

JOAN AND WESLEY BUFFINGTON TRUST

2014-2015 Grant Application Guidelines

The Joan and Wesley Buffington Trust (the "Trust") was created to assist and aid needy adults who are residents of Montana, and who are blind or significantly visually impaired. The Trust will provide grants to qualified applicants to provide assistance for education and training that will enhance the possibility of gainful employment.

In furtherance of these purposes, the Trust shall apply these guidelines in considering applications for grants from the Trust funds. Deviations from the guidelines shall be made infrequently and only in extraordinary circumstances. Any deviations are at the sole discretion of the Trustee.

Are you eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible for a grant from the Trust, you must be a Montana resident and either be totally blind, legally blind, or visually impaired as defined by the World Health Organization. Additionally, you must be applying for funds to provide financial assistance to attend a college or university educational program, vocational training program (including pre-employment training), or confidence-building opportunities; this may include tuition/fees, room & board, technical or adaptive equipment, and airfare or other transportation.

How can I apply for the grant, and what information is required?

An eligible individual must complete a grant application and provide required documents listed below. Applications can be found at www.firstinterstatebank.com. The completed application and supporting documents must be submitted for review by the Trust's Advisory Committee at the following address: First Interstate Bank, P. O. Box 30918, Billings, MT 59116-0918.

- The applicant must provide proof of Montana citizenship.
- The applicant must provide current (within the last 12 months) documentation from a licensed Ophthalmologist or Optometrist testifying to the applicant's condition as a legally blind, totally blind or visually impaired individual.

- ❖ For these purposes, the Trust recognizes the World Health Organization classifications of these terms: Visually Impaired: having a best corrected visual acuity of 20/60 or worse in the better eye; Legally Blind: having a best corrected visual acuity of 20/200 or worse in the better eye or a visual field of less than 20 degrees; Totally Blind: having a best corrected visual acuity of 20/400 or worse in the better eye or a visual field of less than 10 degrees.
- The applicant must demonstrate the intention to pursue educational courses at an accredited college or university or qualified vocational training programs. The applicant is encouraged to provide additional information regarding the specific programs that he/she will pursue and past scholastic records.
- A Statement of Need is required as part of the application; applicant may provide evidence of financial need for consideration.

How many grants per year does the Trust award?

The Trust anticipates providing several grants per year. The minimum grant awarded will be \$1,000. The number of grants and amount of each grant awarded is at the sole discretion of the Trustee and the Trust Advisory Committee.

Grant Accountability and Reporting requirements:

Prior to awarding a grant, the Trustee will require verification of the applicant's admission and enrollment in the college, university, or vocational training program. Upon verification and approval of the Trustee, a check will be provided by the Trust to the educational institution with instructions to credit the funds in the applicant's student account.

Most grants will be awarded either in a single payment or two payments (one per semester) directly to the educational institution.

Application Process Requirements:

The Applicant must provide the following information and materials to the Trust Advisory Committee:

- A completed application;
- An essay or personal statement of financial need that describes your economic need and how you plan to use the grant, if awarded;
- A current eye report completed by a licensed Ophthalmologist or Optometrist stating applicant's vision diagnosis;
- Official transcripts and two letter of recommendation, as applicable.

All materials should be submitted to First Interstate Bank c/o Tiffianny Steffes, P. O. Box 30918, Billings, MT 59116-0918;

Contact Tiffianny at (406) 255-5238 with any questions.

Grant Applications must be made on the form which is available at First Interstate Bank Wealth Management; www.firstinterstatebank.com. Applicants must provide all information requested; incomplete applications may be rejected.

After receipt of a Grant Application, the Trust may contact an applicant to ask questions, offer suggestions concerning the application, or request further information. The Trust may also request an updated application if necessary.

The Deadline for Grant Applications is 5:00 p.m., Mountain Daylight Time on November 15th, 2014. In the event that all trust funds are not distributed, another round of Applications may be accepted at a future time.