



**Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship
A 501(c)(3) Organization
Overview and Scholarship Policy**

MISS AMERICA HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Miss America began awarding academic scholarships in 1945 under the leadership of National Director Lenora Slaughter, marking the start of what would become the largest scholarship program for women in the United States. Over the decades, millions of dollars have been distributed—not through a singular administering entity, but through a variety of financial structures. These have included nonprofit foundations, state-level scholarship trusts, banking institutions, and fiduciary partners such as the New Jersey Community Trust. Administrative responsibility has shifted over time among various boards, officers, and legal entities aligned with the Miss America Organization, reflecting evolving standards of governance and financial compliance. In 2023, Miss America's Scholarship Foundation Inc. was established as the official 501(c)(3) nonprofit responsible for administering and awarding scholarships nationally. Today, stepping onto a Miss America local/state or national stage continues to offer more than scholarship awards—it provides year-round access to a powerful network of women and a platform to elevate individual philanthropic engagement.

ABOUT MISS AMERICA'S SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

Established in 2023, Miss America's Scholarship Foundation Inc. (MASF) is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization recognized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Its charitable mission is to advance educational opportunity by awarding tuition-only scholarships to women who are U.S. citizens between the ages of 14 and 28. MASF operates independently from Miss America IP, Inc., and functions solely as the official scholarship-granting entity associated with the Miss America competition and yearly programs. Use of the "Miss America" name and related intellectual property is authorized through a formal licensing agreement. Scholarship awards are issued in strict compliance with IRS regulations governing qualified educational expenses and serve as a core expression of the organization's broader mission to empower women to lead through access to higher education. These awards help fund higher education for young women while supporting their efforts to lead real change in their communities. Funds not utilized in scholarship awards are held at the Foundation for future awards. The Miss District of Columbia Scholarship policy is aligned with MASF in regards to the receipt, review, approval and distribution of scholarship awards to the delegates of Miss District of Columbia.



Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship Foundation Inc. 2026 Scholarship Policy

I, _____, and, if applicable, my parent or legal guardian, hereby acknowledge that I/we have received, read, and understood the Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship Foundation Inc. (MDC) National Scholarship Policy. We affirm our understanding of the policies and procedures governing the administration, usage, and disbursement of scholarship awards. Furthermore, we agree to comply with all stated requirements as they pertain to Miss District of Columbia. **I/we understand and acknowledge the following:**

State Scholarship Awards

State Competition scholarship amounts are announced and published in advance based on funds raised, primarily through partnerships with philanthropic institutions, including the American Heart Association. This model ensures that published awards reflect secured, disbursable funding and supports Miss DC's ongoing commitment to expanding scholarship opportunities each year. In addition to these State awards, Miss DC may offer designated four-year scholarships through official partner universities, such as the University of Alabama and Mississippi State. Recipients who accept and enroll in a university partner program receive a comprehensive tuition award that exceeds the national scholarship value. Acceptance of a university scholarship fulfills the national award obligation and is not cumulative; recipients may claim one or the other, but not both.

Eligibility

Eligibility for scholarship awards at the local and state level is limited to officially registered delegates who have met all participation requirements outlined by the Miss District of Columbia Organization (MDC), including completion of their philanthropic fundraising commitment under the MAO x American Heart Association partnership. In addition to meeting age, citizenship, and full-time enrollment criteria, recipients must maintain academic good standing at their accredited educational institution and uphold the ethical and behavioral standards of the Miss District of Columbia Organization. Submission of any false information, including doctored or fraudulent documentation, will result in immediate forfeiture of all scholarship awards and may result in legal action to recover any funds disbursed on the basis of that misinformation. Delegates found to have knowingly falsified residency or other eligibility documentation at the local, state, or national level—and who disseminate or promote false narratives regarding their misrepresented status—may be subject to civil or criminal prosecution. Miss District of Columbia (MDC) reserves the right to withhold or revoke any scholarship award in such cases, as well as in instances of academic ineligibility, defamation, misconduct, or behavior deemed detrimental to the integrity or mission of the organization. All award decisions will be governed by applicable Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations and enforced with fairness, consistency, and legal compliance.

Miss District of Columbia

Redemption Timeline

MDC scholarship recipients must redeem their awards within two (2) years for all local/state titleholders and three (3) years for the national titleholders. Any remaining balance after the redemption period will automatically be forfeited, with the following clarifications.

Teen Scholarship Awards Redemption Window

Miss District of Columbia's Teen award recipients who are under age 18 or have not yet graduated from high school at the time of the national competition will have their scholarship funds held in reserve until the later of (a) high school graduation or (b) their 18th birthday. The redemption period will begin in the calendar year in which this milestone is reached and will remain open for two (2) years thereafter. This ensures that all Teen recipients, including those as young as 14 at the time of their award, receive a fair and consistent opportunity to access their scholarship funds once eligible—without undue delay or premature expiration.

Miss Scholarship Awards Redemption Window

Miss District of Columbia's award shall begin on September 1 of the calendar year in which the scholarship competition was held and will remain open for two (2) years thereafter.

Scholarship Forfeiture:

Failure to comply with the scholarship policies and procedures established by Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship Fund (MDC) may result in the forfeiture of a scholarship award. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Failure to submit accurate or complete documentation;
- Submission of false, misleading, or doctored information;
- Failure to disclose receipt of outside scholarships;
- Misuse of scholarship funds or use for non-qualified educational expenses;
- Failure to enroll in an accredited college or university within the required timeframe;
- Failure to redeem the scholarship within the designated eligibility window.

MDC reserves the right to revoke any scholarship and to require the return of funds disbursed under false pretenses. Any unused or forfeited funds will be returned to MDC for future scholarship tuition awards.

Furthermore, any conduct deemed defamatory, fraudulent, unethical, or in violation of law or MDC standards may result in disqualification from current and future awards and may be subject to legal action.

Scholarship Usage

MDC scholarship funds are strictly limited to Qualified Tuition and Related Expenses, such as

Miss District of Columbia

tuition and mandatory course fees, in accordance with IRS guidelines. All funds are paid directly to accredited educational institutions for current, active enrollment and cannot be disbursed to recipients, third parties, or 529 savings plans. Reimbursements for past or already-paid expenses are not permitted. Disbursement requests must include official, itemized tuition invoices showing current charges and outstanding balances. State Directors must also confirm that all other local or state-level awards have been fully applied. Any unused scholarship funds must be returned directly to MDC by the educational institution.

What Are Qualified Expenses

Under IRS guidelines, Qualified Tuition and Related Expenses are those costs directly required for enrollment or attendance at an eligible educational institution. These include tuition and mandatory course-related fees such as laboratory or registration fees required as a condition of enrollment. Expenses such as room and board, travel, insurance, or optional materials are not considered qualified and may not be paid using MDC scholarship funds. For further guidance, see [IRS Publication 970](#).

Disbursements

Once a complete award request is submitted, including all required documentation, MDC reviews the materials for accuracy and compliance. The request is then verified with the educational institution to confirm active enrollment and eligible tuition charges. Upon confirmation, scholarship funds are issued directly to the institution and applied to the student's account. Funds will be disbursed directly to accredited educational institutions for active tuition expenses.

Required Documentation

Requests for disbursement must include current, official tuition invoices clearly reflecting charges and balances due. Local Directors must provide a letter certifying all other local/state award funds have been exhausted. NOTE: Screenshots, photos, or replicas of invoices will not be accepted.

Unused Tuition Funds

Any unused tuition funds must be returned to MDC by the institution.

Online Submissions

All scholarship requests must be submitted online through the designated MDC application platform (missdc.org) and questions regarding uploads sent to shawnda@missdc.org.

Documentation

Requests must be accompanied by required documentation as indicated on the application form and submitted at least 30 days prior to payment due dates to ensure timely processing, but not more than 90 days out from start of classes.

Deadlines and MDC Additional Requests for Information

The recipient must manage requests to comply with procedural deadlines.



Priority of Award Usage

Local/State Funds

Scholarship funds awarded at the local and state levels must be fully utilized before requesting national-level scholarship funds. Written verification from signed by State Executive Director on licensed letterhead confirming the exhaustion of state and local funds is required before accessing national scholarships. National funds *may not be accessed unless all state and local funds have been exhausted, and any outside scholarships applied*. Failure to do so may result in forfeiture of the national award.

Outside Scholarships

Recipients who receive additional scholarships from outside sources—including private foundations, employers, military institutions, or other external entities—must apply those funds first toward tuition, fees, or other eligible educational expenses before Miss District of Columbia (MDC) funds can be disbursed. Documentation confirming the amount and application of all outside scholarships is required as part of the MDC disbursement request process.

