Why is Build Dakota supporting full-ride scholarships?
Several workforce categories in South Dakota have been identified as high need. This means there is a shortage of skilled employees available to fill the workforce. The Build Dakota Scholarship was created to be a catalyst to solve this problem. By providing full-ride scholarships and creating industry partnerships, Build Dakota can get more skilled employees into the state’s workforce. Build Dakota Scholars receive a free education, businesses gain employees, and South Dakota grows. We all win!

What is the Western Dakota Technical College requirements for the Build Dakota Scholarship?
A student must:

- Be accepted into one of Western Dakota Technical College’s 18 Build Dakota eligible programs.
- Be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national (Must meet citizenship eligibility requirements according to the federal financial aid regulations).
- Complete the FREE Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Please note that individuals at all income levels are encouraged to apply.
- Agree to follow Western Dakota Technical College’s, Build Dakota Scholar expectations.

When does the application open and close?
The application will be open from January 1 through March 31 every year.

Can I still apply after the application cycle has ended?
No. However, Western Dakota Technical College’s Foundation offers scholarships for every Western Dakota Technical College program.

How do I apply for the Build Dakota Scholarship?

- First, apply for one of Western Dakota Technical College’s Build Dakota qualified programs by filling out the free application located on our website. www.wdt.edu.
- Next, click on the application link and it will direct you to our scholarship portal. Just as in a job application, use the scholarship application to demonstrate your experience and skill and/or interest in the program area for which you apply.
Note: Because the Build Dakota Scholarship is highly competitive, make sure to fill out the application completely and include all documents requested.

**Can I apply for Build Dakota before I apply for admission at Western Dakota Technical College?**
You can apply for the Build Dakota before applying to Western Dakota Technical College. You still must fill out the free application for admission to be awarded a scholarship. All admission documents must be completed prior to June 1.

**What is the commitment if I accept the scholarship?**
Awarded recipients agree to:

- Enroll full-time in one of the 19 Build Dakota Scholarship-eligible programs.
- Maintain Western Dakota Technical College’s expectations for Build Dakota recipients.
- Maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average.
- Complete the program on time.
  - Diploma programs typically require 1 to 1.5 years.
  - AAS degree programs require two years.
- Live and work full-time in South Dakota, in your field of study, for a minimum of three years following graduation.
- Industry partner awardees must also meet any additional commitments to their industry sponsor.

**How are Build Dakota recipients selected?**
Applications are reviewed through Western Dakota Technical College’s Build Dakota Scholarship scoring process. Finalists then have an interview stage. Scholarship offers are made to highest scoring candidates based on available funds for the Build Dakota Scholarship recipient cohort.

Considerations are given, but not limited to:

- Industry partnerships (Please see the next paragraph)
- Work experience
- High school CTE coursework
- Awards and certifications
- GPA
- Program availability

**What is an industry partnership?**
Because the Build Dakota Scholarship was created in response to a workforce need in South Dakota, businesses are working closely with the scholarship program at Western Dakota Technical College through our Have Your Pick, Industry Partnership program. This allows Western Dakota Technical College to offer as many scholarships as possible to train skilled professionals for high demand careers. Employers, sponsor students, pay for a portion of the scholarship expenses, and the Build Dakota Scholarship pays the balance. Sponsored students agree to work for their sponsor following graduation. This extends the employers’ training dollars, and they gain skilled employees.
How do I obtain an industry sponsor?

There are two ways a Western Dakota Technical College applicant can obtain a sponsor:

- Applicants who are either working for, or know of an employer willing to sponsor them, can contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships and he/she will work with the employer to get the required documentation completed.
- Applicants can indicate on their application that they would like Western Dakota Technical College’s industry partners to view their application. Industry partners can then choose whether they would like to interview the applicant for a possible sponsorship.

Note: Nursing (LPN and RN) Applicants are required to have an industry sponsor at time of awarding. Other applicants do not need an industry sponsor to be awarded a Build Dakota Scholarship but sponsored students receive additional consideration during the awards process.

When will I be notified if I have received a Build Dakota Scholarship?

If you are selected for a Build Dakota Scholarship, you will be notified by the Assistant Director of Scholarships with further instructions on how to complete the acceptance process. Most applicants will be notified before June 1.

What expenses does the Build Dakota Scholarship cover?

The Build Dakota Scholarship covers any expenses directly related to program requirements. This includes tuition, fees, books, laptops, uniforms, equipment, and tools. It does not include office supplies e.g., paper, notebooks, pencils, etc. If a scholar wishes to purchase additional or optional equipment, books, or tools, it is at his or her own expense. The Build Dakota Scholarship does not pay for any housing or living expenses.

How do I get the required tools or computer for my program?

Each year the Build Dakota qualified programs submit a tool list to the Western Dakota Technical College Bookstore. The Bookstore will order the necessary tools, uniforms, and computer prior to the start of the recipients first semester.

What is considered full-time?

Students are considered full-time if they take enough classes to graduate in the allotted time.

If I have already earned credits that prevent me from being full-time for a given semester, can I still receive the scholarship?

Entering a program with credits that apply toward graduation and/or testing out of a required course will not prevent you from receiving and maintaining a Build Dakota Scholarship. Build Dakota scholars are required to be “as full-time as possible”.
Will Build Dakota pay for test-out fees?
Yes. Any cost for fees associated with successfully testing out of classes will be paid by Build Dakota.

