

# **Student Activities Trust Fund Funding Guidelines**

*For Registered Student Organizations (RSOs)*

**University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Fiscal Year 2025**

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## Contact Information

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Registered Student Organization budgeting guide for the upcoming fiscal year! This fiscal year, FY25, will begin on July 1, 2024, and will end on June 30, 2025, encompassing the entirety of the 2024 -2025 academic year. **Please make sure to read this guide thoroughly, as it contains all of the relevant information that an RSO will need to present a high-quality budget request. It is the responsibility of the RSO to take care that they read the entirety of the funding guidelines.** This year, the funding guidelines have changed significantly, such that copying and pasting previous year's budgets could result in your request receiving higher cuts. Please keep in mind that **it is the responsibility of the petitioning RSO to ensure their request is pursuant to the funding guidelines.**

## The Student Activities Fee & Trust Fund

The Student Activities Fee is a mandatory \$266 fee paid by every undergraduate student enrolled at the University of Massachusetts Amherst each academic year. A portion of this fee, \$100, is used to fund the payments of the recently renovated Student Union building; the remaining portion, \$166, is deposited into the **Student Activities Trust Fund (SATF)**. The SATF is then managed by the Student Government Association (SGA), who, primarily through the Ways and Means Committee ("the Committee"), allocates the money to Registered Student Organizations ("RSOs") and Agencies. Some money in the SATF is also set aside and controlled by the SGA's Finance Subcommittee ("the Subcommittee"), and for the DIA Fund. This whole process is governed by the principles of "Viewpoint Neutrality", which will be explained more later in this document.

**The SATF is a finite resource!** This means that even a "perfect" budget might not necessarily receive 100% of the requested amount. During the most recent process, over 200 groups submitted requests for funds in an amount totalling over \$9 million, which is well above the amount held in the SATF. Even after committee review, the amount of eligible line items requested was still greater than the amount held in the SATF. Because of this **almost every budget was subject to a progressive budget cut which took more from larger budgets, and less from smaller budgets.** In the end, all the funds that were available were distributed, but not all requests were fully funded.

This Guide exists to help RSOs create the clearest and most transparent budget requests possible. The Committee votes on each budget using the criteria shown in this Guide, as well as

other supplemental guidelines in a viewpoint neutral manner. Adhere to these guidelines and any supplemental guidelines referenced in this document as closely as possible in order to ensure you are submitting the most clear and transparent budget request possible. Anything contained in this document or any supplemental documents are all considered part of “The Funding Guidelines”. The Committee ***STRONGLY URGES*** that every RSO attend at least ONE Budget Presentation. Many previous budgets that were denied, were denied as a result of errors or omissions that could have been avoided through use of information that was shared at these presentations last year. Office hours with Chair Joshi and Vice Chair TBD are posted in the document below and are available to you. Finally, if you cannot make any budget presentations or office hours, send an email to [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) and [sgafinancecommit@umass.edu](mailto:sgafinancecommit@umass.edu) to set up an appointment. These resources are here to assist you with getting the maximum amount of funding possible.

As stated in the Student Government Association Bylaws Title VI, Chapter 13, Section 4, fee money is “use or lose”, meaning that starting with FY24, having been put into action last fiscal year, **NO ROLLOVERS OF FEE MONEY WILL BE PERMITTED**. Make sure to keep this in mind, as any unused fee money in your fee account will be returned back to the SATF at the end of the fiscal year.

## Audits

Each year, the Secretary of Finance is responsible for appointing and giving direction to the SGA auditor, who assists the Secretary in systematically auditing accounts for informational and compliance purposes. *See* Title III, Chapter 12, Sections 1 & 2 of the [Bylaws of the Student Government Association](#). If you receive funding out of the SATF from the Student Government Association, you are subject to being audited by Student Auditors, who may visit or request information from your RSO at any point during or after the funding process.

The funds released to you during the funding process are allocated for the budgeted purpose; ineligible line items will not be eligible for spending with SATF money. Audits of RSO accounts will be looking for holistic “matching” between the RSO’s budget and the RSO’s fiscal year spending. When going about spending, please be sure to consult your approved budget as a reference for what your SATF money was allocated for. More information about the specifics of this process will be published, but by requesting funds from the SATF, the RSO understands that their financial records could be reviewed in an Audit.

