

2018-19

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

I. ITEMS TO NOTE

- A. The residential custodian should be the individual completing the application.
- B. The email address used should be valid. This is how Empower Illinois will communicate with the applicant.
- C. The application is digital and not available in a paper format. The application is dynamic, meaning it will respond to the individual answers to questions with specific required documentation or additional questions.
- D. The application will be accessed through the Empower Illinois website: www.empowerillinois.org
- E. Once in the application clicking **SAVE AND CONTINUE** will save your progress and move you forward. Clicking **PREVIOUS PAGE** will move you back one page. Clicking **SAVE** will save your progress and close the application.
- F. Choose whether you will use the 2016 or 2017 income information for eligibility. Once you choose a year all the information on the application and the documents submitted should be from that year. For example: If you are going to use your 2017 income, then answer all the application questions based on the circumstances during 2017 and provide the documents from 2017.

II. THE APPLICATION

A. Sign In

1. Choose **CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT**.

B. Create Account

1. In the blue box at the top of the page click the link that says, "...click here to apply for financial aid."
2. Enter your email address and password.
 - a. Enter a valid email address.
 - b. Choose a password you will remember.
3. Enter your name and birthdate.
4. Choose a security question from the drop down list. Enter the answer to the question. (Be sure to make a note of the question and the answer. This is how the Empower Illinois team will verify your identity if you need to call the service center.)
5. Click **SUBMIT**.

C. Apply for a Scholarship

1. If you know the school you are interested in your student attending choose **YES**. If you do not, answer **NO**.
2. Choose the city, state and school name from the drop down lists.
3. The scholarship is for the 2018-19 school year. Clicking this box indicates that you understand.
4. Click **START APPLICATION**.

D. Before Starting Your Scholarship Application

1. This page contains important information related to the application process. Please read it carefully before moving to the next page.
2. Click **CONTINUE APPLICATION**.

E. Parent / Guardian Information

1. This section is related to the residential custodian/s of the student/s.
2. If there are two residential custodians of the student in the home, click **ADD ADDITIONAL PARENT/GUARDIAN**. This will open a set of questions related to the second parent/guardian.
3. After answering all the questions on this page, click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

F. Work Information

1. If either or both parent/guardians were employed within the last year, answer **YES**. If they were not, answer **NO**.
2. Answer the questions related to your employment. If you have had more than one job, click **ADD ADDITIONAL EMPLOYER** to add up to six (6) employers.
3. The questions that ask for your 2016 and 2017 W-2 income should be completed based on the information on your W-2. These fields are required, so if you do not have a W2 for either or both years, you may enter zero (0) in these boxes.
4. If you are self-employed or own a business answer **YES** to this question, if not, answer **NO**.
5. Click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

G. Special Circumstances

1. This is an informational page. No action is required.
2. Click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

H. Tuition Charging Schools

1. You have already indicated one school you are interested in having your student attend. If there are other schools you are interested in, enter them on this page by clicking **ADD ADDITIONAL SCHOOL**.
2. If you are not interested in any other schools, click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

I. Dependent Information

1. Enter all the people who live at your address that rely on you for their support.
2. If you have a child who is in college and lives at another address, but you are still responsible for them, or you claim them on your taxes, include them on this page.
3. If you have other adults who live with you that rely on you for their support, include them on this page.
4. If you have a roommate who you are *not* responsible for, do NOT include them on this page.
5. If you live with family members but they are *not* responsible for you, do NOT include them on this page.
6. Click **ADD ADDITIONAL DEPENDENT** for each person you need to add to this page.
7. If the person added is not in school because they are too young or have finished their schooling, choose **NO GRADE** from the drop down list.
8. If the person added is in pre-kindergarten, choose **P** from the drop down list.
9. If the person added is in college, choose **13** from the drop down list.
10. After adding everyone click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.
11. Select the school/s the student may attend in the 2018-19 school year.
12. Click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

J. Scholarships and Funds

1. This page is informational. It shows the following:
 - a. You are applying for a scholarship with Empower Illinois.
 - b. You are applying for the students shown.
2. If you are unsure if you qualify, you click... **Eligibility Guidelines** to see a chart of the household income guidelines.
3. Click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

K. Household — Empower Illinois

1. Household Information
 - a. Select the Illinois public school district you reside in.
 - b. If your district is not on the list, choose “other.”
2. Annual Income
 - a. Enter the Adjusted Gross Income number from your Federal tax return for the year you are using for eligibility.
 - b. Enter zero if you did not file taxes in 2016 and do not plan to file taxes for 2017.
3. If anyone in your household receives WIC or SNAP (food stamps) benefits, answer **YES**. If no one in your household receives these benefits, answer **NO**.
4. If you are not required to file a Federal tax return or have not, for any reason, filed a Federal tax return, click the box. You will need to submit ONE of the following documents to Empower Illinois:
 - a. W-2/s (2016 or 2017)
 - b. 1099/s (2016 or 2017)
 - c. Year-end paystub (2016 or 2017)
 - d. If you are paid in cash, a letter from your employer/s, on their letterhead, indicating the amount you were paid in 2016 or 2017.
5. General Agreement

Read and agree with each of three statements:

 - a. Declaration that the information on the application is accurate, that the Empower Illinois Terms and Conditions and Privacy policy have been read, and authorization for Empower Illinois to access information for eligibility determination and share information as required by law.
 - b. Authorization for Empower Illinois to share directory information with the schools indicated on the application.
 - c. Authorization for Empower Illinois to share contact information with other organizations to provide information about the mission of Empower Illinois.
6. Answer a series of questions about each of the students listed on the application.
7. Click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

L. Review

1. Enter the number of people who live in your household.
2. “Adults” means the number of parent/guardians entered on the application.
3. “Dependents” means the number of dependents entered on the application.
4. Click **AGREE** to indicate the information on the application is correct.
5. NOTE: This is the last page of the application. Once you move forward you WILL NOT be able to change any information on the application. Please make sure all the information is correct before moving on.
6. You can go back to any section by clicking on the section name shown in blue.
7. If you are sure all the information on the application is correct, click **SAVE AND CONTINUE**.

M. Documentation

1. Your application has been submitted to Empower Illinois and a reference number has been assigned to your application.
2. This page can be printed or saved for reference.
3. This page lists the documents you are required to submit to Empower Illinois to complete your application package. These documents are based on the answers to the questions on the application.
4. Documents required for students will indicate the document and the student.
5. To upload your documents, click the hyperlink or copy the URL into your browser.
6. Documents may also be faxed or mailed. Please NOTE: sending documents via the US Mail may cause delays due to the time to receive and process the documents.
7. Your application will not be considered complete until all the correct, required documents have been received by Empower Illinois.