

Independent Registered Student Organization Fund Guidelines

(Revised July 2024)

Preface

Illinois State University values the contributions involvement in registered student organizations (RSOs) can make to a student's overall development and student life, and therefore aspires to provide an environment in which registered student organizations can operate and thrive. The Independent Registered Student Organization (RSO) Fund supports the work of independent (not sponsored by a department) organizations by distributing funds for the cultural, recreational, co-curricular, entertainment, and artistic needs of Illinois State University students.

I. Purpose and Jurisdiction

The purpose of the Independent RSO Fund allocation structure and process is to provide a meaningful format whereby student fees may be allocated to programs/travel sponsored by independent registered student organizations that are beneficial to the student body at large. Sport Clubs directly supported by Campus Recreation, department-sponsored RSOs, and RSOs who receive funding through fee-funded departmental budgets are not eligible for funding.

II. Organization Structure

A. RSO Fund Student fee board ("Fee Board")

1. The members of the Fee Board include:
 - a. Four (4) Student Government Association Assembly Senators appointed by the President of the Assembly
 - b. The Student Government Association Secretary of College Affordability
 - c. Four (4) students from the general student body, recommended by the Dean of Students Office and appointed by the Student Body Vice President. These four (4) students shall not be current members of the Student Government Association.
 - d. An advisory staff representative from the Dean of Students Office
1. The responsibilities of the Fee Board include:
 - a. Recommending the allocation of funds to independent RSO programs/travel
 - b. Preparing a final report on all allocation recommendations and forwarding it to the Dean of Students Office for review and approval

B. Operational and compositional guidelines

1. The appointment for Fee Board members shall be effective from August 15 through May 15.
2. The Fee Board will elect a Chair from the sitting membership of the Board. The Fee Board may, and is encouraged to, designate other internal officer positions (Vice Chair, Secretary, etc.).
3. A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of the voting membership of the Fee Board.
4. All Fee Board meetings shall be open to the public.
5. The Chair shall call meetings and preside. Meetings may also be called at the request of three voting members.

6. A voting student member may be removed for violation of the Fund Guidelines, two or more unexcused absences, or negligence of their duties. The recommendation to remove a member may be initiated by the Fee Board or the SGA President. The member in question must be notified of the recommendation to remove in writing and can respond before a final decision is rendered. The SGA Executive Committee will make the final decision.
7. Voting student members who are officers or members of RSOs requesting funds shall be ineligible to engage in Fee Board deliberation regarding or vote on allocations to those programs.

III. Guidelines for allocation of funds

A. General Criteria and Regulations

1. All student organizations applying for and receiving allocated funds must be registered student organizations with the Dean of Students Office and be in good conduct standing with the University both at the time of application and throughout the period in which the funds are to be used.
2. Funded programs/travel must provide the student body with educational, cultural, entertainment, or recreational programming which:
 - a. uses allocated funds only for direct support of RSO programs/travel which are consistent with the educational goals and purposes of the institution and/or RSO, and
 - b. has a significant impact upon and/or appeal to the student body at large.
3. The Independent RSO Fund is not intended to fund activities that generate academic credit for those students who participate in the funded program. Funds cannot be used to pay tuition and/or mandatory material fees.
4. The Independent RSO Fund is not intended to fund programs/travel that benefits a primarily non-student audience.
5. The Independent RSO Fund is not intended to serve as a basis from which an RSO or another entity may generate additional funds/fundraise for the future benefit of the RSO or another entity.
6. All funded programs must be open and accessible to any and all students in some manner. Funded RSOs must adhere to the Non-discrimination in Educational Programming Clause, which is agreed to as part of the RSO registration process.
7. The Independent RSO Program Fund allocations must be distributed in a viewpoint-neutral process. The Court in *Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System v. Southworth*, 120 S.Ct. 1346 (2000) stated that a public university may charge its students an activity fee used to fund a program to facilitate extracurricular student speech, provided that the program is funded through a viewpoint-neutral process. In maintaining this viewpoint neutrality, the Fee Board may not consider the length of time as an RSO or the amount or existence of any previous years' fee allocations to RSOs.
8. The funded RSO is expected to follow the budget as recommended by the fee board and approved by the University unless specifically instructed otherwise in writing by the Dean of Students Office.

9. RSOs cannot charge admission or collect participation fees for a funded event unless the anticipated income is identified on the Budget Request Form and approved by the Fee Board.
10. No expenditures from any student fee account may be allowed on a cash basis. All expenditures from a budget allocated by the Fee Board shall utilize the procedures designated by university officials for expending funds. Funded RSOs are expected to have an external bank account. Funded RSOs will receive a distribution of funds for non-University chargeback expenses via direct deposit to their external bank account. These procedures are explained in mandatory fiscal procedures training offered to every funded RSO.
11. The Fee Board may choose to establish and consistently apply operating guidelines to standardize certain allocations.

B. Specifically excluded expenditures

1. Organizations allocated fees through the Independent RSO Fund may not use those fees to request or provide:
 - a. financial support for political programs, parties, individual political candidates, or direct lobbying efforts
 - b. support, contributions, or travel expenses for any private person (including non-ISU students who are participants in the RSO), group, association, or business except for goods and services rendered
 - c. payment for employment of faculty or staff
 - d. payment of faculty or staff professional dues
 - e. gifts for advisory and participating members
 - f. payments of debts and expenditures incurred from any previous fiscal year except under special circumstances
 - g. the purchase of alcohol

C. Caps on expenditures

1. Funding for an individual payee will be capped at \$4,999.
2. Funding for an equipment purchase will be capped at \$2,499 per item.

