



2024-2025 VTF TORCH Scholarship Policy

15 December 2023

Subject: Vigilant Torch Foundation Eligibility, Notification, Application and Implementation of the TORCH Scholarship Program Policy, School Year 2024-2025

The following policy applies to all TORCH Scholarship applicants, recipients and all directors, officers, employees, and contractors of the Vigilant Torch Foundation (VTF). This policy establishes the TORCH Scholarship, a competitive scholarship. The Vigilant Torch Association (VTA)/VTF Boards will establish the total amount prior to being awarded based on the total number of applications and funds available.

1. The purpose of the TORCH Scholarship program is to raise and award money to our members as a way to give back to our community. The money awarded is intended to supplement the costs of higher education.
2. The purpose of this policy is to define who is eligible to receive the TORCH Scholarship and describe the implementation of the annual award process.
3. The goals of the TORCH Scholarship program are as follow:
 - A. Everyone who is eligible to apply for scholarships is informed about the scholarship program and how to apply.
 - B. Everyone who is both eligible and worthy of a scholarship receives support from VTF in some form, subject to available funds.
 - C. The application process is clearly communicated, efficient, and appropriately transparent to applicants.
4. VTF partners with SOFund and can submit candidates for their opportunities as well. To be eligible for a SOFund opportunity, the candidate must also be eligible for a TORCH Scholarship. The candidate does not have to apply for a TORCH scholarship to be eligible for a SOFund opportunity. Any awards earned from SOFund will not count toward the maximum amount of awards limit for the Torch Scholarship program.
5. Eligibility to Receive the TORCH Scholarship.
 - A. Active Duty Unit Members (AUMs), defined as service members who are currently assigned to the Unit, and their dependents are eligible upon registration with Vigilant Torch. No paid membership is required, register on the Vigilant Torch Website.
 - B. Members in good standing of Vigilant Torch and their immediate families, to include grandchildren, are eligible for the TORCH Scholarship. The membership must be current through May 31st, 2024.
 - i. Membership to Vigilant Torch Association is determined in accordance with bylaws, please contact membership@vigilant-torch.org for additional questions about joining.



- ii. DoD Civilians, who are current UMs, and their dependents are eligible with an active membership to Vigilant Torch Foundation, please contact membership@vigilant-torch.org for additional questions about joining.

6. The implementation process:

A. Establish 2024-2025 school year Scholarship Committee:

- i. Chairman: Brian Gellman
- ii. Members: Mike Buggs, Bruce Swatek, Jason De Leeuw, Ryan Irwin, DJ Gille.
- iii. All reviewers must be current members of VTA. The Scholarship Committee Chairman will approve all reviewers.

B. 15 January 2024 through 15 March 2024: the Torch scholarship window is open for submissions:

C. NLT 15 March 2024 at 11:59PM EST: TORCH Scholarship candidates must submit their applications to be considered for that scholarship year.

- i. No applications will be accepted after the last day for submitting applications unless there are extraordinary circumstances. Technology problems are not considered extraordinary.

D. 16 March to 01 May 2024:

- i. The Board Scholarship Committee rates TORCH Scholarship applications.
 - 1. The VTF Scholarship Committee chairperson will blind all applications.
 - 2. The VTF Scholarship Committee chairperson will not vote.
- ii. The VTF Scholarship Committee recommends recipients to the VTF President by providing an Order of Merit List based on ratings.
- iii. The VTF President submits the recommendation to be approved by the VTF Board of Directors.
- iv. VTF Scholarship Committee Chairperson recommends an award payout structure for approval by the VTF Board of Directors.

E. NLT 30 April 2024: The VTF Board of directors approves the recommendation or adjusted recommendation

F. NLT 15 May 2024: VTF Scholarship Chairperson notifies awardees of final award decision and notifies candidates who have not been awarded a scholarship via the VTF Scholarship email account.

- G. NLT 02 May 2024: Scholarship Committee will begin drafting, reviewing, and coordinating for signatures of Scholarship certificates
- H. Next major Unit/VTA event: Ceremony presenting certificates and checks to awardees able to attend in person. All other certificates and checks will be mailed to the remaining awardees in coordination with the VTF Treasurer.
- I. Separate timelines will be published for SOFund opportunities, and they are presented to the VTF Scholarship Chairman – tentative application deadlines to SOFund will be available on the VTF Scholarship webpage. All SOFund submissions will be vetted thru and submitted by the VTF scholarship Chairman.

7. VTF Scholarship additional instructions:

- A. Amount: the award amount for each candidate will be determined by the VTF Board of Directors based on number of candidates, quality of application and amount of total funding available for award this year.
- B. Application Process: Once the application window is open, the VTF Scholarship webpage will provide a web link to an initial application. This initial application will gather administrative data from the applicant that will be used to determine eligibility. Immediately upon completing this initial application, the applicant will receive another web link to submit the remaining requirements for the application.
- C. Frequency: Applicants must apply or re-apply each year.
- D. Number: Applicants may receive up to six annual VTF Scholarships (this does not include SOFund awards or any other non-TORCH Scholarships supported by VTF).
 - i. Applicants must submit a new application for each annual VTF Scholarship and for each SOFund opportunity through the VTF Scholarship committee.
 - ii. Applicants may only be awarded the top award once. If an applicant's score is on the top the OML in subsequent years, they will be administratively moved to the 2nd top award.
- E. Eligible programs and post-secondary institutions:
 - i. Eligible institutions for student attendance must be appropriately accredited and approved by the U.S. Department of Education. This may be a college, university, vocational/technical or career institute. Distance learning programs are also eligible.
 - ii. Two-year community college degree programs.

