

Founding Forward Utah Chapter 2026 Spirit of America Youth Leadership program (SOA) Application Information Sheet



Application Process

Step 1: Applicant must complete, include all required materials ONLINE at:

<https://tinyurl.com/spiritofamericautah2026>



The online application will require you to:

1. Provide your personal and your parent/guardian contact information.
2. Select the week(s) you will be available and able to attend. **Please check** with your school, family, and other calendars to make sure you will be available to travel on the dates you select. Available SOA Sessions dates are:
March 5-8, 2026 March 26-29, 2026 April 16-19, 2026 April 23-26, 2026
3. Compose, type, and upload your essay, as described below. (*Students will verify that they did not use any AI tools to generate, write, or significantly alter any part of the essay.*)
4. Upload a copy of your driver's license, or a valid ID (e.g. passport).
5. Have your parent/guardian fill out their part of the online application form. By completing that portion, it is an acknowledgement that they are giving their consent for you to participate in SOA if you are selected.
6. Complete the Utah Spirit of America online application by **November 7, 2025**.

Written Essay - As part of the application process all applicants are required to write a 500–750-word essay. This year's essay topic highlights the "Declaration of Independence" in honor of "America 250", the commemoration of its signing.

When addressing the essay topic, please focus on expressing your own ideas and using your unique voice. The goal is to think critically and show your writing skills. While AI tools can be useful for research or grammar checks, they should not be used to write any part of your essay. You may use AI to find sources or clarify concepts, but the content, structure, and language must be entirely your own.

This is an opportunity to showcase your thoughts and independent thinking. Let your work reflect your creativity, passion, and knowledge!

The 2026 topic is: **"In what ways is the Declaration of Independence still relevant today?"**

*Essays must be typed, double spaced and uploaded on the online application. At the top of your essay, please include:

Your First and Last Name - "Founding Forward 2026 Essay"

Your mailing address: (Street, City, State zip code)

Grade level:

Your Teacher's name:

Copy of Driver's License - The mandatory uploaded copy of the student's driver's license or passport is critical to assist in the correct booking of airline tickets, with the name as listed on the license being used. Students without a driver's license or passport must include a valid ID with the student's full name listed.

Financial Consideration - The Utah Chapter will provide partial scholarship funding (including airfare), and chaperones for the Utah sessions. Each student will be asked to pay a total of \$425 towards the trip to Valley Forge which will be collected at the Utah Founding Forward Luncheon held in February 2026. (*see below*)

Step 2: Notifications and Interviews - Semi-finalists will be notified by November 10, 2025, and will be invited to an interview with members of the Utah Founding Forward Chapter. Interviews will be held in Gunnison, Utah, on November 15, 2025, and in Murray, Utah, on November 22, 2025.

Step 3: Finalists and Founding Forward Heroes Luncheon - The Utah students selected to attend the Spirit of America program *in March or April of 2026*, will be notified via mail (or email) by early December 12, 2025. That notification will also inform those students of their assigned SOA session dates. *This will be based on the preferences date(s) selected by the students and confirmed by parents/guardians on their applications and clarified at the interviews. If unable to attend that session, an alternate will be invited to attend in their place.*

In February 2026, these students will be honored at the Utah Founding Forward Heroes Luncheon. A mandatory orientation meeting for students and parents will be held at the conclusion of the luncheon. The student's \$425 portion of the cost of attending SOA will be collected at that time, and may be paid in cash, by check, or Venmo.

Utah students sponsored by Utah Chapter of Founding Forward: ffvutah@gmail.com

For more about the Spirit of America Youth Leadership program visit: www.foundingforward.org