SOFO POLICIES AND TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Location: on the first floor of Norris, between the Box Office and the Cashier’s Office
Hours: 9am-4pm, Monday through Friday, when school is in session
9am-1pm, Monday through Friday, on academic breaks
Email: sofo@northwestern.edu
Phone: (847) 491-2328

THE BASICS

• SOFO can only conduct business with the Organization’s Treasurer and President after they have fully transitioned and have completed SOFO signature cards, passed the SOFO quiz, and attended SOFO training.

• Only ORIGINAL receipts, invoices and contracts may be accepted as documentation.

• All checks for deposit to your organization’s account should be made payable to “Northwestern University”. Checks payable to a student group may be rejected by the drawee bank. Checks payable to an event will be refused for deposit at the Norris Cashier’s Office and you must obtain a new check.

• Plan ahead and know your options: check advances are available so that members of your group do not have to pay out-of-pocket. Payments directly to vendors are ideal; all you need to do is obtain an invoice first.

• Read emails from SOFO@northwestern.edu. SOFO sends emails to student organizations when there are problems with transaction requests and action is needed from the group. We also send emails regarding general information that student officers should know. Failure to read and, when necessary, respond to these emails may adversely affect a group if transactions are delayed as a result.

ACCOUNT MAINTENANCE

• SOFO sends monthly audit trails to organization treasurers. If you would like a more current version please feel free to email us at sofo@northwestern.edu.

• Remember to reconcile your account promptly at the end of every quarter, including summer!

• If your group uses University Services, keep careful track of your NU Financials charges to avoid deficits and keep your account from being frozen.

• Make sure your account is up-to-date and active to avoid freezes!

If your account is frozen, you cannot:
  - Pick up checks;
  - Rent rooms in Norris;
  - Use Motor Pool;
  - Receive tax-exempt forms;
  - Submit vouchers for transaction requests; and more...

REIMBURSEMENTS

• Receipts, including adding machine tape, should be taped to the front of a blank sheet of paper.

• Receipts must show: a list of what was purchased and how much each item cost, the purchase date, vendor name and contact information, method of payment, AND proof of payment. Your advisor’s signature must also be present on receipts. All signatures must be originals, not copies.

• You may use one voucher to reimburse an individual with multiple receipts.

• Please provide a specific description of the purchase on each voucher. The description ties the expenditure to an activity sponsored by the student group. It does not duplicate the listing of purchased items on the receipts.
• The adding tape outside our window may be used to add together multiple receipts for the same person, or to subtract Illinois sales tax from a receipt.
• We cannot reimburse on receipts over 85 days old (90, including the time it takes SOFO to process the check).
• We cannot reimburse on alcohol/tobacco related purchases or tip in excess of 20%
• Credit card statements submitted for proof of payment must show the individual transaction line, the date of purchase, and the name of the purchaser.
• If your reimbursement is for less than $30, it must be processed as a Petty Cash using the form available outside our office. Please remember to pick up your petty cash in a timely manner! If you have multiple small reimbursements to an individual, these may be pooled into a single reimbursement. However, do not sit on reimbursements to try and pool them.

TAX

• Northwestern is exempt from Illinois sales tax; SOFO cannot reimburse on any paid Illinois sales tax. To obtain a tax exempt form, stop by our office prior to making a purchase and provide us with the name of the vendor, name of the person who will be purchasing, and date of purchase. Tax exempt forms may be used for organizational purposes only.
• We WILL reimburse out-of-state tax, hotel tax, or tax at a sit-down restaurant.

CHECK ADVANCES

• Check Advances must be reconciled within 30 days of the date printed on the check.
• To reconcile, present the receipts for any purchased items; they must be signed by your advisor and meet standard reimbursement requirements. Deposit any excess funds at the Cashier’s Office, or fill out a voucher if you spent more than the amount of the check advance and wish to be reimbursed the difference.
• Check advances MAY NOT be used to pay for services/contracts, or to reimburse individuals for prior purchases.

CONTRACTS

• NEVER pay for a service with your own money! Anything that involves a contractual agreement between you and a vendor MUST be paid by University check. Work with your advisor if you are unsure about whether or not you’re dealing with a contractual payment!
• Contracts must be signed by both the vendor and an authorized Northwestern legal representative, such as Natalie Furllett, Associate Director of the Center for Student Involvement, or Patricia Telles-Irvin, Vice President for Student Affairs.

SIGNATURES

• If you are ASG-recognized, your account executive (AE) or group executive (GE) will need to sign any voucher dealing with funds in any line items of your account other than the -00.
• Transfers require a single voucher, signed by your president, treasurer, advisor and AE/GE if applicable.
• Your advisor’s signature is required on RECEIPTS (for reimbursements and check advance reconciliations); UNPAID INVOICES (for non-contractual payments); and VOUCHERS (for transfers, check advance requests, and contractual payments).
• Please note that the advisor signature listed on your account application is the only signature we will accept.
OFFICER TRANSITIONS

- Once your term as a SOFO Officer is complete, please remember to come to SOFO and sign out of your position!
- Make sure to pass on an organized and up-to-date ledger to your successor.
- Reconcile any outstanding issues to avoid any confusion for the new officer.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Successful officers plan ahead, organize group records carefully, and communicate effectively!

- Maintain a thorough and accurate ledger!
- Make sure your signature is consistent across vouchers.
- Communication with your advisor and within your group is essential!
  - Make sure group members are aware of SOFO policies and requirements BEFORE they make purchases!
  - Use your advisor as a resource; ask them for clarification and guidance whenever you’re unsure!
- Call us early on in your planning process and ask us about payment options given the activity. Give us a broad idea of what you would like to do so we can think of the best solution.
- Spring is our busiest time; keep in mind that check turnaround times will increase and plan accordingly!