

Scholarship Application Evaluation Rubric

At PFund, we work to facilitate scholarships in a responsible and ethical way; additionally, we highly value diversity and understand that our target audiences have specific needs and circumstances to consider. From first generation college students to senior queers to Indigenous learners, we strive to be clear and transparent on how we award scholarships with our community reviewers.

This document is used by community reviewers to guide scholarship application assessment. **We ask that all reviewers continuously consider their own biases while reviewing applications.** Please keep in mind we don't score on grammar or punctuation given some of our scholars are second language learners or don't have access to editing support. When using this tool, please consider that PFund Scholarships are made possible by funders and sponsors, some with specific and targeted scholarships. We also ask reviewers to uphold PFund's core tenets and practices of advancing equity for LGBTQ+ communities as they review each application.

We ask reviewers to consider the following:

- How will funding be used and contribute to students' goals?
- How diverse experiences and identities contributed to who applicants are and their educational/developmental pursuits?
- How personal experiences shaped their passion for LGBTQ+ people and issues?
- How have they navigated challenges as they advocated for someone or something they believed in?
- What impact will their program and future work have on the LGBTQ+ community?
- How their long-term vision aligns with PFund's vision for thriving and more equitable communities?

Review Process:

Reviewers will read the applications and use the Essay Rubric to assign a corresponding score. Each of the 6 essay questions can be ranked 1-5 using the assessment questions listed in the Rubric, for 30 points total possible. Staff will take final scores and add two points for each focus community the applicant represents (BIPOC, Transgender/GNC and Rural Residing LGBTQ+ individuals).

Once all reviews are in, staff use the average score for each application to rank all applicants for discussion at a full group review. In addition to considering reviewers' scores and notes, at review day reviewers will discuss their feedback and scoring rationale to provide further considerations for the final scholarship recommendations.

Scholarship Application Evaluation Rubric

1. *How will you use the scholarship if received? How will you fund the other expenses associated with your program that aren't covered by this scholarship? Have you experienced any financial challenges in paying for your education?*

Is it clear what the applicant will use the scholarship for? To what extent has the applicant prepared to finance their education/development program? To what extent does the applicant demonstrate a financial need?

1: Not at all

2: Very little

3: Somewhat

4: Very much

5: Completely

2. *How have your diverse experiences and identities (cultural heritage, race, gender, socio-economic background, family, work, sexual orientation, first generation status, etc.) contributed to who you are today and your pursuit of a college, career, and/or leadership program?*

Does the applicant address all aspects of the prompt and provide concrete examples? Have the applicant's experiences and identities contributed to who they are today? Is there a clear connection between their experiences and identities and their educational pursuits?

1: Not at all

2: Very little

3: Somewhat

4: Very much

5: Completely

3. *What is your long-term vision for yourself? How will your studies or leadership program help you achieve your goals?*

Does the applicant address all aspects of the prompt and provide concrete examples? Is there a clear connection between their long-term vision and their academic goals? To what extent will their studies help them achieve their vision for their future?

1: Not at all

2: Very little

3: Somewhat

4: Very much

5: Completely

4. *What makes you passionate about the LGBTQ+ community? What accomplishments and activities have you completed to unite, celebrate, support, and serve LGBTQ+ people, allies or organizations?*

Does the applicant demonstrate a passion for LGBTQ+ people and issues? To what extent have their accomplishments and activities had an impact on LGBTQ+ people and organizations or allies?

1: Not at all

2: Very little

3: Somewhat

4: Very much

5: Completely

5. *PFund Foundation invests in bold leadership. Tell us about a time when you demonstrated leadership, or had to advocate for yourself, someone else, or something you believe in. What challenges did you encounter? What did you learn?*

Does the applicant address all aspects of the prompt and provide concrete examples? To what extent does the candidate demonstrate leadership? (Ex: Ability to make decisions under pressure, trustworthiness, emotional intelligence, compassion, empowerment of others, clear communication, resilience, ability to take/use feedback.) To what extent was the applicant able to advocate for themselves, someone else or something they believed in? Were they able to identify, learn from, and navigate challenges?

1: Not at all	2: Very little	3: Somewhat	4: Very much	5: Completely
6. <i>PFund Foundation exists to ensure LGBTQ+ communities thrive. What impact do you want to have on LGBTQ+ people and communities in the future? How will your studies, work, or community involvement help you make that impact?</i> Does the applicant address all aspects of the prompt and provide concrete examples? To what extent does the applicant's vision for their future align with PFund's vision for thriving and more equitable queer communities in the Upper Midwest? To what degree will the candidate have an impact on the community? Is there a clear connection between their studies or work and the impact on the community?				
1: Not at all	2: Very little	3: Somewhat	4: Very much	5: Completely
Additional notes and overall feedback on the application (anything you want to make sure to remember/ask about/bring up on review day):				

Samples of High and Low Scoring Essays

Over the years, both applicants and reviewers have requested to see an example of a high and a low scoring essay. The samples below help applicants understand the expectations of the essay portion, and help reviewers calibrate their scoring to make the process more equitable. The two samples below are real examples of essays submitted in the past, with any identifying information removed or changed. These are just two samples of the hundreds of unique essays that students have worked hard on and submitted over the years. We have included notes about what makes each of these examples high or low scoring, based on the application evaluation rubric.