- iii. Trade school programs.
- iv. Four-year college degree programs.
- v. Five-year college degree programs.
- vi. Graduate school programs.
- vii. Full- or part-time programs.

8. Application criteria:

A. Community service (addressed in Scholarship Application Webform):

- i. Community service will be scored on a scale from zero to four based on the quantity and quality of the applicant's community service over the year prior to the application. More recent service will be scored higher.
- ii. If the applicant is an Active Duty service member or an activated Reservist or Guardsman and was deployed or was away from home during 2022, the committee may automatically award points because the applicant's ability to serve their community is assumed to have been limited during this time frame. Points will be awarded based on the following progressive scale:
 - 1. More than 180 days, applicant will receive a score of at least 3.
 - 2. From 90-179 days, applicant will receive at least a score of 2.
 - 3. From 30-89 days, applicant will receive at least a score of 1.

B. Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) (addressed in the Scholarship Application Webform accompanied with a transcript as a PDF):

- i. Minimum GPA to be eligible: 2.0 on an unweighted scale of 4.0.
- ii. Must be verified by student transcript. Transcripts can be from secondary or post-secondary institutions. Transcripts do not need to be official copies. Screenshots must contain the applicant's name, a date, and the cumulative GPA.
- iii. GPA will be scored 1 through 4, based upon a weighted GPA scale. The Scholarship Committee reserves the right to modify this score based on qualitative considerations or if extraordinary circumstances exist.

C. Essay will be uploaded to the Scholarship Application Webform as a PDF:

- i. The essay will not exceed two pages at 1.5x line spacing (in the Word ribbon, home tab, click the arrow beside the Paragraph group name, open the Indents and Spacing dialog box, select Line Spacing, select 1.5 Line, OK). 1" margins, Calibri Font, 12 pt. Any essay that does not meet these administrative requirements will not be considered.
- ii. The essay will pertain to one new topic every year.

- iii. 2024-2025 school year essay topic: “New Question TBD”
 - iv. Essays will be evaluated based upon a scale of zero through four.
- D. Cover letter Questions: The Applicant will answer the following questions using the Application Webform. The scholarship committee will evaluate the responses based on the quality using a shared rubric. Raters will score the cover letter questions with a score of 0 to 4.
- i. A brief background, including extracurricular activities, and any other facts applicants might deem of interest to the Scholarship Committee.
 - ii. Applicants will describe their relevant academic activities and accomplishments over the past year.
 - iii. Answer the question, “How will funds from the TORCH Scholarship be used to supplement your education?”
- E. The points from the Cover Letter questions, community service, GPA, and essay sections of the application will each be added together creating a total score. Based upon the total scores, applicants will be rated against other applicants on an OML. In the event of a tie or if the committee deems that total scores are not statistically significant, the committee may resolve these conflicts through random determination.
- F. VTF scholarship applicants must provide a separate transcript and/or acceptance letter or other acceptable proof of attendance (preferably a PDF, unless it comes directly from the school) from an eligible institution or program. If the applicant has not yet been accepted to a school, the applicant must submit a letter of intent stating where they intend to apply for school, when they will begin, and what they will study.
- G. All applicants must submit their application via the Scholarship Application Webform that will be provided on the VTF Scholarship webpage during the application window. Persons with disabilities may contact VTF to request reasonable accommodations.
- H. The complete application will be evaluated for following directions, grammar, syntax, and organization. While the evaluators will not nit-pick, however, an application that is fraught with errors will receive a lower overall score.
- I. TORCH Scholarship recipients may be quoted for web site and other marketing materials pertaining to the TORCH Scholarship.
9. Conflict of interest procedure:
- A. VTF Scholarship Board Committee voting members or VTF Board of Directors members must disclose any potential conflict or association that might be perceived to cause a conflict of interest.

- B. Reviewers may not evaluate their own family members or themselves.
- C. As much as possible, all applications will be 'blinded' so no evaluator is familiar with the applicant, particularly for evaluation of the essay.

10. Appeals process:

- A. Applicants may appeal any action of the above policies and procedures. Requests for special disbursement of funds related to late filing of documents are not grounds for appeal.
- B. The appeal email must be directed to the Board Scholarship Committee chairman, and 'signed' by the applicant and/or family member.
- C. The appeal should include as much documentation as possible with stated facts upon which action and resolution can be achieved.
- D. The Board Scholarship Committee chairman will respond to the concern by email within five working days from the date of receipt of the written appeal.
- E. If the student wishes to pursue an appeal, and the appeal requires an exception to policy or a decision not within the scope of the TORCH Scholarship Board Committee chairman, the VTF President will present the appeal to the VTF Board of Directors for resolution. This may be accomplished telephonically or by email.