



The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) Communication Toolkit

For the 2024-25 FAFSA® and
Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid

Introduction

This guide is designed to assist practitioners who support students and families through the financial aid process. The guide provides resources to help streamline communication to ensure students and families receive the information and assistance they need to navigate this process.

This (2023) is an especially crucial year as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (Alternative App) will become available later than their usual opening date of October 1st. As a result of changes to the FAFSA® stemming from the FAFSA Simplification Act, the FAFSA® and Alternative App will be available by December 31, 2023, though the actual date has not yet been confirmed as of the last update to this publication.

Last updated: December 11, 2023

Create a Communication Plan

To get started, identify your goals, audiences, and timeline. Use these questions will help create concise messaging.

- **What is your goal? Choose key points to highlight.**
 - Inform students of the FAFSA®/Alternative App opening date
 - Inform parents of an upcoming financial aid workshop
 - Inform parents of the information they need for the financial aid workshop
 - Recruit volunteers, etc.
- **Who needs this information?**
 - Your audience will vary depending on your goal
 - If different messages are required, identify all audience groups
 - Determine how messages will differ by audience (or platform, e.g., social media)
- **When does each audience group need the information?**
 - Establish a communication timeline
 - Different audiences will need the information at different times
 - E.g., if you are recruiting volunteers to assist at a financial aid workshop, you will likely need to communicate with them first to ensure you have volunteers prior to inviting students and parents
- **How are you sharing the information?**
 - Phone
 - In-person
 - Flyer
 - Social media, etc.

Set Your Plan in Motion

Once you have a plan, work on the execution.

- Identify materials and resources needed
 - Printer
 - Social media access
 - Phone numbers
 - Emails, etc.
- Recruit volunteers – depending on your method(s) of communication, you may need to enlist the help of volunteers
 - Callers for phone bank
 - Distributing flyers at report card night or parent/teacher meetings
 - Assisting at financial aid workshop
- Execute – spread the word!
 - Send out your initial message
 - Periodically remind your audience
 - Try different methods of communication

Sample Student Email (FAFSA®)

Subject: Don't miss out on FREE money!

Dear Future College Student,

The 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) will be available in **December**! Be sure you complete it as soon as it is available to be considered for financial aid to help pay for your college education.

Keep an eye out for announcements of our financial aid application completion workshop dates. In the meantime, you can plan ahead by creating a [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) ID](#) that will serve as your application login and electronic signature for the FAFSA®. Students and parents will need an FSA ID.

You can also prepare by reviewing the [list of information needed to complete a FAFSA®](#) and gathering those documents ahead of time.

Sample Student Email (Alternative App)

Subject: Don't miss out on FREE money!

Dear Future College Student,

The 2024-25 Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid will be available in December! Be sure you complete it as soon as it is available to be considered for financial aid to help pay for your college education.

Keep an eye out for announcements of our financial aid application completion workshop dates. In the meantime, you can plan ahead by reviewing the [list of information needed to complete an Alternative App](#) and gathering those documents ahead of time.

Sample Student Email (FAFSA® & Alternative App)

Subject: Don't miss out on FREE money!

Dear Future College Student,

The 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (Alternative App) will be available in **December!**

Be sure you complete the FAFSA® or Alternative App as soon as they are available to be considered for financial aid to help pay for your college education. **You only need to file one application.** If you are unsure which one to complete, contact [COUNSELOR NAME] at [PHONE/EMAIL].

Keep an eye out for announcements of our financial aid application completion workshop dates. In the meantime, you can prepare by reviewing the [list of information needed to complete a FAFSA® and Alternative App](#) and gathering those documents ahead of time.

FAFSA® filers will also need to create a [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) ID](#) that will serve as their application login and electronic signature for the FAFSA®. Students and parents will need their own FSA ID.

Sample Student Flyer – Application Availability

FREE \$\$\$

Don't miss out on your opportunity to be considered for free money to pay for college.

The FAFSA[®] and Alternative App will be available in December! You must submit an application (but not both) to be considered for federal and/or state financial aid.

Funds are limited, so mark your calendar!