IRS Compliance and Usage Restrictions

Scholarship funds disbursements are limited to tuition and mandatory course-related fees, as defined by the IRS. These include tuition and mandatory course fees at accredited colleges or universities. To remain eligible, recipients must maintain full-time enrollment status as defined by their institution. Scholarship funds will be disbursed only to accredited educational institutions and may be applied solely toward current, unpaid tuition charges.

Regulatory Changes

I understand that Miss District of Columbia (MDC) reserves the right to amend, modify, or update this policy at any time, without prior notice, to remain in full compliance with federal regulations, including changes to IRS rules governing scholarship funds. I acknowledge that MDC will make such adjustments as necessary to ensure continued adherence to applicable laws and best practices. I further acknowledge that all decisions made by MDC regarding the interpretation and administration of scholarship policies are final and binding.

Miss District of Columbia

Acknowledgment

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read, and understood the Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship Policy. I understand that the disbursement of scholarship funds is contingent upon the signed acknowledgment form accompanying any scholarship award application for disbursement.

By signing this acknowledgment, I affirm my commitment to comply with all policies, procedures, and regulations governing the use of this scholarship, including strict adherence to applicable IRS rules. I accept responsibility for ensuring all scholarship requests paid via the funds provided to your State program are made within the specified award period and that all required documentation is accurate, complete, and submitted in a timely manner through the official application provided. Furthermore, that all awards processed and paid out follows the terms outlined in this MDC Memo of Understanding.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date: _____

**Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship Foundation Inc.
Appendix A
Scholarship Policy – Terms & Definitions**

This Appendix serves to define and clarify key terms referenced in the MDC Scholarship Policy. All recipients, parents, and state affiliates are encouraged to review and reference this glossary when submitting scholarship-related documentation or inquiries.

Miss District of Columbia

Accredited College or University

An educational institution officially recognized and approved by a regional or national accrediting agency listed by the U.S. Department of Education.

Active Enrollment Expenses

Costs directly related to current enrollment in an accredited institution, limited to tuition and mandatory course-related fees. These expenses must align with IRS definitions for Qualified Tuition and Related Expenses.

Application Platform

The official online portal hosted at MissDC.org is to be used by recipients to submit scholarship requests and upload required documentation.

Award Redemption Period

The allowable timeframe during which scholarship funds must be used:

- **Miss State Titleholders:** Two (2) years
- **Teen State Titleholders:** Begins the calendar year of high school graduation or age 18 (whichever is later) and expires two (2) years thereafter.
- **National Titleholders for Miss/Teen:** Three (3) years qualifying Miss/Teen timeline.

Disbursement

The transfer of scholarship funds from MDC directly to the accredited institution. Disbursements will not be made to recipients, parents, third parties, or 529 accounts.

Exhaustion of State and Local Funds

A condition requiring the recipient to fully use all awarded funds at the local levels before requesting any scholarship funds from MDC.

Full-Time Enrollment

The academic status in which a student is enrolled in a minimum number of credit hours as defined by their institution to qualify as full-time. Recipients must maintain full-time status to remain eligible for scholarship disbursement.

IRS Qualified Tuition and Related Expenses

As defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), these include:

- Tuition
- Mandatory course-related fees
They do **not** include room/board, computers, insurance, transportation, or other expenses.

MDC (Miss District of Columbia's Scholarship Fund)

The official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization responsible for administering and managing all scholarships awarded through the Miss District of Columbia program. EIN: ##-#####.

MDC University Scholarship

A four-year full-tuition scholarship awarded through an official MASF partner institution (e.g.,

Miss District of Columbia

University of Alabama or Mississippi State). This award fulfills the national scholarship benefit and cannot be combined with a separate national MASF award.

Official Tuition Invoice

An itemized billing statement issued by an accredited educational institution showing:

- Tuition charges and required fees
- Payment due amount
- School name and student identification

Screenshots, photocopies, or altered documents are not acceptable.

Redemption Forfeiture

The automatic cancellation of a scholarship award when not used within the eligible award period or if recipient fails to meet eligibility conditions (e.g., timely college enrollment).

Scholarship Request

A formal submission through the MDC application platform requesting disbursement of funds. All requests must include proper documentation and be submitted no later than 45 days before payment is due and no more than 60 days before the start of classes.

Local Director Verification

A written statement or letter provided by the Local Executive Director confirming that all applicable state and local scholarship funds have been used prior to accessing any State-level scholarship awards.