THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Breaking Barriers Scholarship Spotlight

Educational & Scholarship Pathways · Scholarships & Financial Aid

An MFGP-featured scholarship opportunity for justice-impacted students, with eligibility details and deadlines.

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A free guide from My Fairy GodParents — for youth impacted by parental incarceration, justice-impacted youth, and the caregivers and families who support them.
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint

Print, write on it, and share it with the people helping your family.

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THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

General scholarships attract tens of thousands of applicants. Awards written specifically for justice-impacted students attract a fraction of that, and many go unclaimed in a given cycle simply because the students they were designed for never heard about them.

The Breaking Barriers Scholarship is one MFGP highlights because it was built for students whose lives include a system involvement they did not choose. Awards like it often come with more than money — mentoring, a professional network, and people who already understand the background rather than needing it explained.

This lesson is about how to approach an award like this one seriously: what committees are actually reading for, how to prepare before the deadline exists, and how to treat an application as reusable work rather than a lottery ticket.

READ THE AWARD BEFORE WRITING ANYTHING

Every scholarship has an intent — a reason a person or organization set money aside. The intent is usually stated plainly on the award page, and it is the single most useful thing an applicant can read. An essay that speaks to the stated intent beats a better-written essay that ignores it.

Note the eligibility requirements exactly as written, and do not talk yourself out of applying based on a guess. If a requirement is ambiguous, email the administering organization and ask. Applicants who ask questions are not penalized; they are remembered.

MFGP maintains a page for this award with current details and links. Always verify eligibility and deadlines with the administering organization before relying on any summary, including ours — terms change year to year.

WHAT COMMITTEES ARE ACTUALLY READING FOR

Reviewers are usually looking for three things: evidence that the student will finish what they start, a clear

sense of what the money makes possible, and some indication of who the student is beyond the hardship.

That last one matters more than applicants expect. A file that is entirely about a parent's incarceration tells the committee about the parent. A file that shows what the student built while carrying that — the job, the younger siblings, the grades held steady, the club stuck with for three years — tells them about the student.

Specificity beats intensity every time. 'I want to be a nurse' is a category. 'I want to work in a labor and delivery unit, because I spent two years driving my aunt to prenatal appointments and I watched what a good nurse does for a scared person' is a person.

+ PREPARE BEFORE THE DEADLINE EXISTS

Most scholarship applications ask for the same underlying materials: a transcript, one or two recommendation letters, a personal statement, and a list of activities or work history. Assembling that packet once, in advance, turns each new application into an afternoon instead of a month.

Ask for recommendation letters early and give the writer a packet: the award description, a deadline, and a short note on what the student would like mentioned. A teacher writing under deadline pressure produces a generic letter; a teacher given three weeks and context produces a specific one.

Keep every essay in one document. A strong essay written for one award becomes the backbone of the next four with an hour of adaptation. Applicants who win multiple scholarships are almost always reusing and refining, not starting fresh each time.

+ APPLYING AND NOT WINNING IS STILL WORTH IT

Most applications do not win, including strong ones, and that is a statement about volume rather than about the applicant. The students who eventually win are usually the ones who applied to enough awards that the odds turned.

Every application produces reusable material: a polished essay, a recommendation letter on file, a cleaner activities list, and practice describing yourself to a stranger. That is real value even in a cycle with no award.

Set a target of a specific number of applications rather than a specific award. Six is a reasonable goal for a school year. Track them on one sheet with deadlines, so the work is visible.

+ SIX APPLICATIONS, ONE CALENDAR, ONE FOLDER

A high-school junior whose father had been incarcerated since she was nine decided she would apply to six scholarships before graduation. She started with a folder: her transcript, an activities list, and a letter from her chemistry teacher she requested in April rather than December.

Her first essay took three weeks and was about caring for her younger brother while her mother worked nights. It did not win. Her second was the same essay, cut by a third and pointed at a different award's stated intent. Her fourth won a small award. Her sixth — the Breaking Barriers application, submitted with the same teacher letter and the fourth draft of the same essay — won a larger one.

Total additional writing after the first essay: about six hours. The folder did the rest.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Emailing a scholarship administrator about eligibility

Send before deciding you don't qualify.

"Hello — I'm interested in applying for the scholarship and I want to make sure I read the eligibility correctly before I submit. My situation is [one sentence]. Would that meet the requirement as you interpret it? I'd rather ask than assume. Thank you for your time."

Asking a teacher for a scholarship recommendation

Send at least three weeks before the deadline.

"Hi [Teacher] — I'm applying for a scholarship for students from backgrounds like mine and I'd be grateful if you'd write me a recommendation letter. The deadline is [date]. I've attached the award description and a short note about what I've been working on in your class, in case it's useful. If you don't have the time, I completely understand and would rather know now."

Caregiver encouraging a student who thinks it's pointless

For the student who won't apply because they assume they'll lose.

"You might not win this one. That's normal — most people don't win most of them. But the essay you write for this becomes the essay for the next five, and the letter your teacher writes stays on file. I'm not asking you to be optimistic. I'm asking you to build the folder once."

Following up after submitting

Optional, and only if the award page doesn't say not to.

"I submitted my application on [date] and wanted to confirm it was received. If there's anything missing from my file, please let me know and I'll send it right away. Thank you for considering me."

+ YOUR SCHOLARSHIP PACKET

- [ ] Read the award's stated intent and match the essay to it.
- [ ] Verify eligibility and deadline directly with the administering organization.
- [ ] Build one folder: transcript, activities list, work history, essay drafts.
- [ ] Request recommendation letters at least three weeks out, with context.

- [ ] Write about what you built, not only what happened to you.
- [ ] Keep every essay — adapt rather than restart.
- [ ] Set a target number of applications for the year, and track deadlines on one sheet.
- [ ] Add the next deadline to a calendar today.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

What is one specific thing I built or carried that a committee would never guess?

Who knows my work well enough to write a letter with details in it?

How many applications will I commit to this school year?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

> Open the scholarship page and add its deadline to a calendar.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Source: The LAGRANT Foundation — verified August 2026. Curated and summarized by MFGP.

This is general information and practice guidance — not legal advice, mental-health treatment, or a statement of any court, agency, or facility's rules. Policies differ by state, county, facility, school, and program, so always confirm details with the office involved.

For decisions with legal, medical, financial, or clinical consequences, work with a licensed professional or the organizations listed with each resource.

You do not have to do this alone.

More free guides, scripts, and checklists:
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint