Project Charter

Problem Statement

The manual, email-based scholarship application and review process is time-consuming, error-prone, and lacks transparency. Staff struggle to track application status, reviewers use different versions of scoring sheets, and applicants receive delayed or inconsistent communication. This results in processing delays, missed deadlines, and poor applicant experience.

Objective

Design and implement an online scholarship management portal that allows students to submit applications digitally, supports structured scoring workflows for reviewers, and provides real-time status tracking and automated notifications. The solution should streamline operations, reduce processing time, and improve transparency for all stakeholders.

SMART

S – Specific: Design and implement an online scholarship management portal for applicants, reviewers, and administrators to manage the full application lifecycle digitally.
M – Measurable: Reduce average scholarship application processing time by at least 30% and manual data errors by 90% in the first application cycle.
A – Attainable: Utilize existing scholarship program data, standardized workflows, and widely used web technologies to configure and deploy the portal.
R – Relevant: Streamlines operations, improves transparency, and enhances the experience of students, reviewers, and staff across all scholarship programs.
T – Time-bound: Plan, build, test, and launch the scholarship management portal before the start of the next scholarship cycle (within 6 months).

In-scope

- Online application form and student portal
- Reviewer dashboard with scoring and comments
- Admin console for staff to configure programs and deadlines
- Automated emails (submission, shortlist, rejection, award)
- Basic analytics/reporting (volume, status, demographics)

Out-of-scope

- Full CRM integration
- Mobile app
- Payment/disbursement processing

Assumptions and Constraints

Assumptions

- The solution will be developed in-house using the organization's existing technology stack.
- Two internal developers will be available for the duration of the project.
- Key stakeholders (program managers, IT, and compliance) will be available for requirements gathering, reviews, and UAT.
- Existing scholarship program data (applicants, criteria, historical records) is accurate enough to be migrated with minimal cleansing.
- Applicants and reviewers have reliable internet access and basic digital literacy to use an online portal.
- The organization will approve and maintain the required hosting, security, and infrastructure for the portal.
- Transition from email-based applications to the portal will be supported by clear communications and basic training materials for users.
- The project budget and high-level scope will remain stable once approved.

Constraints

- Only two developers are available, limiting parallel development capacity.
- Fixed timeline to launch before the next scholarship cycle (e.g., within 6 months of project initiation).
- Limited budget for additional tools, integrations, or external vendors.
- Existing legacy systems (spreadsheets, email workflows) may restrict integration options and require interim workarounds.
- Data privacy and security requirements for student information may constrain design and technology choices.
- Limited availability of staff and volunteer reviewers for extensive testing and change management activities.

High Level Timeline

Timeline	Phase	Key Activities	Milestone
Month 1	Initiation & Planning	Confirm scope, budget, timeline; assign core team; finalize charter	**M1 – Project Charter Approved**
Month 2	Requirements & Process Design	Stakeholder workshops; document as-is/to-be; define & prioritize requirements	**M2 – Requirements & To-Be Process Sign-Off**
Month 3	Solution & Technical Design	IA & UX wireframes; data model; security & hosting design; review & approval	**M3 – Solution Design Approved**

Timeline	Phase	Key Activities	Milestone
Months 4–5	Development & Configuration	Build application form, reviewer dashboard, admin console, basic reporting	**M4 – MVP Complete & Internal Demo**
Month 5	Testing & UAT	System testing; defect fixes; pilot data migration; user acceptance testing	**M5 – UAT Sign-Off**
Month 6 (early)	Training & Go-Live	Training staff/reviewers; comms to applicants; production deployment	**M6 – Portal Go-Live**
Month 6 (end)	Hypercare & Closure	Post-go-live support; handover to operations/IT; lessons learned	**M7 – Project Closure & Handover**

Roles

Role	Name (Pseudo)	Title / Function	Key Responsibility in Project
Sponsor	Dr. Olivia Martinez	Executive Director, BrightFutures Foundation	Provides strategic direction, approves budget, and signs off on major milestones.
Product Owner	James Chen	Scholarship Programs Manager	Owns requirements, prioritizes backlog, and validates that the portal meets program needs.
Delivery Lead	Priya Singh	IT Project Manager / Delivery Lead	Oversees delivery, coordinates development team, manages scope, schedule, and risks.
Business Analyst	Khush Domadiya	Business Analyst, Digital Transformation	Gathers requirements, documents processes, supports testing, and maintains project artifacts.

High Level Risk

Risk ID	Risk Description	Impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood (H/M/L)	High-Level Mitigation
R1	Limited development capacity with only two developers delays delivery.	High	Medium	Prioritize MVP scope, stagger features, and agree on clear “must-have vs nice-to-have” backlog items.
R2	Requirements are unclear or change late in the project.	High	Medium	Run structured workshops, obtain formal sign-off, and manage changes via a simple change control log.

Risk ID	Risk Description	Impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood (H/M/L)	High-Level Mitigation
R3	Data migration issues from spreadsheets/email lead to inconsistent or lost data.	High	Medium	Perform data profiling early, run trial migrations, and define clear data cleansing & mapping rules.
R4	Low adoption from applicants or reviewers due to resistance to change.	Medium	Medium	Provide training, quick-reference guides, and clear communications on benefits and timelines.
R5	Portal does not fully meet security or privacy requirements for student data.	High	Low–Medium	Involve IT/security early, follow security best practices, and perform a formal security review.
R6	Tight timeline to launch before scholarship cycle leaves limited testing time.	High	Medium	Allocate dedicated UAT window, prioritize critical test cases, and plan a short hyper care period.
R7	Dependencies on key stakeholders' availability (Sponsor, Product Owner) cause delays in approvals.	Medium	Medium	Schedule checkpoints in advance, set response SLAs, and identify delegates for key decisions.