

Grow Southeast Alabama Workforce Development Scholarship Program

Purpose: The GSEA Workforce Development Scholarship Program aims to support individuals pursuing trade programs in various vocational fields within the 11-county footprint of Southeast Alabama. This initiative intends to provide financial assistance to high school seniors and first-year trade program students, foster skill development, and address the growing demand for skilled workers in the region.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. **Residency:** Applicants must be residents of one of the 11 counties within the Southeast Alabama economic development coalition. The 11 counties include Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Coffee, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Geneva, Henry, Houston, and Pike Counties.
2. **Education Level:** The scholarship is open to high school seniors planning to enroll in a trade program at a local community college and first-year trade program students (to be applied towards their tuition for their program's second year).
3. **Trade Programs:** Eligible trade programs include but are not limited to welding, mechanics, HVAC, construction, industrial systems, manufacturing, plumbing, electrical, forestry, ag vocations, and other relevant vocational courses.
4. **Academic Standing:** Applicants must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5.
5. **Commitment to Field:** Candidates must demonstrate a strong interest and commitment to pursuing a career in their chosen trade field.
6. **Financial Need:** Preference may be given to applicants who can demonstrate financial need.
7. **Extracurricular Activities:** Participation in community service, extracurricular activities, or relevant clubs is valued. Current participation in a high school trade program is also highly valued.
8. **Letter of Recommendation:** Applicants are required to submit at least one letter of recommendation from a teacher, employer, or community leader.
9. **Essay:** Applicants must submit a 250-word essay detailing how this scholarship would significantly impact their future and career goals. We are eager to understand how this support will help you achieve your aspirations and make a positive difference in your life.
10. **Not Applicable to Four-Year Colleges:** The scholarship is exclusively applicable to trade programs at local community colleges and is not intended for four-year colleges.

Application Process:

1. Interested candidates must submit a **completed** application form. Online applications are available at growsoutheastalabama.com.
2. The deadline for applications is February 28, 2024.
3. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Selection Process:

1. A selection committee appointed by Grow Southeast Alabama will review all eligible applications. Each county will have a committee that will include their high school vocational program director(s), high school career coaches, and an economic development representative and/or utility partner representative from Grow Southeast Alabama.
2. The committee will evaluate applications based on the specified criteria, including academic standing, commitment to the trade field, extracurricular involvement, and financial need.
3. Scholarship recipients will be notified via email no later than April 15, 2024.

Scholarship Award:

1. Each of the 11 counties within the coalition will be awarded one (1) \$500 scholarship.
2. The scholarship funds will be disbursed directly to the community college's financial aid office to be applied to the recipient's tuition and related educational expenses.
3. Awardees will be recognized on the Grow Southeast Alabama social media platforms and through local media outlets.

Obligations of Recipients:

1. Scholarship recipients must provide confirmation of enrollment in a qualifying trade program at a local community college.
2. Awardees are encouraged to provide periodic updates on their academic progress and achievements to Grow Southeast Alabama.
3. Recipients may be requested to participate in events organized by the coalition to share their experiences and the impact of the scholarship.

By implementing this Workforce Development Scholarship Program, Grow Southeast Alabama aims to empower local students to pursue trade careers, contributing to the growth and development of our region's workforce and economy.