

# Leah Armstrong Scholarship Guidelines

First Nations Economics (FNE) drives social, cultural and economic prosperity for First Peoples. The organisation is an Aboriginal-led, Supply Nation-registered charity that works directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide economic, governance and finance capability uplift.

The Leah Armstrong Scholarship program is named in honour of trailblazing Torres Strait Islander woman, Leah Armstrong (**Scholarship**). The Scholarship is designed to empower First Nations economies through supporting the education of First Nations women and girls in the areas of economics, finance, business and community governance.

## 1. Title

The Leah Armstrong Scholarship Program

## 2. Purpose

First Nations women play an important role in their families and communities as leaders, nurturers and knowledge holders. But First Nations women are also less represented in the labour force and are even more underrepresented in professions such as finance and economics. These skills, along with governance, underpin the success of First Nations enterprises and community-controlled organisations. By creating more opportunities for First Nations women to study and work in these areas, we aim to drive greater outcomes across the entire community.

The Leah Armstrong Scholarship program is designed to build and support a strong pipeline of educated and empowered First Nations women who are interested in working in economics, finance, business or community governance. Each scholarship provides up to \$20,000 in funding support each year for up to three years, to First Nations women studying or looking to study economics, finance, business or community governance-related areas at an Australian University or tertiary education institution.

- The Scholarship is named in honour of Leah Armstrong, a proud Torres Strait Islander woman, a senior professional with over 30 years' of experience in business and the not-for-profit sector. Formerly the Chair of First Australians Capital, she remains the driving innovation in how Indigenous enterprises access tailored capital and support, including an ambitious Indigenous-led and managed impact investment fund. Leah also serves on several committees, including a member of the First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group, an Australian co-representative of the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Co-operation Arrangement (IPETCA) Partnership Council, Creative Australia Impact Investment Advisory Committee, Philanthropy Australia First Nations Governance

### Program Partners



**STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG BUSINESS**

Committee and Chair of the First Nation Funders Network and Executive Member of the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance.

Leah has been a pivotal figure in national Indigenous affairs, holding influential roles such as CEO of Reconciliation Australia, Director of Indigenous Business Australia, Director of Indigenous Engagement and Advancement at the University of Newcastle, and a member of the Business Council of Australia's Indigenous Taskforce. She has also served on the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council, as a Fellow of the University of Sydney Senate, Chairperson of Supply Nation, and Chairperson of the Aboriginal Housing Office NSW. Additionally, Leah co-founded and served as Managing Director of Yarnteen Ltd, an Aboriginal community economic development organisation in Newcastle.

### 3. Value

\$20,000.00 per annum over three years, totalling \$60,000.00 per scholarship.

The per annum value will be paid in equal instalments throughout each year, at the beginning of each semester or trimester (as applicable). For example, if your course has semesters, you will be paid 50% of the yearly value at the beginning of semester one and 50% at the beginning of semester two.

### 4. Number of scholarships available

Up to two scholarships are available for commencement in 2026.

FNE retains the discretion only to award scholarships to suitable applicants.

### 5. Duration of scholarship

The duration of the scholarship is up to three full academic years.

### 6. Concurrent scholarships

You may be permitted to hold the scholarship concurrently with another scholarship or financial award, subject to the Scholarship Selection Committee's discretion. To avoid any confusion, you are permitted to hold this scholarship concurrently with any Commonwealth scholarship, award or other monies.

### 7. Eligibility requirements

Applicants for the Scholarship should:

Program Partners



**STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG BUSINESS**

- a. Be an Australian domestic student<sup>1</sup>;
- b. Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander;
- c. Identify as a woman;
- d. Be enrolled to study full time at an Australian University or tertiary education institution;
- e. Be enrolled in an undergraduate or post-graduate degree, or other tertiary-level course in the areas of finance, economics, business or community governance; and
- f. Commence or continue their degree / course in the semester or trimester in which the scholarship is awarded.

## 8. Selection Criteria

The Scholarship is awarded to the applicant(s) who, in the opinion of the Scholarship Selection Committee, best demonstrate through their application and supporting documentation:

- a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership and/or willingness to contribute to First Nations communities;
- b. Passion and/or interest for area of study;
- c. Demonstrated life experience that contributes to the motivation to study; and
- d. Clearly communicates a vision of where study may lead them after graduation.

## 9. Selection Committee

The Scholarship Selection Committee will comprise of representatives from FNE, as well as other independent representatives. All representatives will be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

## 10. Method of payment

The method of payment is contingent on the needs of the awardee and will be agreed in writing between the Scholarship Selection Committee and the awardee. This could include, for example, payment into your nominated bank account and/or payment of your course fees directly to the university or tertiary education institution (as applicable).

---

<sup>1</sup> an Australian citizen or permanent resident  
Program Partners

**11. Disbursement of Scholarship**

The Scholarship funds must be disbursed to cover educational expenses (e.g. tuition, uniforms, textbooks and travel), and other living costs that enable you to pursue your education (e.g. rent, accommodation costs and childcare).