## The Budgeting Process

The budgeting process takes place via the Campus Pulse Online Budgeting System (“Campus Pulse”). This system contains an online budgeting tool, which can be accessed from your group’s Campus Pulse page. If you are listed as an officer on your group’s roster page, then you have the ability to “Manage Organization.” Click “Manage Organization,” then click the

taskbar, then choose “Finance” from the drop down menu. Once there, click “Create Request.” **Make sure to choose your council’s template.** The budget templates will go live and be made available to every RSO on October 1st, 2023.

To access the complete, step-by-step, instructions for submitting a budget request, please refer to your ESO Financial Training (SR Training) in Moodle.

All budget requests must then be submitted to the Committee through Campus Pulse by **11:59 PM on Wednesday, January 31, 2024.** See below for the full, step-by-step, schedule of deadlines.

Preliminary budget allocations for next fiscal year (FY2025) will be released through Campus Pulse by April 12th, 2024. The period for appealing any allocations made by the Committee will then run from receipt of the allocation through April 19th, 2024.

## Committee Office Hours

Sessions are available in-person in the SGA Office (Student Union, Room #305) or virtually via zoom

- Chair Joshi
  - September 5th to November 18th:
    - SGA Office, Student Union Room #305
      - Monday: 12:15 pm - 2:15 pm
      - Wednesday: 12:15 pm - 2:15 pm
      - By appointment: Use this [zoom link](#), or email [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) to set up a meeting
  - After November 27th:
    - By appointment: Use this [zoom link](#), or email [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) to set up a meeting
- Committee
  - Meetings by appointment. Email [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) to request a meeting
- Finance Subcommittee Chair Sinha
- Secretary Lee
  - Fall office hours: By appointment, email [sgafinance@umass.edu](mailto:sgafinance@umass.edu)

## Budget Workshops/Presentations

Per the SGA Bylaws, specifically Title VI, Chapter 16, Section 1.1(e), The Chair and the Committee is required to provide Budget Workshops. These are intended to reduce miscommunication, increase face-to-face interactions, provide additional resources for RSOs, and to ensure that groups are submitting the clearest and most transparent budget requests possible. Budget Workshop topics will include: an in-depth review of the Funding Guidelines,

examples of how to create sufficient descriptions for line items, the “Do’s and Don’ts” of submitting a budget request, and time for questions and answers. While each Budget Workshop will cover the same topics, you are welcome to attend as many as you feel are necessary to assist you in submitting the clearest and most transparent budget request possible.

The Committee **STRONGLY** recommends that all RSO Presidents and Treasurers, as well as Council Presidents and Treasurers, attend these workshops, as they are designed to help you understand the budget criteria and thus improve your budget request. If you are not available during any of the scheduled Budget Workshops, please contact [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu).

Budget Workshop information will be available on Campus Pulse and emailed out to RSO leaders. Since this is a live document, please check back periodically for more information.

## Council Budget Reviewers

The Committee strongly recommends that each Council have a **Council Budget Reviewer**—that is, a person to proofread your RSO’s budget prior to its being submitted to the Committee. The assignment of a Council Budget Reviewer (e.g., the Counsel Executive Board, an appointed committee, or the Council’s advisor) is at the discretion of each Council. Be in contact with your Council Executive Board and/or SAI advisor to find out more about your Council’s Budget Reviewer.

**While the Council Budget Reviewer plays an important role in assisting you in creating the clearest and most transparent budget request possible (e.g., by proofreading and assisting in improving descriptions), you are responsible for the final budget request you submit to the Committee.**

**Council Budget Reviewers:** Please use the [FY25 Council Review Checklist](#) as a guide to review budgets. Please CC [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) on all emailed comments/feedback to RSOs about their budgets!

## Timeline

Dates and deadlines are subject to change as the academic year progresses. **This document is live and will be updated as necessary.**

**Sunday, October 1st, 2023:** Budget tool and guidelines become available on Campus Pulse

**Monday, October 2nd, 2023:** Fall Office Hours by appointment begin. Contact [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) for an appointment.

