



# DONOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## HOW MUCH IS THE CREDIT WORTH AND HOW MUCH CAN I DONATE?

An individual or corporate donor will receive a 75% state tax credit on their donation. This means that if a donor contributes \$10,000, they will receive a state tax credit of \$7,500. Donations by both individual and corporate donors are capped at \$1.33 million, i.e. a per-donor tax credit of \$1 million. Individual donors can direct their donations to a school or subset of schools of their choice. Corporate donors cannot designate funds. The credit is non-refundable, but can be carried forward for five years.

## IS THERE A PROGRAM CAP? IF SO, WHAT IS IT?

Yes. The program is capped at \$75 million in state tax credits per year. This means that in order for the \$75 million cap to be hit, \$100 million will have to be donated. A maximum of \$100 million in scholarships will be awarded through this program annually to students throughout Illinois.

## HOW DOES THE DONATION PROCESS WORK?

Before reserving your tax credit, you must first establish an account via [mytax.illinois.gov](https://mytax.illinois.gov) to request your letter ID. It may take up to 10 days to receive your letter ID. After receiving your letter ID, you will activate your account on [mytax.illinois.gov](https://mytax.illinois.gov). Then you will reserve your tax credit. If this is your first time logging into your account after creating it, you will need to enter the Activation Code you received from the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) after your account was created. You must donate the amount reserved to the SGO of your choice within 60 days or no tax credit will be awarded. After donating, you will receive a certificate of receipt from the Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) and IDOR will be notified that your donation was made.

## IF I DONATED LAST YEAR, DO I NEED TO CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT WITH THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE?

No. If you have a Username from a previous year, log in using that Username and Password. If you cannot access your account, contact IDOR at 800-732-8866 to resolve this issue.

## CAN DONATIONS BE DIRECTED TO A CERTAIN SCHOOL OR INDIVIDUAL?

Individuals may direct donations to a particular school or subset of schools, but NOT to an individual student or group of students. Corporate donors cannot designate their donations. Individuals can direct their donations to the school or schools of their choice when they make a donation to the SGO after they have reserved their credit. When reserving a tax credit with the IDOR, however, donors will need to select the region in which their designated school or schools are located.

## CAN A TAXPAYER MAKE A TAX-CREDITED CONTRIBUTION TO A SCHOLARSHIP GRANTING ORGANIZATION FROM A DONOR ADVISED FUND?

No. Payments to SGOs are not treated as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes and therefore payments from a donor advised fund do not qualify for the tax credit. The payment of tax-credited scholarship donations to an SGO must come directly from the individual or corporate taxpayer.

## ARE THESE SCHOLARSHIPS ONLY FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

No. The scholarships can be used to cover the tuition and eligible fees for any non-public school in Illinois officially recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

## WHAT CREDIT CARDS ARE ACCEPTED?

Empower Illinois accepts all major credit cards including Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover.

## IS THERE A PROCESSING FEE TO DONATE WITH A CREDIT CARD?

Yes, if you donate by credit card there will be a 3.25% fee added to your donation.

## IS DONATING WITH A CREDIT CARD SECURE?

Yes, all credit card information processes directly with U.S. Bank and is not viewed or stored by Empower Illinois. Additionally, each transaction has \$250,000 consumer protection insurance.

## CAN I SPLIT MY DONATION ON MULTIPLE CREDIT CARDS?

No, a single donation cannot be split between multiple credit cards. If you wish to use more than one credit card, you can make multiple donations each using a different card.

## WILL I EARN CREDIT CARD POINTS ON MY DONATION?

Your gift may be eligible for credit card points. Talk to your credit card provider to learn more about qualified spending.

## IF I DONATE WITH A CREDIT CARD, AM I STILL ELIGIBLE FOR A 75% TAX CREDIT?

Yes, your donation is still eligible for a 75% state tax credit. Only your donation, however, not the 3.25% processing fee, is eligible for a state tax credit.

## IF I NEED MY DONATION REFUNDED, HOW WILL IT BE RETURNED?

Your donation will be refunded in the same manner with which you made your donation. For example, if you donate with a credit card, your donation will be refunded to the same card. If your gift was made with stocks and they have already been sold, however, your refund will be refunded via check.

## I CANNOT DESIGNATE TO THE SCHOOL WHERE I WISH TO DONATE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

First, make sure to select the region where your designated school, not your home address, is located. A regional map is available [here](#).