**12. Scholarship continuation**

The Scholarship will continue to be paid subject to the recipient:

- a. Maintaining a pass grade or above each semester or trimester (as applicable); and
- b. Maintaining full time enrolment in the degree/course for which they were enrolled in when the Scholarship was offered.

**13. Deferral of Scholarship**

If you defer your enrolment in your course, your scholarship may also be deferred at the Scholarship Selection Committee's discretion. If you defer your enrolment for a period of greater than 12 months, section 14 will apply.

**14. Suspension of Scholarship**

The recipient may forfeit the Scholarship if they:

- a. Fail to meet the requirements in 12 a) and b) above;
- b. Are found to have behaved in a manner that is in breach of their place of study's Student Code of Conduct or is the subject of disciplinary action under the Regulations of that place of study;
- c. Take a leave of absence;
- d. Defer their enrolment for a period greater than 12 months; Or
- e. At any stage, provide incorrect, false or misleading information to or withhold relevant information from the Scholarship Selection Committee, FNE.

Where any of the above circumstances apply, the recipient may make an application in writing to the Scholarship Selection Committee requesting that the Committee maintain their Scholarship, outlining the circumstances and reasons relating to their personal situation. The Scholarship Selection Committee has discretion to determine the ongoing status of the Scholarship.

Program Partners



**STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG BUSINESS**

## 15. Application process

The application process consists of completing an [online form](#).

Applicants will be asked to provide their details, including confirmation of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity. They will also be asked to provide evidence of application or enrolment at an Australian University or other tertiary institution, as well as their academic transcript from their most recent year of formal studies, on official organisational letterhead.

Applicants must provide a statement (either in writing or via video submission) supporting their application and indicating how they believe receiving the Scholarship would support their studies and future career goals. This statement should give a sufficient explanation of the applicant's background, current circumstances and estimated educational expenses and other living costs to enable the applicant to pursue their education (see section 11 for more detail) to enable judgement of their eligibility, need and merit. Supporting documents can also be uploaded. Written statements and accompanying materials must not exceed **four pages**, and video submissions must not exceed **seven minutes** in total.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to prepare their statement in their own words. The use of AI-generated content is discouraged, as the Scholarship Selection Committee places significant value on authenticity, personal voice and genuine reflection.

Successful applicants will be selected based on their application, academic potential, ability to meet the criteria, and where appropriate, performance in an interview before the Scholarship Selection Committee.

Completed applications must be received by 5pm (AEST) 23 January 2026 to be considered for a Scholarship in 2026 (**Application Closing Date**).

## 16. Flexibility

While these Guidelines set out specific selection criteria and requirements for the Scholarship, the Scholarship Selection Committee is committed to working with awardees to accommodate individual needs and circumstances. Applicants are encouraged to communicate openly about their individual needs and circumstances during the application process (and throughout the duration of the Scholarship, if awarded). Applicants who feel they only meet some of the selection criteria or scholarship requirements are still encouraged to apply, and to explain their individual situation in their application.

### Program Partners



**STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG BUSINESS**

## 17. Scholarship requirements

Scholarship recipients are required to:

- a. Submit an end of year report to FNE, outlining their progress;
  - i. Reports should include academic results for the year, an update regarding the circumstances which warrant the recipient being in receipt of the Scholarship, an estimated breakdown by category of expenses of how the Scholarship money has been spent, and other relevant feedback. The Scholarship Selection Committee retains the discretion to request that recipients provide evidence (e.g., invoices and receipts) that the Scholarship money was spent for the purposes outlined in section 11, so it is important that recipients retain this evidence throughout the year.
- b. Consider participating in any publications, media releases, marketing/promotional activities and events related to the award of the Scholarship (where reasonable and to the extent you give us your consent to do so).

## 18. Confirmation of Identity

The Scholarship application requires the following documentation to be considered. These documents are required by the Application Closing Date.

- a. A certified copy of your confirmation of identity from a registered Community Controlled Organisation (e.g. Land Council, Elder's Association or other) with a common seal confirming a person to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- b. If you are unable to provide the above, you will need to supply a statutory declaration outlining your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage, community ties and the reasons for being unable to obtain confirmation from a registered community-controlled organisation.

## 19. Privacy and Confidentiality

By submitting an application for the Scholarship, you consent to FNE collecting, using and sharing your personal information for the purposes of enabling the Scholarship Selection Committee to assess your application. Any information you provide within your Scholarship application is confidential and will not be used without your consent, except as described in these Guidelines.

If you choose not to provide your personal information, it may not be possible for the Scholarship Selection Committee to assess your application and eligibility for a Scholarship.

Program Partners



**STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG BUSINESS**



If you have any questions about how your personal information is being used, please contact FNE at [scholarships@firstnationseconomics.com](mailto:scholarships@firstnationseconomics.com).

20. Intellectual property

FNE acknowledge that applicants will own any intellectual property rights in their applications for the Scholarship.

21. When will I be notified of the outcome of my application?

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application approximately two weeks after the closing date.

Program Partners



**STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG BUSINESS**