**October 2023:** Budget Presentations and Workshops begin

**Sunday, November 26th, 2023: All budgets must be submitted to their Advisor/Council through Campus Pulse by 11:59 PM EST**

**\*Please note** that from November 28th, 2023 to February 1st, 2024, the Ways and Means Committee will be voting on Agency budgets and observing winter break. The Committee will be offering limited budget support at this time. We advise that you utilize office hours by appointment, budget workshops, and other resources offered by the Committee during the fall semester.

**Wednesday, January 31st, 2024: All budgets must be approved through Campus Pulse by Advisor/Council Review by 11:59 PM EST.** *This is the Final Day for Council Review to meet. It is the responsibility of the RSO to communicate with their council advisor and ensure that the budget was submitted to the committee*

**Friday, February 2nd, 2024:** Ways and Means Committee voting begins

**Friday, April 12th, 2024:** Ways and Means Committee concludes voting on budgets.

**Tuesday, April 16th, 2024:** Initial allocations will be sent out to RSOs, period to submit an appeal to the SGA's Administrative Affairs Committee opens

**Friday, April 19th 2024:** Period to submit an appeal ends

**Monday, April 22nd, 2023:** the SGA's Administrative Affairs Committee begins hearings on appeals

**Friday, April 26th, 2024:** Hearings on appeals conclude

# Funding Criteria

## Eligibility

In order for to be considered or approved for fee funding, your RSO **must** meet the following criteria:

1. A member of the RSO must submit a budget request to the Ways and Means Committee by **Wednesday, January 31st, 2024 @ 11:59 PM EST**, hereafter to be referred to as "the budget request deadline";
2. The RSO must be listed by SEL/the SORC as "Active" by the budget request deadline;

3. The budget request must include the **full names and** UMass student emails of at least **ten(10)** undergraduate student members by the budget request deadline (ex: Name: Pranav Joshi, Email: [pajoshi@umass.edu](mailto:pajoshi@umass.edu));
4. Per the SGA Bylaws, Title VI, the RSO must not have a negative balance in their fee account by the budget request deadline;
5. The RSO must not have line item requests in more than one budget request for Fiscal Year 2025; and
6. The RSO must have been active and completed all trainings in Fall 2023.

***IMPORTANT:*** Your RSO **MUST** meet **ALL** six of these requirements to be considered for fee funding. Groups in the past have lost out on an entire year's worth of funding as a result of their failure to meet the eligibility requirements. Please make sure your RSO follows and meets these eligibility requirements by the budget request deadline, January 31, 2024 at 11:59 PM EST.

## Eligibility Petition

If an RSO is deemed ineligible due to an alleged violation of any eligibility criteria, and the RSO can establish that this ineligibility resulted from the actions or inaction of an authoritative individual or department, they must notify the Administrative Affairs (AA) Chair via email at [sgadminaffairs@umass.edu](mailto:sgadminaffairs@umass.edu) within five (5) business days after receiving the Notice of Denial for their budget request, which includes a link to the Eligibility Petition.

**If the ESO notifies the AA Chair within 5 business days, the timeline is as follows:**

1. The petitioning ESO will have five (5) business days to prepare and return the form to the AA Chair
2. The AA Committee will convene, deliberate, vote, and notify the ESO of their decision regarding whether to grant a hearing within one (1) calendar week (excluding any University holidays or breaks)
3. If the ESO has been granted a hearing, the AA Chair and ESO representatives will schedule a meeting date that falls within the following ten (10) calendar days
  - a. The hearing will consist of a presentation of evidence by the ESO, followed by deliberation by the AA Committee and the delivery of a decision to the ESO

**The Administrative Affairs Committee, upon a majority vote, may decide to deem the ESO's budget eligible based on the evidence provided by the petitioning ESO. The responsibility of providing evidence is incumbent on the petitioning ESO.**

**Examples of evidence indicating that the petitioning ESO is not responsible for the violation of eligibility criteria may include, but are not limited to:**



1. Acknowledgement of Responsibility: When an authoritative individual or department admits or acknowledges that their actions or inactions were responsible for the violation.
2. Documentation of Errors: Providing screenshots, files, or other records that clearly document the error or misjudgment that led to the violation.
3. Correspondence Records: Furnishing documented correspondence (emails, letters, etc.) between the authoritative individual or department and the ESO that shows the authoritative individual or department's role in the situation.
4. Supplemental Evidence: evidence that cannot be solely considered in the Committee's deliberation
  - a. Witness Statements: Statements or testimonies from individuals who can attest to the actions or non-actions of the authoritative individual or department and how they led to the violation.

