

FAQs

Tax ID Number (TIN)

- **What is a federal Tax ID Number (TIN)?**

The federal Tax ID Number (also known as the Employer Identification Number, or EIN) is a number used to identify a business or organization. It is like a social security number for your organization.

- **Why do I need a TIN?**

If your RSO collects self-generated revenue (SGR) --- money from fundraising, event admission fees, membership dues, corporate sponsorships or donations --- and would like to have quicker access to that money or greater control over how it may be spent, then your RSO will need to deposit it into an off-campus bank account. To open an off-campus bank account in the name of your organization, your RSO first must apply for a TIN from the federal government. IMPORTANT: RSOs should not open a bank account using an individual's social security number (SSN). The financial burden of that account then rests with that individual, and they become responsible for claiming any interest accrued from the account on their own taxes. They also become personally responsible for the RSO's revenue and expenditures in the case of an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) audit.

- **Is the TIN the same as being a non-profit organization?**

No. Student organizations are not considered federally tax-exempt non-profit organizations unless they apply for charitable status from the government. Filing for charitable status, or 501(c)3 status, is a lengthy and costly legal procedure that commits the RSO to the rigorous annual reporting procedures required by the IRS. Because of the annual reporting requirements and the frequent turnover of student leadership, we do not encourage RSOs to file for charitable status.

- **How do I obtain a federal TIN?**

The easiest way to apply for a TIN is online through the IRS website. (Please refer to the *How to Apply for a TIN* instructions.) Your RSO President or Treasurer will be walked through the application process and receive the TIN immediately. Your RSO can also apply by mail or over the phone. If your RSO has questions while filling out the online form, please contact the IRS at 1-800-829-4933 for assistance. Your RSO only has to complete this process once. IMPORTANT: RSO advisors are not allowed to be listed as the "responsible party" on the TIN application.

- **Who should fill out and submit the TIN application?**

Only the RSO President or Treasurer may submit the TIN application; however, if that individual graduates or leaves Mason, the RSO should file IRS Form 8822-B, Change of Address or Responsible Party, within 60 days to let the IRS know that the "responsible party" has changed.

- **What address should we use for our RSO on the TIN application?**

RSOs may choose to list the University's main address (4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030), the address of their "responsible party" (i.e., the RSO President or Treasurer submitting the TIN application), or even the address of their national affiliate (if applicable). However, if the address changes (e.g., the RSO President used their personal address on the TIN application and now they are graduating), the RSO is required to file IRS Form 8822-B, Change of Address or Responsible Party, within 60 days.

- **Are there any restrictions to what we can list as our RSO’s legal name on the TIN application?**

Yes. If the RSO wants their name to reference their affiliation with the Mason, they may only do so by using “at George Mason University” or “at Mason” after the title of their group. (For example, “GMU Bicycling Club” would not be allowed; however, “Bicycling Club at GMU” would be.)

- **Will our RSO be required to file annual taxes for our off-campus SGR?**

In regards to off-campus SGR, each RSO is responsible for filing its own federal and state returns and complying with related federal and state tax laws. If your RSO has questions about its taxes, please speak with a tax professional or visit the IRS website for additional information.

- **We have our tax ID number (TIN). What does our RSO do now?**

Your RSO should use its TIN to set-up a checking account with the bank of its choice.

Off-Campus Bank Accounts

- **What are the benefits and responsibilities of an off-campus bank account for our self-generated revenue (SGR)?**

BENEFITS	RESPONSIBILITIES
Less restrictions (RSOs have greater control over the use of off-campus SGR and aren't forbidden to purchase gift cards, greeting cards, etc.)	No tax-exemption (RSOs using off-campus SGR to pay for an expense cannot use Mason's tax-exempt certificate. However, the RSO may be able to apply for its own tax-exemption, using its TIN, from the federal government.)
Ease of use (No prior authorization or university budget paperwork needs to be requested or completed to use off-campus SGR.)	Tax filing (If applicable, RSOs would be responsible for reporting their off-campus SGR and expenditures to the federal and/or state government.)
Shorter waiting period (RSOs won't have to wait for purchase orders to be created or reimbursements processed if it uses its off-campus SGR.)	Track its own budget activity (Since Student Involvement won't have access to an RSO's off-campus bank account, it will be the responsibility of the RSO to track its off-campus SGR balance, to make purchases, to arrange payment to vendors, etc.)

