

Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

What is the Accelerate Hope Fund?

The Accelerate Hope Fund is an employee-driven program at Strickland Brothers that provides financial assistance to team members experiencing unexpected hardships. Whether facing medical emergencies, housing loss, funeral expenses, natural disasters, or other unforeseen challenges, the fund is designed to support employees in times of need and reflects our commitment to caring for one another.

How is Accelerate Hope funded?

The fund is supported through voluntary contributions from employees, including payroll deductions and one-time donations, which can be made at any time throughout the year. Contributions to the fund are tax-deductible, and employees can start or stop contributions at their discretion. While employee contributions are crucial to sustaining the fund, contributing does not guarantee eligibility for assistance, nor is it required to apply for or receive support from the fund. Strickland Brothers may also provide matching contributions to enhance the program's impact.

Fund Policy

Am I eligible to apply for assistance?

All active full-time or part-time employees (both salaried and hourly) of Strickland Brothers are eligible to apply. Applicants must have completed their New Employee Orientation period (180 days) and be in good standing.

What types of events are covered under the EAF?

Qualifying Events are unexpected or unavoidable circumstances outside of an individual's control that create a financial hardship for an individual and their family. These are usually one-time events that cause an individual to spend their rent, mortgage, or utility money on unexpected bills. A "Qualifying Event" is a Qualified Disaster or Personal Hardship. Qualifying Events must have occurred no more than six (6) months prior to the application date.

What types of expenses are covered under the Fund?

If an employee has suffered a Qualifying Event in accordance with Fund policy, then they may submit an application for a grant from the Accelerate Hope Fund to assist with Covered Expenses. A non-exhaustive list of bills, costs, payments, and other expenses the Fund has deemed as covered expenses are identified in the policy. The Fund will not grant assistance for expenses that are ineligible under the policy. A non-exhaustive list of Ineligible Expenses is also listed in the policy. To be considered for a grant for a covered expense, applicants must submit required documentation that substantiates the Qualifying Event for which the need for assistance is based.

What documentation is required?

Applicants will be required to provide documentation as part of the application for assistance to substantiate and support the application. The documentation required is dependent on the individual circumstances of each application and is subject to change.

Examples of Required Documentation (non-exhaustive):

- Photos of damage
- Personal financial statements (verification of family income and expenses; other available assets)
- Insurance claims, explanation(s) of benefits and deductibles
- Police reports
- Repair estimates with readily verifiable contact information
- W-9 of creditor to whom a payment is being issued. The [W-9](#) is necessary for Accelerate Hope to issue funds to a creditor on an employee's behalf
- Receipts of incurred expenses
- Overdue billing statements
- Certification of medical condition
- Certificate of death
- Medical bills
- Funeral costs/estimates

Are there limitations on how many applications may be submitted?

While there is no limit to the number of applications an employee can submit, an employee cannot apply for the same event more than once. Priority will be given to those who have not received funds previously.

Qualifying Events must have occurred no more than six (6) months prior to the application date. Once an application for a category of a Qualifying Event is denied, an application may not be resubmitted for the same Qualifying Event.

How much money can I get?

Awards of assistance shall be made based on financial need and the severity and impact of the disaster or other emergency had on the applicant and their family. Applications will be evaluated with consideration for previous submissions and disbursements. Priority will be given to employees who have not previously received assistance through the fund.

The maximum amount that can be awarded to an applicant is \$1,000 per calendar year. Additionally, no more than \$5,000 can be awarded to an individual during their employment.

Assistance from the Fund, pertaining to all grant applications, is subject to the availability of funds, the extent of each applicant's need, and the satisfactory completion of the application as determined in Accelerate Hope Committee (AHC) sole discretion in accordance with these and other guidelines established in the Fund Policy.

Are grants subject to income tax?

Yes, They are subject to income tax.

Who do I contact if I have questions about eligibility?

Please contact the Internal Accelerate Hope Committee (AHC) with questions. AHC may be reached via email at acceratehopeeap@acceleratedbrands.com

Application Process

How do I apply for assistance under the Fund?

The application for financial assistance is online and is located at [Accelerate Hope Fund Application Form](#)

Must the application be completed online?

Yes, all applications must be completed online. Employees will be provided guidance and directions for submitting the application and any required documentation.

The application site is mobile-friendly and can be completed using a smartphone. Employees may also use electronic devices provided by Strickland Brothers and are located at their shops to submit an application. If you are unable to complete an application online, you may email our EAF Support Team for further assistance at: acceratehopeeap@acceleratedbrands.com

May someone complete an application on my behalf?

In the event an employee is incapacitated or otherwise unable to complete the application, the application may be completed by another individual. This could be your manager or an immediate family member.

May I save my application information to be completed at another time?

No employees are encouraged to have all the required information prior to beginning the application.

What happens if I submit an incomplete application?

You will be contacted by a member of the AHC if additional information is needed to review your application materials. Requests for additional information will be sent via email. If materials are not received within seven (7) business days, AHC will close an application as incomplete.

When will I be notified if my application has been approved? When will payment be issued?

Decisions will be made within ten (10) business days upon receipt of a completed application. Decisions will not be made until all application materials have been determined to be complete by AHC. Applications missing core materials will delay the decision and award process, so it is critical to respond to requests for additional information in a timely manner. Final decisions will be sent in writing via email.

How will payment be issued?

Payments are deposited with the employees check and coded as grant.

What happens if my application for assistance is denied?

An appeal may be submitted for denial of an application within ten (10) business days of receipt of notification of denial. Appeals must be submitted via email to acceleratehopeeap@acceleratedbrands.com. Appeals not containing new information will not be considered by AHC and applicants are only allowed one (1) appeal per denied application.

Is the information submitted shared with my manager?

AHC will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality and privacy of applicants, as well as provide a secure and compliant online application process. By submission of an application, the personal information included in this application will be accessed by a limited number of authorized people affiliated with AHC for the purposes of assessing the application and processing payments where applicable.

The personal circumstances of an individual's application will not be shared with your manager.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the application process?

Please contact Accelerate Hope Committee at acceleratehopeeap@acceleratedbrands.com for questions about your application.