**The party responsible for the error may be, but is not limited to:**

- I. An Advisor
- II. Student Affairs and Campus Life (SACL) or any subsidiary department (e.g., SACL Finance, SEL, etc.)
- III. Any non-member of the ESO who has access to the ESO's fee accounts and/or responsibility in the budget process for the ESO

## Eligible Line Item Requests

Line items and requests for fee funding must benefit fee-paying students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and enable RSOs to carry out their mission. **Please do not round.** The Committee **will** reduce rounded line items to their original amounts. **Please keep in mind that it is the responsibility of the petitioning RSO to ensure their request is pursuant to the funding guidelines.**

There are three components that comprise each line item. Each line item **must** have each of these three **distinct** components in order to be considered eligible; **description**, **cost-breakdown**, and **evidence**. It is important to note that these three components **must** be separate and distinct from each other. Please note that following these guidelines will result in you providing duplicate and redundant information throughout a line item's components. **THIS IS INTENTIONAL**, as it helps the committee better understand your line item request and catch typos. Please make sure all components of a line item are correct, add up properly, and that all information between components is consistent. If the committee finds a line item to have inconsistent information between its components, **the line item's requested amount will be cut in half.**

1. **Description:** A description is a statement that describes what the line item is and the quantity requested. RSOs must also demonstrate how they came to their requested number of items. Depending on its complexity, it could range from a few sentences to a

few paragraphs. RSOs must also demonstrate how they came to their requested number of items. **ALL quantities should be described. For example, if you are requesting fee money for hotel rooms, you will need to mention the total quantity of students, rooms, and nights. Quantities may be in number form (80) or written out (eighty).** The entire description **must only** appear in the Campus Pulse ‘description’ box. No part of the description may appear in any other component of the line item.

- a. Example: “We expect about 40 members to be attending our RSO meeting. Since we’ll need 2 pieces of paper per member, we will need 80 pieces of paper,”

2. **Cost-breakdown:** A cost-breakdown is an explanation of the **unit cost of the item**, a mention of the **quantity of the items** requested, and a mention of the **total cost** of the line item. This **must** be included in the ‘description’ field on Campus Pulse. **However the cost breakdown is not a component of the description described above, and must be separate components.** A great way to keep your cost-breakdown and description separate is to put your cost-breakdown a few lines below your description, and by writing “Cost-breakdown:” above it. See the eligible line item example. Completing the ‘quantity’ and ‘cost’ fields in Campus Pulse is **not** a sufficient cost breakdown. Think of this component like a simple multiplication equation. For example, if an ESO is seeking to purchase 4 plane tickets at \$100 each, their cost breakdown could appear as follows: “4 plane tickets x \$100 per plane ticket = \$400”, or simply just “4x\$100=\$400”. You may also write out the cost-breakdowns with words, but make sure that it is still clear to the committee.

- a. **CAUTION!** Make sure your cost-breakdown is clear and easily understandable. Confusing or hard to understand cost-breakdowns will be deemed insufficient. Furthermore, **ALL** calculations should be clearly stated in the cost-breakdown. If you are requesting multiple items in a single line item, you must show how you summed quantities and prices . Using the hotel example again, you should show mathematically how you arrived at your total amount from the number of students, number of hotel rooms, room capacity, and total nights. Make all calculations as clear as possible. **The Committee is not required to, and will not make any math calculations on behalf of the RSO. If the committee can’t understand a cost-breakdown, it will likely be deemed insufficient.**