For more information, contact [COUNSELOR NAME] at [PHONE/EMAIL].

FREE \$\$\$

We will be hosting a FREE workshop to help you complete a FAFSA® or Alternative App on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION]!

Don't miss out on your opportunity to be considered for free money to pay for college.

Funds are limited, so mark your calendar!

If you have questions, contact [COUNSELOR NAME] at [PHONE/EMAIL].

Sample Parent Email – Application Availability

Subject: Help your student get FREE money for college!

Dear Parent of a Future College Student,
The 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (Alternative App) will be available in **December!**

Students must complete the FAFSA® or Alternative App as soon as they are available to be considered for financial aid to help pay for their college education and they cannot do it without you! Most students under the age of 24 are required to provide parental information to help determine their financial need and aid eligibility.

Keep an eye out for announcements of our financial aid application completion workshop dates. In the meantime, you can prepare by reviewing the [list of information needed to complete a FAFSA® and Alternative App](#) and gathering those documents ahead of time.

FAFSA® filers will also need to create a [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) ID](#) that will serve as their application login and electronic signature for the FAFSA®. Students and parents will need their own FSA ID.

Sample Parent Email – Workshop Announcement

Subject: Help your student get FREE money for college!

Dear Parent of a Future College Student,
Students must complete the FAFSA® or Alternative App as soon as they are available to be considered for financial aid to help pay for their college education and they cannot do it without you! Most students under the age of 24 are required to provide parental information to help determine their financial need and aid eligibility.

We will be hosting a financial aid application completion workshop on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION]. It is important to complete the application as soon as possible as funds run out.

You can prepare for the workshop by reviewing the [list of information needed to complete a FAFSA® and Alternative App](#) and bringing those documents with you to the workshop.

FAFSA® filers will also need to create a [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) ID](#) that will serve as their application login and electronic signature for the FAFSA®. Students and parents will need their own FSA ID.

If you have questions, contact [COUNSELOR NAME] at [PHONE/EMAIL].

Sample Parent Email – Application Availability (Spanish)

Asunto: ¡Ayude a su estudiante a recibir dinero GRATUITO para la Universidad!

Estimado/a Padre de un Futuro Estudiante Universitario,
La Solicitud Gratuita de Ayuda Federal Para Estudiantes (FAFSA®) y la Solicitud Alternativa de Ayuda Financiera de Illinois (Solicitud Alternativa) para el ciclo escolar 2024-25 estarán disponibles en diciembre.

Estudiantes deben completar la FAFSA o Solicitud Alternativa lo antes posible a partir de que estén disponibles para ser considerados para recibir ayuda financiera para pagar la universidad, ¡y no pueden hacerlo sin usted! La mayoría de los estudiantes menores de 24 años de edad deben proporcionar información de los padres para ayudar a determinar su necesidad económica y elegibilidad para ayuda financiera.

Manténgase atento a los anuncios de las fechas de nuestros talleres para completar las solicitudes de ayuda financiera. Mientras tanto, puede prepararse revisando la [lista de la información que necesitar para llenar la FAFSA o Solicitud Alternativa](#) y reuniendo los documentos con anticipación.

Todas las personas que proporcionen información en la FAFSA® necesitarán obtener una [credencial FSA ID](#) que servirá para acceder a la solicitud y como firma electrónica para la FAFSA®. Estudiantes y padres deben tener su propia credencial FSA ID.

Sample Parent Email – Workshop Announcement (Spanish)

Asunto: ¡Ayude a su estudiante a recibir dinero GRATUITO para la Universidad!

Estimado/a Padre de un Futuro Estudiante Universitario, Estudiantes deben completar la FAFSA o Solicitud Alternativa lo antes posible a partir de que estén disponibles para ser considerados para recibir ayuda financiera para pagar la universidad, ¡y no pueden hacerlo sin usted! La mayoría de los estudiantes menores de 24 años de edad deben proporcionar información de los padres para ayudar a determinar su necesidad económica y elegibilidad para ayuda financiera.

Tendremos un taller para completar las solicitudes de ayuda financiera el [FECHA] a las [HORA] en {UBICACIÓN}. Es importante llenar la solicitud lo antes posible ya que los fondos son limitados.

