wizehive

How Your
Association's
Scholarship Process
**May Be Hurting,
Not Helping,
Your Members**

Thousands of professional associations offer scholarships every year, and for good reason. Scholarships – along with grants, fellowships, and awards – have become a crucial part of the association mission as these organizations thrive to offer more desirable experiences and true value to their members.

Scholarships, be they for advanced education of the members or the college studies of members' children, are an attractive benefit. Those designed for students interested in pursuing a career in your industry serve as an investment in the next generation, not to mention help create student-level or future members. Many associations proudly offer scholarships out of social responsibility, and there's no doubt any giving program helps bolster an organization's branding and public image.

Add in your internship or fellowship programs, and you are making a sound and important contribution to the education and advancement of your profession.

But are all of these benefits diminished by your process itself?

The current state of
the application process

A cursory look at many association scholarship, internship, and fellowship programs shows an application process firmly rooted in the past. Outdated technology – or in some cases the lack of any technology – creates an antiquated and cumbersome process that has negative impact on numerous players.

For one, your members. Be they the applicant themself or the parent of an applicant, they are instantly hit with a challenging submission process.

According the the National Scholarship Providers Association's 2017 Membership Survey, 34% of scholarship applications are still not online, requiring applicants to download an application off their website or request a hard copy application; many others use a simple, static web form. These are difficult to follow, require more work to complete for the applicant, and can often lead to incomplete applications as your members try to rush through or misunderstand instructions. Attachments – think transcripts or letters of recommendation – must be emailed or snail mailed separately, and then are often misplaced. And if a member needs to stop during the process for any reason, unsaved work could be lost completely.

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The review of all these applications also often causes headaches. Your reviewers might be current members or individuals on your board – people who volunteering to assist your association. Yet despite their time being valuable, they are being bogged down with manual processes that can take hours per review. According to the NSPA survey, 25% of scholarship programs still have judges scoring hard copy applications. Multiple files have to be considered, literally surrounding a reviewer with paperwork. And feedback process are rudimentary, requiring even more forms, spreadsheets, or emails.

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And then, of course, there is the impact this all has on the program manager. Often a lone individual who has other job responsibilities to handle, they are the ones constantly trying to put all these pieces together, track their progress, and consolidate the feedback to determine the winners. Their days are a constant to-do list of sending email reminders and status check-ins, photocopying and file building, and trying to make sense of it all.

The average scholarship recieves 4,344 applications.

The average scholarship receives 4,344 applications. Just imagine having to do one manual item for each of those applications. That said, even a program with only a dozen or so submissions could spend weeks collecting, organizing, and managing all the paperwork that comes with them.
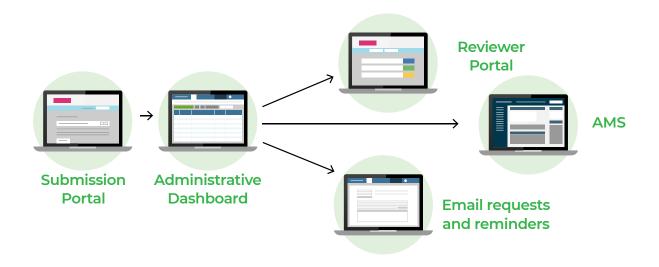
For an association focused on member engagement and experience, the current application management process is simply inadequate and damaging. Members are being put through a painful, complicated application process. They may be overloaded with time-consuming reviews. And the staff whose job it is to improve the member experience is too busy chasing down PDFs to do it.

Improving the
member experience

The need for a clearer, simpler, more streamlined application management process is obvious. And in the past few years, technology has come on the market that allows associations to upgrade.

Yet according to the NSPA survey, only half of scholarship providers use scholarship management software.

Those who use some sort of technology often have opportunities to improve even further, by integrating their software with their AMS, utilizing more features available to them, or automating more steps within the system. Or, if their current platform doesn't allow for these options, upgrading to a more comprehensive system.

Submission Portal → **Administrative Dashboard** → **Reviewer Portal** / **AMS** / **Email requests and reminders**

APPLICANT/ MEMBER BENEFITS

With a quality application management system, members can enjoy a cleaner application experience for your scholarships, fellowships, internships, and more.

- Single sign on allows your members to use their association log on information, eliminating the need for creating yet another user profile.

- Integration with your AMS automatically populates questions in the application with data you have already collected from them.

- A qualifying quiz quickly lets applicants know if they meet the standard criteria, saving them from wasting time on inappropriate applications.

- A clean submission portal experience allows for stepped applications, saving as you go, uploading of files, and status check-in after submission.

- Triggered emails from the administrator easily remind members to finish applications or submit before a deadline.

REVIEWER BENEFITS

Have members volunteering as part of your review panel? With a scholarship management platform, their role is easier than ever.

- Automating reviewer assignments mean they get notifications to review applications based on your criteria, be it their local district, profession, or other rule. You can also use this step to ensure reviewers aren't assigned submissions that would constitute a conflict of interest.

- A personalized reviewer portal displays only the applications on their plate, with clear color coding for new applications, those they are in the process of reviewing, and those they have completed.

- All pieces of an application – from the profile to question responses to uploaded transcripts or letters – appear together in the profile for easier review.

- Side-by-side views of the application data and the scorecard make providing feedback quicker.

Additional benefits for your
association staff

While improving the experience and reducing the amount of time and energy spent by your members and board is paramount, utilizing a scholarship management platform can also provide attractive benefits for your association staff.

Administrative time managing scholarship programs is drastically reduced since there is no manual collecting or compiling of files, no printing or photocopying, and no spreadsheets to create. All the data from the submitted applications is stored clearly in the platform's database, and admins can sort and view this data in multiple ways to match their needs. Reminder or update emails can be sent directly from the system to all applicants or any segment. And the system can even be used after the scholarship is awarded for payment updates, uploading of transcripts to prove GPA, or surveys.

This is a big time saver for your staff. Depending on how large your program is, it could save them 50% of their current workload.

And that means they can use that newly free time to better focus on your members and the rest of the value you provide them.

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Meet
Zengine from WizeHive

WizeHive's powerful yet easy-to-use Zengine™ platform WizeHive helps associations simplify and save time with Zengine, a cloud-based platform designed to streamline the collection, review, and management of applications for grants, scholarships, fellowships, and countless other programs.

Zengine is the only platform that:

- Can be tailored to your process, not the other way around

- Can easily manage multiple application processes, including grants, scholarships, fellowships, awards, speaker submissions, certifications, and more

- Can integrate with more than 1000 other software programs, including AMS programs like Personify, Salesforce and others, for the ultimate in streamlining solutions

To learn more about Zengine's ability to improve your program and the experience for your members, please visit wizehive.com.