3. **Evidence:** Evidence is something that furnishes proof that the cost of a given line item is as you described. Quotes from vendors, pricing evidence from past years\*, price references from suppliers or quotes, links to websites, or other similar references are all common and acceptable forms of evidence. **It must be clear that your evidence is from an outside source, and was not made from within your RSO. The Committee recommends the use of PDF invoices and screenshots.** We will accept links to items, **but please note that if a given link is inactive, or shows a different price than what is requested, your evidence will be deemed insufficient, and your budget will be cut accordingly.** The Committee is not required to, and will not search through websites for

evidence. Additionally, if you are using a spreadsheet or other document as evidence for multiple different costs, please ensure each cost has all of the components of an eligible line item. ALL components of price **MUST** be supported either as a whole, or individually by the evidence. If your evidence is a significantly long document, **PLEASE** only submit the necessary parts of evidence, or clearly mark where the relevant information is. **If the committee is unable to find relevant information within a given piece of evidence, it will be deemed as insufficient. RSOs should strive to provide succinct accurate information regarding cost. If any document submitted is longer than 2 pages and every page contains relevant information, in which case the relevant information must be highlighted.**

\*If your evidence is from a previous year, you **must** make sure you mention this in the Campus Pulse ‘description’ box. If the previous year’s evidence shows a different price, that difference must be mentioned and explained in the description.

[Here](#) is a basic line item checklist. The Committee recommends groups use this to double check their line items, but this is by no means required.

## Insufficient Line Item Requests

- If two out of the three components of a line item are sufficient, but one is deemed insufficient, the line item will still be eligible for funding, but the requested amount will be cut in half.
  - If a line item has **sufficient cost-breakdown and sufficient evidence**, but an **insufficient description**, the item will still be eligible for funding, **but the requested amount will be cut in half.**
  - If a line item has a **sufficient description and sufficient cost breakdown**, but **insufficient evidence**, the item will still be eligible for funding, **but the requested amount will be cut in half.**
  - If a line item has a **sufficient description and sufficient evidence**, but an **insufficient cost breakdown**, the item will still be eligible for funding, **but the requested amount will be cut in half.**
- If **two or more** of the three line item components are deemed **insufficient**, the line item will be deemed **ineligible** for funding, **and the requested amount will be reduced to zero.\***

\*See ineligible line item request #1

## Eligible Line Item Example

Here is an example line item for an RSO requesting money for trifold boards. Please note that in a real line item request, the petitioning RSO should go into a bit more detail as to how the item is relevant to the RSO's mission statement. An example of sufficient evidence for this line item would be a screenshot from the Target website clearly showing the item, and its unit price.

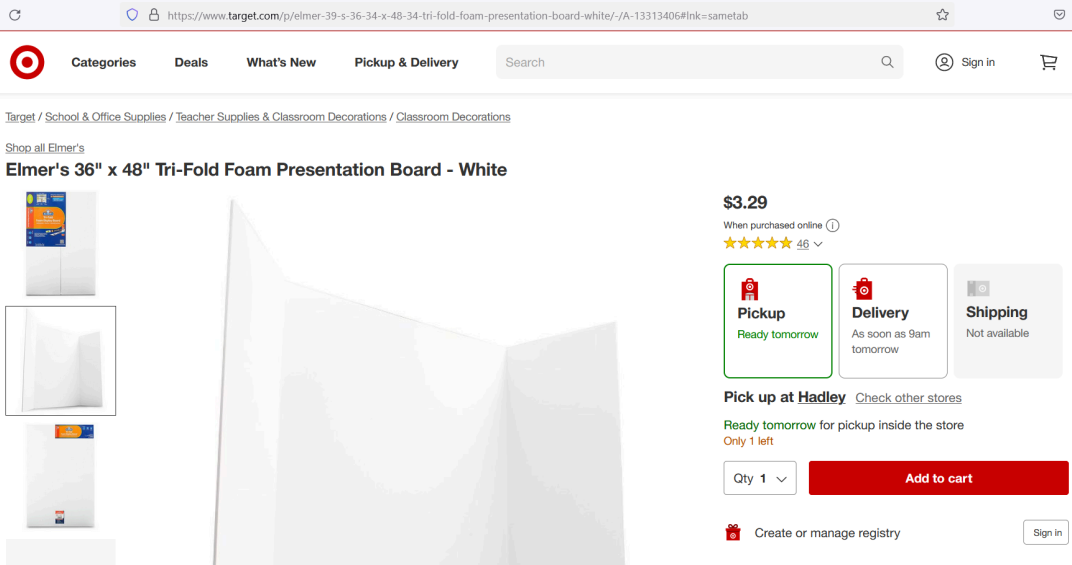
**Line Item Category**  
Office Supplies Expense

**\* Name (Required Field)**  
Trifold Boards

**Description**  
We frequently use trifold boards for displaying information during our RSO meetings. We plan to hold 14 meetings per semester, and we will need one trifold board per meeting. This means we will need a total of 28 trifold boards.

