

Business Case

Options

Option	Description
Do Nothing	Keep the current email + spreadsheet process with minor ad-hoc fixes.
Option A	Implement a core online scholarship portal (MVP) for applications, reviews, and tracking.
Option B	Implement an enhanced portal with automation, advanced analytics, and integrations from day 1.

Option Detail: Do Nothing

- **Description:** Continue using email for submissions and spreadsheets for tracking and scoring.
- **Pros:**
 - No new implementation cost.
 - No change management required.
- **Cons:**
 - Continued high manual effort and risk of errors.
 - No improvement in applicant experience or transparency.
 - Limited ability to scale scholarship volume.
 - Ongoing frustration for staff and reviewers.

Option Detail: Option A – Core Portal (MVP)

- **Description:**
Build a web-based portal where:
 - Applicants submit and manage applications online.
 - Reviewers access assigned applications and submit scores/comments.
 - Staff manage programs, deadlines, and basic reporting in an admin console.
- **Scope Highlights:**
 - Online forms and document upload.
 - Role-based access (applicant, reviewer, admin).
 - Status tracking and basic dashboards.
 - Automated email notifications (submission, status change, decision).
- **Pros:**
 - Significant reduction in manual work and errors vs. status quo.
 - Faster processing and clearer visibility of application status.
 - Reasonable timeline and complexity for a small internal team.
 - Foundation for future enhancements (analytics, integrations).

- **Cons:**
 - Does not initially include advanced analytics or full integration with other systems.
 - Requires upfront effort for design, build, testing, and training.

Option Detail: Option B – Enhanced Portal (Advanced Features)

- **Description:**
Deliver the core portal **plus**:
 - Advanced analytics (e.g., trend reports, demographic breakdowns).
 - Workflow automation (auto-assigning applications, multi-stage approvals).
 - Integration with existing CRM or donor management systems.
- **Pros:**
 - Maximizes process automation and insight from the start.
 - Strong long-term data and reporting capabilities.
- **Cons:**
 - Higher complexity and higher delivery risk, especially with only two developers.
 - Longer implementation time; may miss the next scholarship cycle.
 - Greater dependency on other systems and teams for integrations.
 - Higher change management and support requirements.

Benefits (Quantitative & Qualitative)

Estimated Benefits by Option

Benefit Area	Do Nothing	Option A – Core Portal	Option B – Enhanced Portal
Application processing time	No improvement	↓ 30–40% average processing time	↓ 40–50% with more automation
Manual data errors (duplicates, lost)	No improvement	↓ ~80–90% errors	↓ ~90%+ with validations & automation
Staff efficiency	No improvement	Moderate improvement	High improvement
Applicant experience & transparency	No improvement	Clear status / better UX	Best UX, more insights
Scalability of scholarship volume	Low	Medium	High

Key Qualitative Benefits (Options A & B)

- Improved **applicant experience** through clear online workflows and transparent status.
- Better **reviewer experience**, with centralized access and standardized scoring.
- Reduced **operational risk** from manual tracking and version confusion.
- Enhanced **reputation** of BrightFutures as a modern, student-focused organization.
- Better **data foundation** for decision making on scholarship programs (volume, demand, demographics).

Costs & Effort (T-Shirt Sizes)

High-level, relative effort only (S/M/L/XL), for internal planning.

Cost / Effort Category	Do Nothing	Option A – Core Portal	Option B – Enhanced Portal
Development Effort	XS	M	XL
Business Analysis & Design	S	M	L
Testing & UAT	S	M	L
Change Management & Training	XS	M	L
Infrastructure / Hosting	XS	S–M	M–L
Integration Effort	XS	S (minimal/none)	L–XL
Ongoing Support & Maintenance	S	M	M–L

High-Level Risks by Option

Option	Key Risks
Do Nothing	Continued processing delays, high error rates, staff burnout, poor applicant experience, inability to scale.
Option A	Scope creep; limited dev capacity; tight timeline to launch before next cycle; user adoption risk.

Option	Key Risks
Option B	Over-complex solution; missed cycle due to longer build; high integration dependency risk; higher change management burden.

Recommendation & Rationale

Recommended Option: Option A – Core Scholarship Portal (MVP)

Rationale:

- 1. Best balance of value vs. effort**
 - Delivers substantial improvements in processing time, data quality, and applicant experience.
 - Effort is manageable for a small internal team (two developers) within a realistic timeline.
- 2. Lower delivery risk vs. Option B**
 - Focused scope reduces complexity and likelihood of delays or technical issues.
 - Avoids heavy dependencies on integrations and advanced analytics in the first phase.
- 3. Fast time-to-benefit**
 - Can be targeted to go live before the next scholarship cycle, delivering visible impact quickly.
 - Staff and applicants see immediate improvements, which supports future enhancements and change adoption.
- 4. Scalable foundation for future phases**
 - Core portal establishes a solid base (data model, workflows, UX).
 - Advanced analytics, deeper reporting, and integrations can be added later as **Phase 2/3** once the core process is stabilized.