- **Is our RSO required to use a specific bank to set up its off-campus account?**

No, and unfortunately we are not allowed to recommend any particular bank either. Instead, we suggest that your RSO does a little research into which bank best fits your RSO’s financial needs. For example, your RSO may first want to determine what types of banking services it will need (e.g., checking or savings account, credit/debit cards, checks, online banking, ATM access), and ask questions such as: Is there a minimum balance requirement? What’s the fee schedule (i.e., monthly maintenance fees, overdraft fees, cost of checks, ATM fees)? Is online banking available? What are the minimum/maximum number of transactions (if applicable)?

- **Can Mason help our RSO set up an off-campus bank account and/or manage our off-campus self-generated revenue (SGR)?**

No. It is the sole responsibility of the RSO to set up and maintain an off-campus bank account for its SGR. Mason will not have access to these accounts, and, therefore, will not be able to provide assistance in managing them.

- **What address should our RSO use to set up its off-campus bank account?**

RSOs may choose to use Mason's main address (4400 University Drive MSN 2D6, Fairfax, VA 22030) or the address of their RSO President or Treasurer on their off-campus bank account. Please be mindful, however, that whichever address is used is where the bank may end up mailing important documents such as bank statements, PIN notifications, and/or Form 1099-INT (used to report interest income on taxes); therefore, please choose either a secure location for your mailing address or (if available) sign up for an all online bank account. Also, please remember to update this address directly with the bank if or when it changes (i.e., the RSO President, who used their personal address to set up the bank account, graduates).

- **Can Student Funding Board (SFB) allocations be deposited into our RSO's off-campus bank accounts?**

No. SFB money must remain within an RSO's Mason account and cannot be withdrawn for deposit into an off-campus bank account.

Self-Generated Revenue (SGR)

- **What if our RSO does not have or use self-generated revenue (SGR)? Does this policy change apply to us?**

If your RSO does not have or use SGR, then this policy change does not affect it. Your RSO does not need to apply for a tax ID number (TIN) or set up an off-campus bank account. It can continue to apply for and use Student Funding Board (SFB) money through its Mason organization code to pay for its activities.

- **What happens to our RSO's current self-generated revenue (SGR) balance?**

For those RSOs, which have a current SGR balance within their Mason RSO account, we will issue you a check in the name of your student organization, so you can deposit this money into your RSO's off-campus bank account.

Fundraisers & Donations

- **Can we use Mason's tax ID number (TIN) to set up fundraisers with off-campus vendors such as Chipotle and Panda Express?**

No, RSOs will not be allowed to use Mason's TIN to set up fundraisers. If your RSO uses Mason's TIN to set up a fundraiser, then the money that your RSO collects will be issued (usually in the form of a check) in the name of "George Mason University," and then your RSO will not be able to deposit it into your off-campus bank account. If your RSO wants to set up a fundraiser, then it should use its TIN to do so.

- **Can our RSO accept donations and deposit the money into our off-campus bank account?**

Yes; however, if your RSO doesn't have 501(c)3 status, then the donor will unlikely be able to claim the donation as a charitable contribution on their taxes. Since an RSO that has not gone through the process of applying for and being granted 501(c)3 status cannot legally claim to be a tax-exempt, charitable

organization, it is important that your RSO has clearly explained to the donor the situation before any money is accepted. Let the donor know that you're a student organization on campus and that, like most student organizations, you don't have the paperwork filed for 501(c)3 status. If the donor requests proof that your group is a registered student organization with George Mason University, please contact Student Involvement about obtaining a letter, verifying your RSO is recognized by the campus.

RSO Spending

- **Can we still use our Mason organization code to pay for on-campus expenses (i.e., Police Services, Mason Catering, Parking, Printing Services, and Event Services)?**

Your RSO may continue to use its organization code to pay for on-campus expenses as long as the funding source is one of the following: (1) money applied for and allocated by the Student Funding Board (SFB), or (2) self-generated revenue (SGR) that your RSO collected during previous fiscal years and which currently resides within your Mason RSO account (i.e., on-campus SGR). If your RSO plans to use its off-campus SGR, then it should not use its organization code to pay for these expenses. Instead, it should provide the GMU office (i.e., Police Services, Mason Catering, Parking, Printing Services, and/or Event Services) with a debit/credit card or check tied to its off-campus bank account.

- **Can we use Mason's tax-exempt certificate to pay for RSO expenses?**

Your RSO can only use Mason's tax-exempt certificate when the funding source is either: (1) money applied for and allocated by the Student Funding Board (SFB), or (2) self-generated revenue (SGR) that your RSO collected during previous fiscal years and which currently resides within your Mason RSO account (i.e., on-campus SGR). If your RSO plans to use its off-campus SGR, then it is not allowed to use Mason's tax-exempt certificate.

Disclaimer: *GMU Student Involvement does not offer tax or banking advice. Nothing in this FAQ or on this website shall be construed as the offering of tax or banking advice.*