**Cost Breakdown:**  
14 meetings per semester x 2 semesters = 28 meetings  
28 meetings x 1 board per meeting = 28 trifold boards  
28 trifold boards x \$3.29 each = \$92.12

* Quantity	X	* Cost	=	Total
28		\$ 3.29		<b>\$92.12</b>

The screenshot shows the Target website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Categories', 'Deals', 'What's New', and 'Pickup & Delivery'. Below that, the breadcrumb trail reads: 'Target / School & Office Supplies / Teacher Supplies & Classroom Decorations / Classroom Decorations'. The product title is 'Elmer's 36" x 48" Tri-Fold Foam Presentation Board - White'. The price is '\$3.29' with a note 'When purchased online'. There are 48 reviews shown as stars. Three options are available: 'Pickup' (Ready tomorrow), 'Delivery' (As soon as 9am tomorrow), and 'Shipping' (Not available). The 'Pickup at Hadley' option is selected. Below the options, it says 'Ready tomorrow for pickup inside the store' and 'Only 1 left'. There is a quantity selector set to '1' and a red 'Add to cart' button. At the bottom, there are links for 'Create or manage registry' and 'Sign in'.

## Ineligible Line Item Requests

The following types of line items **are not eligible** to receive funding:

1. Line items with two or more insufficient line item components (description, cost-breakdown, evidence)
2. Line items that are not relevant to the petitioning RSO's mission statement.

3. Gifts, awards, scholarships, or giveaways of any kind. Including but not limited to;
  - a. Clothing or apparel of any kind;\*
  - b. Individual member dues to local and/or national organizations;
  - c. Giveaways to faculty or staff members of UMass Amherst;
  - d. Giveaways to non-fee paying students;
  - e. Giveaways to non-fee paying individuals, including those not affiliated with UMass Amherst.
4. Housing, lodging, etc. expenses for judges, speakers, etc. unless specifically contracted for. These types of line items will only be funded if it is a required component of their contract, which must be proven in evidence and mentioned in description. Any fee money paid to a non-fee paying individual **must** be in direct exchange for some good or service, which benefits the RSO.
5. Private events, including but not limited to, group banquets, award dinners, formals, retreats, and any other similar celebratory social functions.
6. Food or drinks of any kind.\*\*
7. Line items that will be paid for with an RSO's revenue money, or any monetary sources other than fee money.
8. Commonwealth of Massachusetts Sales Tax or tax of 6.25%. RSOs receive tax exempt status from MA sales tax.
9. Donations of any kind.
10. Alcohol, tobacco, illegal substances, or drugs of any kind.
11. Line items in conflict with municipal, State, or Federal Law, and/or the policies of UMass Amherst.
12. Black and white flyers, and any office printers (the Student Organization Resource Center, the "SORC", provides 25 free black and white prints per day).
13. Printing expenses that exceed the prices listed on the Campus Design and Copy price list (found [here](#)).
14. Any equipment that can be checked out for free at the W.E.B. Du Bois Library Digital Media Lab and Circulation desk (a list can be found [here](#)).
15. Payroll for undergraduate students
  - a. Payroll for non-student staff, such as coaches, is permitted for RSOs. Please see the [Coach Payroll Guide](#) for more information.
16. Retroactive or reimbursement funding
17. Goods that will be sold to generate revenue (ex: donuts/bracelets/t-shirts/other items being sold for a fundraiser).
18. Campus Parking passes and related expenses.
19. Items that cost more than the prices charged by on-campus venues and services for the same items.

