

Obtaining an EIN for your Student Organization

NOTE: Student organizations whose funds are accounted for within the university should not obtain a separate EIN for the purpose of setting up a bank account.

What is an EIN/Federal Tax ID Number?

The Employer Identification Number or EIN, (also known as the Federal Tax ID Number) is a number assigned by the Internal Revenue Service and used to identify a business or other organization.

Student organizations wishing to open a bank account must apply for an EIN. Organizations should not open a checking account using an individual's social security number. The financial burden of the account then rests with that individual and they become responsible for claiming any interest accrued on the account on their own tax return. They also become responsible for the account if there is any problem with it and furthermore, the individuals-in-charge change over the life of the organization.

Why do I need an EIN?

If your organization applies for grant funding or you have a fundraiser with an outside business such as a restaurant, you need a tax ID number to receive money or in-kind donations. You will also need this number to open an account with the credit union or bank. Additionally, obtaining an EIN helps to ensure the IRS will not make any of an organization's members personally responsible for taxes on revenue that the organization has earned.

Can we just use the University's EIN?

NO! Recognition by the University does not imply similar tax status and student organizations are not allowed to use the University's EIN. Student organizations are independent entities responsible for their own finances and establishing and maintaining their tax status with the IRS. They are also responsible for any required tax filings with Federal and State agencies.

Is having an EIN the same as being a non-profit organization?

No! Student organizations are not necessarily Federally Tax-Exempt Non-profit Organizations. Only the federal government can confer charitable status on an organization. Filing for charitable status (501(c)(3) status) is a lengthy legal procedure that commits the organization to the rigorous annual reporting procedures required by the IRS.

How do I get an EIN?

The easiest way to apply is online through the IRS website. For guidance on completing the registration process, please see the one-page job aid on page 2. You will receive your number immediately upon applying. You can also apply by mail or over the phone.

Who do I contact if I have questions about or have trouble filling out the online form? For assistance you should contact the IRS directly. They can be reached at 1-800-829-4933.

Job Aid for applying for an EIN online:

1. Go to the IRS' Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) Online Website. To do so, right click on the link below and click on "Open link in new tab" or "Open link in new window."

Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) Online

2. Click the APPLY ONLINE NOW link near the middle of the page.

3. Once you have read the instructions on the page, click the Begin Application button.

4. Select the View Additional Types, Including Tax-Exempt and Governmental Organizations option for the "What type of legal structure is applying for an EIN?" question and then click the Continue button.

5. Any of the following options may describe your type of organization: 1) Political Organization; 2) Church-Controlled Organization; 3) Community or Volunteer Group; 4) Social or Savings Club; or 5) Sports Teams (community). Once your selection is made, click on the Continue button.

6. To confirm your selection click the Continue button.

7. Enter your first name, last name, and SSN/ITIN. While the online SS-4 form requires the individual to enter his/her Social Security Number (SSN), it is still the EIN that is used to open a checking account, not any individual's SSN.

8. The assumption herein is that you are an officer or member of the organization. Select this option and then click the Continue button.

9. Enter the address information for your organization and click the Continue button when you are done.

10. Enter the requested information about your organization and click the Continue button when you are done. Repeat this step for the next screen requesting additional organizational information.

11. Select the Other option for the question "What does your business or organization do?" and click the Continue button.

12. Select the Organization option for the question regarding your business activity and click the Continue button.

13. From the list of organizational activities select the activity that best describes what your organization does and click the Continue button.

14. Select whether you would like to receive your EIN confirmation letter online or by mail and click the Continue button.

15. Once you receive the information, retain it in your student organization files for current and future leadership. You will also need a copy of this form to open an account at the credit union or bank.