SDSWMA Scholarship Application

The SDSWMA Scholarship Program, an entity of the South Dakota Solid Waste Management Association (SDSWMA), provides scholarships annually to students pursuing vocational trade degrees for heavy equipment operations, diesel technology, millwrights, environmental technicians, welding, GPS/computer technicians, etc. Preference is given to South Dakota residents intending to study at South Dakota colleges.

The SDSWMA Scholarship was founded in 1995, by SDSWMA members Timothy Sander, Jerome Wright and Terrance Keller, in remembrance of Michael (Paco) Sowers of Belle Fourche and James Pickering of Rapid City. Both died in accidents associated with the solid waste industry in 1994 and 1995.

Who is eligible for SDSWMA Scholarship?

An applicant should desire a career in the solid waste industry and/or related fields. Applicants must intend to enroll for the fall semester.

- Preference will be given to South Dakota residents intending to be or enrolled at a South Dakota colleges/vocational schools.
- High school seniors are eligible to apply.
- Part-time studies will be considered if applicant can show good cause for other than full-time studies and that the course of study is directed toward a degree, certificate or similar identification of graduation.
- Students who have received an SDSWMA scholarship in the past are eligible to apply each year.
- Children and spouses of Scholarship Committee members are not eligible.

What is considered a course of study that is supportive of the solid waste industry and will provide protection and enhancement of our natural resources and the environment?

SDSWMA membership consists of a broad range of industries relating to and supporting the proper disposal, reuse, hauling, or recycling of solid waste. Currently, our State and industry is suffering from shortages of skilled laborers such as heavy equipment operators, diesel mechanics, millwrights, environmental technicians, welders, GPS/computer technicians, etc. These are the courses of study that will be considered for scholarships for the next 2-3 years beginning October 2024.

How can individuals apply for a scholarship?

Each October, this scholarship announcement is furnished to South Dakota high school counselors and vocational college financial aid offices. This announcement is also available from the SDSWMA website (www.sdswma.org).

To apply, submit an application letter. **Application letters must be emailed or postmarked no later than January 15 of each year**, for the following school year.

What information must be supplied in the application letter?

- Contact Information – please provide a permanent mailing address
- Interests
- Background
- Work history and/or extra-curricular activity
- Financial need
- Goals for the future/career goals
- Applicants must furnish a copy of their most recent grade transcript. This scholarship is not awarded based on grades or overall GPA. We are more interested in your dedication and goals for the future.
- Three letters of reference.
- High School seniors applying for a scholarship must include an acceptance certificate from the post-secondary institution they will be attending.

Submit application letters via email to: contact@sdswma.org or through the mail at the following address:

SDSWMA Scholarship Program
1616 Melody Lane
Aberdeen, SD 57401

Further information can be obtained by contacting SDSWMA by phone (605-216-3256) or by email at contact@sdswma.org.

How are scholarships awarded?

The SDSWMA Board appoints a committee of five SDSWMA members who review all applications. Applications are rated on a point system basis and those applications with the highest points are awarded scholarships. Award letters will be mailed by April 30 and scholarship checks will be mailed out by August 1.

How many scholarships are awarded?

The number and amounts of scholarships vary from year to year. In 2026, a total of $18,250 was awarded between 11 students!