- a. The prices of AV equipment should already be available to your RSO. If you don't have this information, please contact the SORC or refer to your financial training.
  - b. The Physical Plant resources page can be found [here](#).
20. Items requiring the execution of a deed (e.g. real estate, land, houses, timeshare, etc.).
  21. Motor vehicles (excludes the cost of rental vehicles).
  22. Discretionary funds of any kind (e.g. lump sum estimates to be used on various unforeseen expenses throughout the year). Any RSOs expecting or experiencing unforeseen expenses should seek relief through the SGA's Finance Subcommittee.
  23. Additional funding for future fiscal years.
  24. Training of any kind that results in certification (ex. CPR)
    - a. RSO members are required to pay for their own licenses and certifications

\*RSOs *may* receive funding for non-personalized uniforms and costumes if they are maintained in the club inventory for re-use from year to year. **It is the responsibility of the petitioning RSO to prove these exceptions exist. These conditions must be explicitly clear to the committee when reviewing requests for clothing.**

\*\*RSOs *may* receive funding for food if they meet specific exceptions. The Committee uses a two pronged test to determine if food or drink may be funded. The petitioning RSO must demonstrate that the provision of food is 1) for a public event where individuals other than the RSO members only are invited to join; and 2) beneficial to the campus community. Line items requesting food for general body meetings, welcome meetings, or similar events will not be funded. However, there is an exception for water at large events. **It is the responsibility of the petitioning RSO to prove these exceptions exist. These conditions must be explicitly clear to the committee when reviewing requests for food or drink.** Any items of food that are considered to be "ingredients," and used to make something that will be eaten, are considered food for the purposes of this ineligible line item criteria.

## Ways and Means Adjustment Line

The Ways and Means Adjustment line is a black revenue line item that **must** be added to the beginning of each budget. It allows the Committee to adjust the total level of funding received based on any additional adjustments at the end of the process.

There will be a present budget section in Campus Pulse for the adjustment line. Add a revenue/income line item titled "Ways and Means Adjustment." **Set it as 1 x \$0.00.** The Committee will then be able to make necessary adjustments at the end of the budget process. **Do not set it to any amount other than \$0.00 as it will reduce your total requested amount and the committee reserves the right to allocate funds according to this reduced amount.**

If you need further guidance on how to add the budget line, refer to the Signature Responsibility Training on Moodle. If you continue to have problems after reviewing the training, email [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu) to request assistance.

## Budget Adjustments

The Committee uses a “resource-blind” method when reviewing budget requests and voting on initial allocations. This means that the Committee does not know, or take into account, how much money is available in the SATF to be allocated when they are considering your budget; all budgets are granted initial allocations as though the SATF were an infinite resource. After all initial resource-blind allocations are totaled, the Ways and Means Committee compares that sum to how much money is actually available in the SATF for disbursement. Because of the large number of ESOs that request funding, the total amount initially allocated by the Committee has historically been well over the amount of money available in the SATF. The Committee therefore makes adjustments to all initial allocations, reducing funding by a percentage based on the guidelines-based allocation amount until the total allocation matches the funds available in the SATF. Once this adjustment is complete, initial allocations are released to your RSO.

## What is Viewpoint Neutrality?

In the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System v. Southworth* 529 U.S. 217 (2000), the Court ruled that mandatory student activity fees are legal so long as funding decisions are made in a viewpoint neutral manner. Viewpoint-neutral funding means that funding decisions cannot be based on a group’s point of view. In other words, an organization cannot be denied funding because it holds or advocates any certain opinion.

Viewpoint neutrality does not mean that funding levels must be equal for all organizations. **Viewpoint neutrality is about the process, not the outcome.** Different groups will be funded at different levels, but not because of the viewpoints that they espouse. Different organizations require different amounts of money to function effectively on campus and uphold their mission. Viewpoint neutrality also does not mean that by funding one point of view, an “opposite” point of view must be funded. Many organizations and activities do not have an opposite point of view. Even in a situation where two groups with “opposite” points of view or missions groups apply for funding, it is not necessary to fund both groups at the same level. There is a possibility that the quality of requests will vary between the groups and each needs a different amount of money to function effectively.

No funding decisions are based on a particular group or activity’s point of view. This method of allocating funds, which at UMass is detailed in these funding guidelines, protects students’ free speech rights by ensuring that all viewpoints have an equal chance to receive funding from student fees.

The most important thing to remember is that viewpoint neutral funding pertains to the process, not the outcome.

