be a K-12 student, has not graduated and have not reached the age of 22.
 Have a household income that does not exceed **500%** of the federal poverty guidelines.
 Cannot attend their resident zoned public school for the 2027-2028 school year.
NOTE: Your resident public school is the school that your student is zoned to attend, based on your address. As part of participation in the ESTF program, a student in public school must be withdrawn from their resident public school.
 Cannot receive the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children for the 2027-2028 School year.
 Cannot attend home school under Option 1, Option 2, or Option 3 for the 2027-2028 School year.

Please refer to the ESTF website at SC ESTF Program to access all information regarding the Scholarship program.

Open to everyone means it is open to you!!!!!!

ESTF: THE APPLICATION TO APPLY IS NOW OPEN!

The ESTF Program would like to let you know about a change to the 2027–28 application cycle that may affect you. Returning families need to pay close attention to this information.

WHAT'S CHANGING

- **Effective October 15, 2026; every ESTF applicant must submit a federal Form 1040 tax return to verify household income. Last year, some families qualified without filing a tax return. Those families will now need to file one to keep their student's scholarship.**
- **A federal tax return is the only document that gives us a full, consistent picture of household income. Pay stubs, W-2s, and employer letters show only part of a family's income and are harder to verify. To maintain program integrity, every applicant must provide the same type of document. There are no exceptions to this requirement. We have already emailed the affected families directly about this change.**
- **Additionally, please note the addition of a new required document: age verification. This document is needed to confirm the student's date of birth, as we had many problems last year with typos in student birthdates. Acceptable documents include a birth certificate, passport, student driver's license or state ID, or adoption decree/paperwork.**

KEY DATES FOR ESTF APPLICATIONS

 8:00 AM November 1, 2026. The returning applicant window opens. Families can apply at this time for any returning ESTF student and add any of their siblings. They will receive the application link via email and a popup in ClassWallet. This window only applies to students who are awarded the scholarship, not students who are on the waitlist. Note that November 1, 2026, is a Sunday, so SCDE and FACTS customer service will not be available until Monday morning.

o Families without a tax return should still submit their application and all other required documents right away, without waiting for their tax return to be completed.

 8:00 AM January 15, 2027. Applications open for new ESTF applicants who fall into at least one of the following categories: household income at or below 300% FPL, parent or guardian is active-duty military, or the student attended public school during the 2026-27 school year.

o As soon as the IRS opens tax season, families who don't have a 2025 tax return should file their federal Form 1040 and upload a copy to their application.

 8:00 AM February 16, 2027. The general application window opens, for all eligible families with income up to 500% FPL. For returning students who qualified for ESTF without filing taxes in 2026-27, their scholarship spot will be held for them until the general application window opens at 8:00 AM February 16.

o If a family gets their taxes completed in January or early February and uploads their Form 1040 to FACTS before February 16, the student's returning priority spots are kept (assuming the rest of their application is complete).

However, if returning families do not complete their application and upload a Form 1040, their student will lose their priority spot, and their student may not receive a scholarship for 2027–28.
Families who file later should still upload their Form 1040 as soon as possible so their student can be placed on the waitlist. Fora returning student, starting the application in November will help the family get a good placement on the waitlist.

REMINDERS

Some reminders for applying for ESTF:

 All returning ESTF families need to complete their applications as soon as the window opens on November 1. This includes families that need to wait until January to file their 1040.

 If you did not submit a 1040 tax return last year, file your taxes as soon as possible in January and upload your completed 2026 Form 1040 to your FACTS application well before February 16.

 If your household lives on someone else's income, such as a spouse, partner or grandparent, they may need to add that person as a co-applicant and submit their 1040.

 For Spanish-language support with ESTF, have parents call the SCDE's ESTF program office at 803-734-0009 to speak with our customer support specialist Anna.

FREE TAX HELP

 IRS Free File (free online filing for eligible households): https://www.irs.gov/freefile
 IRS VITA and TCE free in-person tax help: https://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/ or 1-800-906-9887
 SC Thrive (free online federal and state filing, help in English and Spanish): https://scthrive.org/for-you/filetaxes/ or 800-726-8774
 SC 211 (connects families to local free tax clinics): dial 2-1-1, text 211211, or visit https://www.sc211.org
 AARP Foundation Tax-Aide (free in-person help for all ages, no income limit): https://www.aarp.org/taxaide or 888-227-7669

 For families without a Social Security number, information on getting an ITIN (Form W-7): https://www.irs.gov/individuals/individual-taxpayer-identification-number

These resources are shared as a public service. The South Carolina Department of Education does not endorse or guarantee the services of any outside organization listed. Please contact each provider directly about eligibility and services.