If you are still unable to find the school you want to donate to, it may be because the school is not "recognized" by the ISBE.

## HOW DO I CHOOSE THE REGION FOR MY DONATION?

When reserving your tax credit on the IDOR website, you must choose the region in which your designated school(s) are located, not the region of your home address. Click [here](#) to determine in which region your designated school or organization is located.

If your designees are in different regions, you must make separate reservations for each region in the amounts for each donation you would like to make.

## DOES EMPOWER ILLINOIS ACCEPT DISTRIBUTIONS FROM INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS (IRAS)?

At this time, there is significant uncertainty as to whether a donation of assets other than cash can qualify for the tax credit. That said, Empower Illinois is indifferent to the source of funds that are donated, except that the taxpayer must own the source of funds. Any penalties or tax liabilities incurred by the donor for an IRA distribution are solely the responsibility of the donor. Potential donors considering making a donation from their IRA should consult a tax advisor before doing so, as individual circumstances could dictate the implications of their donation. If the taxpayer does not own the source of funds, they do not technically satisfy their tax reservation.

## CAN DONORS USE MARKETABLE SECURITIES SUCH AS STOCKS AND BONDS TO DONATE TO EMPOWER ILLINOIS TO FUND STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS OR MUST A STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP DONATION BE MADE IN CASH?

Empower Illinois accepts marketable securities as donations. Empower Illinois then sells and converts donated securities into cash, per our gift policy. If the net proceeds of the donated securities is less than the amount of the tax credit reservation as stated on the Contribution Authorization Certificate ("CAC"), donors may make up the difference by sending an ACH payment to Empower Illinois, or by mailing a check to our lockbox. If the net proceeds of the donated securities is greater than the amount of the tax credit reservation as stated on the CAC, the difference will be used by Empower Illinois as an unrestricted 501(c)(3) donation. **Empower Illinois strongly urges donors to make their tax credit reservation well in excess of the estimated value of the marketable securities being donated.**

Donors should first visit Empower Illinois' [donor wizard](#) to upload their CAC and complete the designation form. Once completed, donors or their brokers should notify Wintrust Bank's Wealth Management Team at [support@wintrustwealth.com](mailto:support@wintrustwealth.com) to initiate a marketable securities (including stock) transaction.

## CAN DONATIONS BE DIRECTED TO A SCHOOL THAT IS NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (ISBE)?

Donations can be directed to schools that are recognized or in the process of being recognized by ISBE. These schools are eligible to receive donations to be used for scholarships under the Invest in Kids Act.

## CAN I DESIGNATE MY DONATION IF I AM DONATING FROM A PARTNERSHIP OR TRUST OF ANY KIND?

No. To remain in compliance with the Invest in Kids Act, tax credit scholarship donations from corporations, partnerships, or trusts (of any kind, including revocable) must remain undesignated.

## WHAT IS THE DONATION DEADLINE?

To help fund scholarships for the current school year, donations must be made annually by November 30. Donations made between December 1 and 31 each year will still earn the donor a state tax credit for the current calendar year, but will be used to fund scholarships for the following school year. Please note donations made via check must be postmarked by the donation deadlines (November 30 for the current school year or December 31 for the calendar year) to qualify.

## CAN DONATIONS BE ANONYMOUS?

Yes, all donations, from both individuals and corporations, can be anonymous based on the donor's wishes.

## CAN DONATION CREDITS BE APPLIED AGAINST ILLINOIS' PERSONAL PROPERTY REPLACEMENT TAX THAT CORPORATIONS (INCLUDING SUBCHAPTER S CORPORATIONS), PARTNERSHIPS AND TRUSTS ARE SUBJECT TO?

No. The tax credit scholarship statute and regulations prohibit this.

## CAN I DONATE IF I AM NOT AN ILLINOIS RESIDENT?

Anyone can donate to an Illinois SGO, but only those who pay Illinois state taxes can receive the 75% tax credit. If you are out of state, have Illinois tax liability, and would like to donate, you will still need to set up an account with IDOR.

## HOW DO I GET HELP WITH THE DONATION PROCESS?

Contact [donors@empowerillinois.org](mailto:donors@empowerillinois.org) or call the Donor Helpline at 800-616-7606.