Does the scholarship cover remedial, preparatory coursework, or other classes that are not part of my program?
If remedial or preparatory courses are required prior to the start of a Build Dakota eligible program, they are covered by the scholarship, but the need for these courses must be determined and recommended by Western Dakota Technical College.

If I'm not planning to start my classes until the spring, can I still qualify for the scholarship?
Yes, however, because so many technical programs are cohort-based, spring term starts may not be available.

I've already graduated from a technical college. Do I qualify for this scholarship?
This depends on your individual circumstances. If you currently have a degree in a field that has not been designated as high-need and you wish to get a degree in a high-need area, you may qualify for this scholarship. If you currently have a degree in a high-need field and wish to move to a different high-need field, contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships.

Note: LPN graduates applying for the RN program CAN receive a Build Dakota Scholarship if they have an Industry Partner.

Why do I have to apply for financial aid?
Completing the FAFSA is a requirement to qualify for the scholarship. It is beneficial to complete the FAFSA to determine eligibility for grants that can be used for living expenses. The FAFSA should be completed every year you are in school.

If I receive a Pell Grant, how does that affect my Build Dakota Scholarship?
Pell grants do not affect the amount awarded for Build Dakota Scholarships and can be used for living expenses while attending school.

Can I qualify for the scholarship if I am in default on a federal student loan or owe a financial aid overpayment?
This is considered a disqualifying event; feel free to apply once the default has been made current.

Can I receive other financial aid and scholarships if I receive this scholarship?
Yes, however, because there are regulations tied to certain types of funds, it is recommended you contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships for questions regarding your individual situation.
Why doesn’t every program offered at Western Dakota Technical College qualify for the Build Dakota Scholarship?
Each year, the Build Dakota Administrative Board, South Dakota Technical Colleges, and Department of Education work closely with the Department of Labor and Regulation to determine which industries have the highest need for skilled professionals in South Dakota.

Can I transfer my Build Dakota Scholarship to another technical college or university?
No. If a scholar is awarded a Build Dakota Scholarship from Western Dakota Technical College, the scholarship will only be available at Western Dakota Technical College.

How will I know what to do after I graduate?
The Build Dakota administrative staff will visit Western Dakota Technical College to meet with Build Dakota scholars prior to graduation to make sure graduates understand how to comply with the employment requirements. It is the responsibility of the scholar to make sure they attend this meeting.

What type of job is required after graduation?
Recipients must work in the field the Build Dakota Scholarship paid for.

How long do I have to secure a job after graduation?
Recipients who haven’t secured an industry sponsored have 6 months after graduation to begin employment. Recipients who are sponsored will work with their sponsor to determine when they begin employment.

How is the three-year employment commitment tracked?
The Build Dakota administrative staff will conduct yearly employment verification with Build Dakota recipients, the South Department of Labor and Regulation, and the employers of Build Dakota recipients.

Can I be self-employed?
Self-employment will be approved in some circumstances; however, the scholar must be prepared to submit legal documentation of self-employment on a full-time basis.

What if I can’t find a job after graduation?
Build Dakota Scholarship programs have been specifically chosen to fill high-need areas in South Dakota and open positions usually exceed the number of applicants. Western Dakota Technical College has a very high placement rate, and most recipients will be employed prior to graduation. Students can work with Western Dakota Technical College’s Career Services, the Build Dakota website has a list of industry partners looking to employ skilled recipients, and the Department of Labor offices have remarkable resources for helping job seekers secure employment. A list of local offices can be found here: [http://dlr.sd.gov/localoffices/default.aspx](http://dlr.sd.gov/localoffices/default.aspx)
What if I don’t fulfill the three-year work commitment?
The requirements of the work commitment are outlined in the Student Agreement. If the scholar does not complete the terms of the agreement, the scholarship will convert to a loan. If the scholar completes a portion of the work commitment, the loan amount will be pro-rated based on the amount of time worked.

Under what circumstances would the scholarship convert to a loan?
If a scholar does not complete the terms of his or her Build Dakota Student Agreement or their Industry Sponsorship Agreement, it will be converted to a loan and the funds allocated for that scholar will be used to provide a scholarship to a new recipient.

What if I quit school during the first month of enrollment?
Any items paid for by the scholarship will be converted to a loan. This includes any tuition, fees, tools, uniforms, computer, and any other expenses paid for on behalf of the Build Dakota Scholarship. Because all the tools required to complete the program are purchased prior to a recipients first semester, the scholar will be responsible for re-payment of those items.

What is the interest rate if my scholarship converts to a loan?
Scholarships converted to loans through June 30, 2022, will have a 4% annual interest rate. A copy of the loan promissory note can be found on the Build Dakota Scholarship website.

Can I appeal the decision to convert the scholarship to a loan?
All recipients have the right to request an appeal by the Build Dakota Administrative Board. Requests must be submitted within the 10 days following the date the scholar was notified of the decision to convert the scholarship to a loan. Contact the Build Dakota program manager for questions regarding an appeal.

For additional information visit the Western Dakota Technical College website at [www.wdt.edu](http://www.wdt.edu) or contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships:

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