

TIPS for SUCCESSFULLY Completing the STAR Scholarship Application

Welcome to the P.E.O. STAR Scholarship application. We are excited to learn about your high school career. To help ensure success, please familiarize yourself with STAR protocol. Before you begin your application, we suggest that you:

- Read and apply these tips.
- Read through all the sections included in your application form prior to beginning.
- Call on your recommending chapter for support. They are encouraged to assist you any way they can. They are your first contact should you have non-technology difficulties.
- Office and IT support are available from 7:30 am Central Standard Time (CST) to 4:00 pm CST. Services are based in Iowa so daylight savings time is in effect for the first part of the application season, ending in early November.
- Your deadline is at **11:59 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST)** 30 calendar days from when your link is sent to you from the P.E.O. STAR Supervisor. **This deadline is firm. NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Extracurricular (ECs) and Community Service (CSs)

Extracurricular (EC) (of an activity at a school or college) is defined as: pursued **in addition** to the normal course of study. **Your school classes are not considered extracurricular. See exception noted below.**

Community service (CS) reflects efforts within the community beyond the school that benefit the community at large. These may originate from school related activities (ECs) but must be above and beyond the EC requirements. Example: If National Honor Society requires 30 hours of community service for active membership status, this is considered extracurricular. However, if you put 50 hours into NHS community service, you may claim 20 hours. *Clarify this scenario in your application.*

- You may enter an activity in both extracurricular and community service **only** when the hours spent volunteering are in addition to time spent as an officer or committee member. A clear rationale must be stated in the community service section.
- Many schools offer classes that are tempting to place in EC. *No class credit options should be in ECs unless the class requires significant time outside of class. Examples: band, chorus, theater.*
- ECs must span at least 2 years unless it is a 1-year specific activity, such as Prom Committee.
- Limit the number of ECs to 12. Select the ECs that best reflect your talents, interests and/or leadership.
- If websites/blogs/entrepreneurial efforts are noted as appearing on the internet, please add URL and ensure that it is viable.
- Activities within a genre may be counted separately IF they require independent practice/performance time. For example, different bands, choral groups, speech/debate/drama.
- Mission trips (CS) must include the number of days/weeks working. Example: 160 hours for mission trips in grades 9-12 may be OK if these hours represent four (4) weeklong trips. NOT OK if they are weekend trips. Up to 40 hours/week for such ventures is appropriate unless additional work hours are specifically noted.

- Research/conferences/workshops/internships/shadowing opportunities must each span a minimum of four 20-hour weeks to qualify as an EC. If shorter duration, they belong in Awards/Honors/Recognitions/Experiences.

Awards/Honors/Recommendations/Experiences

- Girls' State, Girls' Nation, Governor's schools, HOBY, etc. belong in Awards/Honors/Recognitions/Experiences.
- Talented/Gifted programs belong in Awards/Honors/Recognitions/Experiences.
- Short term (less than 4 weeks duration) research/conferences/workshops/internships/shadowing opportunities/etc. belong in Awards/Honors/Recognitions/Experiences. DO NOT PLACE IN ECs of CSs.
- Indicate number of days/weeks for workshops, conferences, summits, internships, etc.
- Foreign exchange opportunities are appropriate in Awards/Honors/Recognitions/Experiences.

Essay:

- Paragraphing within the essay allows for easier readability.
- It's OK to add an element of fun! Creativity within the stated parameters is encouraged.
- SELL yourself! There is no need to list all of your achievements again. If you choose to write about achievements, select the ones that best define you and apply them to the noted essay criteria.

References:

- **Select your references wisely.** Your references should be ones who know you well and are willing to take the time to portray you in your best view.
- Request your references to participate on your behalf based on the criteria valued by the P.E.O. STAR Scholarship.
- Send the link to your references ASAP. Check the website regularly to ensure the references have been submitted. If a reference fails to submit by your deadline, your application will not be considered. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- DO NOT include relatives in your selection of references.

Timeliness:

- Understand that the deadline of 30 days after the P.E.O. STAR Scholarship link has been sent to you is firm. Your application must be submitted before **11:59 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST)** of the 30th day to be considered. In fairness to all, there can be **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- Be aware that there is IT support and the STAR Supervisor is available during regular work hours of 7:30 am – 4:00 pm Central Standard Time (CST). Issues that arise after this time will be answered the following regular business day. *Please note that it may take up to 24 business hours before you receive a response to your phone call or email.*
- If you are a few hours before your deadline and encounter a glitch or computer malfunction, you may miss your deadline. **Do not let this happen to you.** Make every effort to complete your application early. The P.E.O. STAR Scholarship policy regarding deadlines clearly states: **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Reminder: Should you receive a P.E.O. STAR Scholarship and subsequently either choose to take a gap year or attend a college/university in a country other than US/Canada, you will forfeit your award. Please research criteria of other awards that you may receive. Certain other organizations, such as NCAA, have rules that *may* prohibit you from accepting other financial assistance, including the P.E.O. STAR Scholarship. If you submit your application and then discover you are no longer eligible, please contact the STAR Supervisor immediately. Awards presented and then forfeited are not given to another applicant on a wait list. In fairness to other candidates, please keep the STAR Supervisor and your recommending chapter apprised of your plans.