D. Interpretation of guidelines

The RSO Fund Fee Board, subject to review by the Dean of Students Office, will make interpretations of and revisions to the Independent RSO Fund Guidelines.

IV. Allocation procedures

- A. Prior to the beginning of each spring semester, Program Fund request procedures and deadlines will be communicated to all Independent RSOs.
- B. RSO representatives are responsible for completing the request process by the stated deadline to have programs/travel considered for funding for the next fiscal year.

- C. There is no limit on the number or amount of program/travel requests an RSO may submit throughout the fiscal year.
- D. Budget requests will be provided to the Fee Board. The Fee Board will then conduct funding hearings with the RSO sponsors of the budget requests.
- E. After consideration of the various requested programs/travel, the Fee Board shall, by majority vote, recommend the amount to be allocated by program/travel. The recommendation shall include an identification of each program/travel to be recommended for funding, appropriate justification, and a line-item budget for each.
- F. The final Fee Board allocation recommendations shall be submitted to the Dean of Students Office for review and consideration.
- G. If any alterations are made in the Fee Board's final report by the Dean of Students Office, the Fee Board shall receive a written rationale for such alterations. The Fee Board may request reconsideration of alterations in its report by notifying the Dean of Students Office within one week.
- H. Copies of the final budgets and justifications, as approved by the Dean of Students Office shall be forwarded to all RSOs and their advisors.
- I. Any request for change or internal transfer of funds in the approved budget must be submitted in writing to the Dean of Students Office for consideration.

V. Appeal procedures

- A. RSOs may appeal the allocations granted to them by submitting an appeals packet to the Dean of Students Office by the date specified in the allocation letter. The appellate entity will reach an appeal decision and notify the RSO of the outcome within fourteen (14) business days.

VI. Opportunity fund allocation procedures

- A. An Opportunity Fund will be established annually. Opportunity Fund allocations are dependent upon the availability of sufficient funds.
- B. There is no limit on the number or amount of program/travel requests an RSO may submit throughout the fiscal year. Requests for funding must be submitted a minimum of six (6) weeks prior to the program/travel date.
- C. An RSO may apply for the Opportunity Fund if one or more of the following applies:
 - 1. An unexpected opportunity has arisen since the last regular funding cycle (e.g. a bid for a regional conference was accepted).
 - 2. The RSO experienced an unanticipated need (e.g., an unexpected cost change or a large increase in student membership).
 - 3. The RSO has further developed a program concept that was not fully planned in time to request a regular fiscal year RSO Program Fund allocation.

4. The organization's RSO status has changed (e.g., the RSO registered after the Program Fund deadline).

VII. Records and reports

- A. RSO student officers and budget officers of all programs receiving funds shall keep accurate records of expenditures/income.

VIII. Freezing/removing funds

- A. Funds must be spent in accordance with the University, Board of Trustees, and Independent RSO Fund Guidelines. Any violation of Federal, State, or local laws, or Independent RSO Fund Guidelines may result in immediate termination of funding.
- B. If the fee board should have due cause to believe that RSO members, budget officer, or advisor is using funds other than for purposes originally intended and/or is deviating from the usage that was approved by the Fee Board, the Fee Board may recommend freezing or removing any portion of the fee funding originally allocated. In the event of any irregularity in the use of funds, the fee board shall recommend a course of action to rectify the situation and/or to prevent such a situation from occurring in the future.
- C. Allocated funds may be frozen if the organization fails to re-register as an RSO or fails to attend the mandatory fiscal agent training. The Fee Board may choose to reinstate some or all the RSO's funds only after the initial requirements (registration and/or fiscal training) have been met. The fee board will annually establish a process by which reinstatement may be requested and reviewed.
- D. The RSO student leadership, budget officer, and/or advisor of the investigated program will be required to respond to the charges of fund misuse as directed by the Fee Board or Dean of Students Office.
- E. A recommendation of the Fee Board to freeze or remove funds from a funded program must be forwarded to the Dean of Students Office for review and final approval.
- F. The Fee Board or Dean of Students Office may request that the Office of the Comptroller withhold payment of the item(s) in question until the investigation is resolved.
- G. Auditing of any account is undertaken upon the request of the Dean of Students Office to the Internal Auditing office. This item shall in no way be interpreted to prohibit the legally required auditing of accounts or to hinder a University budget officer from exercising due care in the protection of funds. When the Office of Internal Auditing conducts a study of student fee-funded accounts, a copy of the study may be made available to the Fee Board.
- H. Any RSO that is 90 or more days past due on a deficit balance in their RSO University account will have any existing funds allocated to the RSO by the Fee Board frozen until such time as the past due balance is resolved. Further, until the RSO resolves the deficit balance, the group will not be qualified to apply for or receive any new Independent RSO Fund allocations.

IX. Budget officer/advisor assignments and responsibilities

- A. RSOs that are allocated funds will be required to expend those funds via a university-appointed budget officer or delegate. The RSO advisor must approve and process expenditures through the Dean of Students Office.
- B. Only requests for funds from the University account need to be approved. Expenditures from the external bank account are the responsibility of the RSO signatory authorities as listed with the bank.