Example of a high scoring essay:

Essay question: How have your diverse experiences and identities (cultural heritage, race, gender, socio-economic background, family, work, sexual orientation, first generation status, etc.) contributed to who you are today and your pursuit of a college, career and/or leadership program?

"One fateful high school morning, James Baldwin's stories descended from the sky and onto my desk. His starlight novels so lucidly articulated the struggle for belonging in a country inhospitable to melanated bodies. Reading his incantations, I saw how personhood is always political; how his prose transmuted oppressive histories into poetic narratives. I am a LGBTQ+, BIPOC person, and a migrant. As a 1st generation college student, it was my first time reading how an artist reconciled identities like mine. Like an alchemist stirring a cauldron's ingredients, casting transformation spells on himself.

My Bachelor's degrees in English, Creative Writing, and Education have molded me into a global citizen hungry to learn, teach, read and write. My academic and professional goals are to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing, a PhD in African American literature, and a career teaching language arts in secondary and post-secondary education and non-academic settings like museums. I'm eager to teach abroad in French-speaking African communities to engage diverse people and diverse ideas, meeting both personal and global needs. Transformative experiences in my English classrooms, literary communities, and artists spaces taught me writing is a tool for liberation. Growing up abroad, I saw how economic disparity directly affects educational opportunity. As 1st gen, I'm eternally grateful for and want to capitalize on the opportunities she's made so many sacrifices to provide me. In teaching literacy and Creative Writing craft to historically underrepresented students, especially diasporic Blackness, I hope they can feel as empowered as I do by creating and consuming beautiful literature. This scholarship will fund my education and theirs.

Looking up, I realized Baldwin's stories didn't meteor down from the heavens. My 11th grade English teacher dropped them on my desk. He gave me the gift of poetry. Studying Queer poets in class like Carol Ann Duffy was the first time I could talk openly about Queerness with adults. He gave me book suggestions by Queer and Black authors. Told me, "read this and get back to me. I want to hear what you think." He gave me encouragement, challenges, tenderness, and tough love. He saw me, this closeted teenager in the South, struggling. He taught me how literature and writing can help untangle my identities. I became the President of the

What makes this essay a 5:
Author shares clear and unique details relevant to the prompt
Author uses multiple paragraphs to fully answer the prompt in a well-organized way
Author answers all parts of the prompt by clearly illustrating how their experiences contributed to their pursuit of education.
Author completes the prompt by connecting their history and identities with their educational goals

Creative Writing club and got to meet other LGBTQ+ students. With the confidence I gained from his mentorship, I applied and was admitted to college. I knew then that I wanted to be a lucky star and encouraging presence, like Mr. Chen was for me.

Throughout my life Creative Writing has connected me to my communities, my history, and myself in sacred ways. Writing's diaristic nature allows me to make sense of both my personal character and professional career. Reading Black literary traditions has facilitated my racial and gender awakenings. In my life, literature is the central catalyst for my self and social awareness. I want to use what I've learned to diversify Western curriculums and institutions by using critical lenses: queer, postcolonial, and African American. Studying language has allowed me to better wield its transformative power, and my vocational goal is to go tell it on the mountains."

Example of a low scoring essay:

How have your diverse experiences and identities (cultural heritage, race, gender, socio-economic background, family, work, sexual orientation, first generation status, etc.) contributed to who you are today and your pursuit of a college, career and/or leadership program?

"Being part of the LGBTQ+ community has led me to safe spaces to have open discussions about hard topics and to take a non-cis or hetero view of our world. The society we live in has so many attributes that are aimed to appeal to cis men and hetero relationships. There is even an extra emphasis on romantic love in general that is placed at a certain age. Many fictional coming-of-age stories and movies create conflict with romantic and sexual interests and relationships. As a person who does not feel romantic or sexual attraction, it can be a confusing thing to watch and not understand the emotions behind their big life decisions. In many instances, I feel more level-headed when making decisions because I am basing them on my own wants, dreams, and beliefs, not for someone else."

*What makes this essay a 1:
Author's answers are off topic
Author uses only 1 brief paragraph without a clear intro, body, conclusion
Author doesn't answer the prompt and answer is not well organized
No concrete examples of the future pursuit of college, career or leadership program*