



Questions and Answers on the BOOST Scholarship Program

The Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Program provides scholarships for some students who are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program to attend eligible nonpublic schools. Awards are granted based on household income, with the lowest income served first.

1. What are the instructions to start an application?

To begin the application EVERY APPLICANT MUST CREATE AN ACCOUNT. YOU CANNOT LOG-IN. YOU MUST CLICK THE “Sign Up” button and create an account. Once you have created an account and an application, you can log-in when you return to the application portal. Your login email will be the contact email for scholarship status notifications.

2. The online application states to upload my 1040 tax form, U.S. Individual Income Tax Return for the year 2019. I have not filed taxes is there another option?

If you are required by law to file a 2019 federal tax return, your completed Federal tax return (all pages/schedules submitted to the IRS) must be uploaded to your BOOST application to verify income eligibility for the program. The following documents will **not** be accepted in lieu of a 2019 tax return:

- W-2 statement
- Statement from employer
- Applicant statement taxes not filed
- IRS extension request form
- Prior year IRS 1040

If you believe that you are not required by law to file a federal tax return, you should [access and carefully review detailed IRS information](#) regarding who is required to file an income tax return. There is also an interactive, on-line IRS interview that will further help you determine if you're required to file a federal tax return or if you should file to receive a refund. [Access IRS interactive online interview.](#)

3. I have reviewed the federal filing requirements and determined I am not required to file an income tax return for 2019 tax year. Is there another option to provide my income verification to the BOOST application?

If by law, you are not required to file a federal 1040 tax form and have not submitted a 2019 tax return to the IRS, you may submit an alternative form with sufficient backup documents. The BOOST application provides an option to download, complete and upload to your application the BOOST Alternate Form for Income Verification and supporting documents.

CAUTION: The BOOST Program staff will make the final decision re: your requirement to file a 2019 federal tax return. If BOOST determines you are not exempt from filing a 2019 tax return and a BOOST Alternate Form for Income Verification has been uploaded to your application; the application will be classified as incomplete and will not be considered for a 2020-2021 BOOST scholarship.

4. If a student received a BOOST scholarship in the 2019-2020 school year, will the student automatically be eligible for a 2020-2021 school year BOOST scholarship?

Not necessarily, as the program is authorized in the State's annual budget bill. Historically, the Governor includes funding for the program in his budget. The General Assembly considers and enacts the annual budget bill during the legislative session each year. The BOOST program requirements and scholarship awards are dependent on funding in the annual budget bill.

5. At which schools can the scholarships be used?

Schools that applied for and are approved to participate fiscal year 2020 Nonpublic Textbook Program and offer programs beyond kindergarten. To be fully eligible, schools will have to certify that they will abide by any requirements included in the fiscal year 2021 annual budget bill. [Access an example of the requirements](#) for participating schools can be found in the fiscal year 2020 annual budget bill.

6. Can students currently attending an eligible school apply for the scholarships?

Yes, students currently attending an eligible school can apply for the scholarships.

7. Are kindergarten students eligible for the scholarships if they are attending an eligible school?

Yes, kindergarten students are eligible if they attend a school that is participating in the Fiscal 2020 Nonpublic Textbook Program and the school offers educational programs for grades above kindergarten.

8. Are pre-kindergarten students eligible? Are half-day pre-K students eligible?

No, neither half-day nor full-day pre-kindergarten students are eligible.

9. How do I apply?

The link to the online application is posted on the BOOST web page. You will need to provide the following as PDF electronic attachments with your application:

- Your complete 2019 federal tax return (all IRS required pages/schedules); and
- Documentation showing that the parent has pursued enrollment in an eligible nonpublic school for the 2020-2021 school year. This documentation could include a letter of acceptance/continuation, a letter that the student is on the waiting list, or acknowledgement that an admissions application has been submitted.

If you need assistance with the online application, you may wish to contact the nonpublic school at which you intend to use the scholarship.

10. If I want to apply for scholarships for more than one of my children, can I submit a single application?

The electronic application for the 2020-2021 school year is set up so that applicants create a single login ID and account. Applicants enter household information once, then add each student to the application separately.

11. How does the program work?

Applications will be reviewed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for completeness and eligibility. Incomplete applications will not be evaluated. All eligible applicants, ranked by income as a percent of the federal poverty level, with the lowest income eligibility served first are included in the recommendation to the BOOST Advisory Board, who determines scholarship award amounts. Awards are granted based on household income, with the lowest income served first, and issued based on available funding.

Applicants who receive an award will be asked to log in to the application system to indicate whether they accept or decline their award. For accepted awards, MSDE will verify the student's enrollment with the selected nonpublic school. BOOST awards are not to substitute for other financial aid. MSDE will work with the selected school to determine whether the BOOST award plus any non-BOOST financial aid exceed the tuition amount owed. In those cases, the BOOST award will be reduced.

BOOST scholarship checks will be made payable jointly to the parent/guardian and the nonpublic school. The checks are sent directly to the school, and the parent/guardian must go to the school and endorse the payment over to the school.

12. If a student changes schools during the course of the school year to another eligible nonpublic school, can the scholarship follow the student to the other eligible school?

Yes. Cases where a student changes enrollment from one eligible nonpublic school to another eligible nonpublic school during the course of the school year will need to be handled on a case-by-case basis and will involve the sending school, the receiving school, and MSDE.

13. How is income determined for foster children and children in informal kinship care?

For children in foster care, the BOOST application should be completed with information on the foster parent as the guardian, and the family income should be reported as zero. Written state/local documentation re: child placement should be uploaded.

For students in informal kinship care, the BOOST application should be completed with information on the relative/other adult providing kinship care as the guardian, and the family income of the kinship care family should be reported. The application must include an electronic attachment of an affidavit verifying informal kinship care. The BOOST application page will include a link to an MSDE kinship care affidavit form. Kinship care affidavits also can be obtained from the local school district, local department of social services, or local office on aging in the county in which the kinship care family resides.

14. If the student's parents are divorced or separated, which parent's information should be submitted in the application?

Information for the parent that claims the child as a dependent on the tax form should be submitted in the application.

15. Can a student attending an eligible nonpublic school be considered for a BOOST scholarship if the family resides outside of Maryland?

No, the family must reside in Maryland.