

Women's Opportunity Awards

Application

Since 1972, Soroptimist International of the Americas has been helping women to reclaim their dreams through the Women's Opportunity Awards program—cash grants for women seeking to improve their employment status by gaining additional education and skills. The program was designed to assist women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families. The women may use the awards to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education—including books, child care and transportation. The Women's Opportunity Awards program is funded by The Soroptimist Foundation.

About the Program

The program begins on the club level, where award amounts vary. Club-level winners become eligible for region-level awards. Each year, three awards (one first-place \$5,000 award and two \$3,000 awards) are granted in each of Soroptimist's 29 regions. The first-place winner then becomes a candidate for one of three \$10,000 finalist awards. Women's Opportunity Awards totaling almost \$1 million are granted each year.

You are eligible to apply for a Women's Opportunity Award if you:

- 1) are a female head of household, with primary financial responsibility for supporting your family (including children, a spouse and parents);
- 2) are attending, or have been accepted to, a vocational/skills training program, or an undergraduate degree program;
- 3) have financial need;
- 4) are motivated to achieve your educational and career goals;
- 5) reside in one of Soroptimist International of the Americas' member countries and territories (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Taiwan, United States of America, Venezuela).

Eligibility Criteria

Previous Women's Opportunity Awards recipients are ineligible to apply.

Women who already have an undergraduate degree are ineligible to apply. Soroptimists, employees of Soroptimist, and the immediate families of both are ineligible to apply.

Please read the application instructions carefully before proceeding.

- The application, with two completed reference forms, must be received **BY DECEMBER 15** at the address listed on the back cover of this packet—**not** postmarked by this date. In order to ensure that your application is received on time, mail it well in advance of the December 15 deadline. Applications submitted directly to Soroptimist headquarters will not be considered.
- Give the people writing your references sufficient time to complete their forms and return them to you—at least three weeks, if possible.
- Be neat. Typing your application is strongly recommended, especially the essay portions of the application. Ask the people writing your references to type their forms, if possible.
- (*U.S. applicants only*) Do not forget to provide your Social Security number on your application. Because Women's Opportunity Awards are not scholarships, they are considered taxable income that is reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You should consult IRS Publication 520, or a tax planner, for more information.

Some social service agencies and school financial aid offices may also consider Women's Opportunity Awards as income, which may affect any financial assistance that you currently receive. Laws vary from state to state, and you should consult the appropriate agencies for more information.

- Remember to sign your completed application.

Award recipients will be notified between January and June. Not all applicants to the program will be selected as recipients.

Founded in 1921, Soroptimist is a volunteer service organization for women in business, management and the professions. Soroptimist International, of which Soroptimist International of the Americas is a part, has almost 100,000 members in 119 countries and territories who contribute time and financial support to community-based projects benefiting women. Soroptimists are women of all ages, professions and ethnic groups joined by their desire to improve the quality of life in their communities.

In addition to participation in the Women's Opportunity Awards program, other Soroptimist International of the Americas' club projects include: creating awareness about domestic violence, providing literacy instruction, mentoring girls and young women, and campaigning in the fight against breast cancer.

The Soroptimist Foundation, which funds the Women's Opportunity Awards and other Soroptimist programs, was established in 1958.

For more information about how Soroptimist makes a difference for women, visit <www.soroptimist.org>.

Application Instructions

About Soroptimist

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PART III — PERSONAL STATEMENT

The Women's Opportunity Awards aid women who have faced economic and social barriers and personal hardships, and are seeking to gain additional skills, training and education. The program helps women who, as heads of their households, must enter or return to the work force—or improve their employment status—in order to support themselves and their families.

Using another sheet of paper, please tell us in 750 words or less how these statements apply to you, and why you would make a good Women's Opportunity Award recipient.

PART IV — FINANCIAL NEED

The Women's Opportunity Awards are given based in part on financial need. Your total income will be compared to your total annual expenses. Please be as exact as you can.

A. Total annual household income before taxes, from all sources (*include your income from employment, savings, child support, alimony, Social Security benefits, and school loans or scholarships; also include all income received by your spouse or other household members*).

B. Please list your annual educational expenses **ONLY**—do not include those of your children or other family members.

Tuition/School Fees _____ Books _____ Transportation _____
Other (please describe) _____

C. Please list your family's **TOTAL** annual living expenses (such as for housing, food, child care, utilities, medical expenses, etc.).

PART V — REFERENCES

Using the enclosed reference forms, please submit **TWO** references—from persons **NOT** related to you—with your completed application. Applications received without two references will not be considered.

PART VI — AGREEMENT

- I certify that all information provided in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I will notify the designated club to which I have submitted this application if there are any changes.
- I understand that this award is taxable for citizens of the United States. Recipients in other countries should check their local tax laws.
- I certify that this is the only application I have made this year for a Women's Opportunity Award from this or any other Soroptimist club.
- I understand that my application and supporting information become the property of Soroptimist International of the Americas upon submission, and that Soroptimist shall have sole discretion in using these materials for the purpose of publicizing the Women's Opportunity Awards program.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Submitted to: *(Please provide the name of the sponsoring Soroptimist club listed on the back page of the application packet.)*

Name of Applicant *(Applicant: Please fill in your name above before giving this sheet to the person writing your reference.)*

Thank you for taking the time to provide this reference for a Women's Opportunity Award applicant. Women's Opportunity Awards assist women entering or re-entering the workforce to obtain the education and skills training they need in order to improve their employment status. Please use your personal knowledge of this candidate to respond to the following questions (please type or print legibly; limit your answers to the space provided; additional pages cannot be considered):

1. How long have you known the candidate, and in what capacity (employer, school instructor, friend, etc.)?

2. Please rate the candidate in the following areas (as applicable), based upon your knowledge of her achievements and strengths. A score of "1" means that you "strongly disagree" with the statement; a score of "5" means that you "strongly agree" with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
A. The applicant is motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. The applicant has demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. The applicant has demonstrated strength of character.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. The applicant has clear goals.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. The applicant would be an inspiration to others.	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please tell us what you believe to be the candidate's particular strengths in her personal, educational, or professional life (as applicable). Be as specific as you can, and give examples of particular accomplishments.

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4. What is your knowledge of the candidate's educational goals, and her progress toward achieving these goals? Consider any barriers or difficulties she has overcome.

5. Is there any additional information that you believe we should know about this applicant?

COMPLETED BY *(Please return completed reference form to the applicant for submission with her application.)*

Name

Date

Title

Organization

Address

Telephone

Name of Applicant *(Applicant: Please fill in your name above before giving this sheet to the person writing your reference.)*

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