Puede prepararse revisando la [lista de la información que necesita para llenar la FAFSA o Solicitud Alternativa](#) y trayendo esa información consigo al taller.

Todas las personas que proporcionen información en la FAFSA® necesitarán obtener una [credencial FSA ID](#) que servirá para acceder a la solicitud y como firma electrónica para la FAFSA®. Estudiantes y padres deben tener su propia credencial FSA ID.

Sample Robocall Script

Dear Parents,

Financial aid application season is here! Attend our financial aid application completion workshop to help your student be considered for financial aid to help pay for their college education. The workshop will take place on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION]. Funds are limited, so don't wait!

If you have questions or cannot make it on this day, please contact [COUNSELOR] at [PHONE/EMAIL] so we can find a time and date that work for you.

Sample Robocall Script (Spanish)

Estimados Padres,
¡Ya está aquí la temporada de solicitudes de ayuda financiera! Asista a nuestro taller de solicitudes de ayuda financiera para ayudar a que su estudiante sea considerado para recibir ayuda financiera para pagar su educación universitaria. El taller se llevará a cabo el [FECHA] a las [HORA] en [UBICACIÓN]. ¡Los fondos son limitados, así que no espere!

Si tiene preguntas o no puede asistir en este día, por favor contacte a [CONSEJERO] al [TELEFONO/CORREO ELECTRÓNICO] para que podamos encontrar otra fecha y hora que funcionen para usted.

Sample Volunteer Recruitment Email

Dear [VOLUNTEER],

This year, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid will be available by December 31, 2023, and we need your assistance!

We will be hosting a financial aid application completion workshop on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION] and are looking for volunteers to help students and families. Information, training, and details will be provided ahead of time.

Please help our students make college a reality by supporting them through the complexities of the financial aid process. We look forward to seeing you! Snacks will be provided for workshop volunteers.

If you are able to assist, please confirm your attendance with [COUNSELOR NAME] via [PHONE/EMAIL], or feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sample Social Media Posts

- Complete a #financialaid application to be considered for state and federal student aid for #college. #FAFSA #AlternativeApp
- Make #college a reality, apply for #financialaid at our financial aid workshop on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION]. #ILGoes2College
- Get #free help filling out a #financialaid application at our financial aid workshop. #FAFSA #AlternativeApp
- #IL public HS seniors: don't forget you must complete a #financialaid application to #graduate. Attend our free application workshop with @ISACFinAid to get help!
- Qualifying undocumented students in #IL can complete the Alternative Application for IL Financial Aid to be considered for state aid.

Sample Social Media Posts (Spanish)

- Llena una solicitud de #ayudafinanciera para ser considerado/a para ayuda financiera estudiantil para pagar la #universidad. #FAFSA #SolicitudAlternativa
- Haz de la #universidad una realidad, llena tu solicitud de #ayudafinanciera en nuestro taller de ayuda financiera el [FECHA] a las [HORA] en [UBICACIÓN]. #ILVaALaUniversidad
- Obtén ayuda #gratuita para llenar tu solicitud de #ayudafinanciera en nuestro taller de ayuda financiera. #FAFSA #SolicitudAlternativa
- Estudiantes de escuelas públicas de #IL: no olviden que deben llenar una solicitud de #ayudafinanciera para poder #graduarse. Asiste a nuestro taller #gratuito de ayuda financiera con @ISACFinaAid para obtener ayuda.
- En #IL, estudiantes indocumentados que califiquen, pueden llenar la Solicitud Alternativa de Ayuda Financiera de Illinois para ser considerados para ayuda estatal.

Best Practices & Recommendations

To ensure students and families receive the support they need through the financial aid process, consider the following.

- Plan early
- Identify key audiences
 - Students
 - Parents
 - Volunteers, etc.
- Plan your message and communication method for each audience group
- Utilize different communication methods to best fit the needs of your students and families
 - Robocalls
 - Mass emails
 - Flyers, etc.
- Send periodic reminders prior to FAFSA opening date
- Send periodic reminders prior to any financial aid application completion workshops