*Adapted from the Center for Campus Free Speech website.*

*For any questions about viewpoint neutrality, please contact the Student Legal Services Office or [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu)*

## Appeals Process

According to the SGA Bylaws, specifically Title VI, Chapter 10, Section 10, Subsection 1, all RSO's may appeal their initial allocation to the Administrative Affairs Committee ("AA") on any one of the grounds that; 1) there has been a process violation; 2) Committee members engaged in viewpoint discrimination when considering the RSO's budget; or 3) the Committee made an error, including but not limited to, a computer/calculation error.

When initial allocations are released to your RSO, they will be accompanied by a Google form that can be used to submit an appeal to AA. The Administrative Affairs Committee shall have discretion to determine whether an appeal properly alleges one of these three grounds. If an appeal is not based on one or more of the three aforementioned criteria, it shall not be eligible for an appeal hearing.

If an appeal is properly based on one or more of the three grounds above as determined by a majority vote of the Administrative Affairs Committee, then the Administrative Affairs Committee shall grant an appeal hearing.

Hearings on all appeals will be between the dates of **April 22nd, 2024** and **April 26th, 2024**. AA will give you a written notification of their decision to grant or deny your appeal by **Sunday, April 28th at 11:59 PM ET**. If AA grants your appeal, they will notify the Finance Subcommittee, who will make the necessary line item and budget adjustments in Campus Pulse. For any questions about the Appeals Process or the grounds for making an appeal, contact the Administrative Affairs Committee at [sgadminaffairs@umass.edu](mailto:sgadminaffairs@umass.edu).

# Additional Information and Resources

## FY25 Budget Resources

[FY25 Budget Example Wording \(Glossary\)](#)

[FY25 Council Review Checklist](#)



## [FY25 Budget Checklist](#)

### [Gas Cost Calculator](#)

When requesting money for gas, please make sure to include all calculations made, including how many cars, how many students, how many students per car, etc. in your description **and** cost-breakdown. Be sure to also clarify if you're requesting gas for a round trip or one way.

### [Travel Cost Estimation Resources](#)

Campus Center\* and [Physical Plant Prices](#)

\* This information should already be available to RSOs. If your group doesn't have this information, please contact the SORC or refer to your financial (SR) training.

## **Other Funding Resources**

- The SGA's Finance Subcommittee
  - During the academic year, the SGA's Finance Subcommittee accepts applications for Emergency Funding requests. To apply, please see the [Emergency Funding Guidelines](#).
- The SGA's DIA Fund Committee
  - Since 2022, the SGA's DIA Fund, formerly "Equity Fund", has set money aside to fund ESO initiatives that support UMass Amherst's mission of equity and inclusion. In July 2023, the DIA Fund was codified into the SGA Bylaws. To apply, please contact President Tess Weisman at [sgapresident@umass.edu](mailto:sgapresident@umass.edu).
- Student Affairs ECSA (Engage, Connect, Serve, Achieve) Grant
  - The purpose of the ECSA grants are to provide resources for projects that enrich UMass campus life by increasing civic engagement, building social capital, enhancing co-curricular development, and fostering student achievement. RSOs, GSOs, and SACL units may apply for grants by logging into Campus Pulse, scrolling down to Campus Links, clicking "ECSA" and filling out the application.
- Arts Council Grants
  - Grants are awarded to groups and organizations that are affiliated with the University of Massachusetts Amherst and involve UMass students through program management, participation and/or as an audience in arts related events (such as music, dance, theater, video, film productions, visual arts exhibits, poetry readings, etc.) Applicants must have a Revenue accepting fund. Apply on the Fine Arts Center website.

- UMass MinuteFund & UMassGives Fundraising
  - **Looking to fundraise for your RSO? Try the MinuteFund!**
    - **What is the MinuteFund?**
      - The MinuteFund is UMass Amherst's crowdfunding platform! The team in the Office of Annual Giving will provide training on outreach strategy, creating your website, and help you to craft compelling communications. Then, you will reach out to your contacts and ask them to support your RSO. 100% of the money raised will go directly into your RSO revenue account. Every donation is tax-deductible and your donors will become donors to the university. You can launch a MinuteFund project anytime (except April 1 to May 1 each year). Interested? Fill out an application [here](#) and someone from Annual Giving will reach out to you to set up a meeting!
    - **How can we use funds raised through the MinuteFund?**
      - You can raise money through the MinuteFund for any expenses that your RSO has! Whether you are planning a trip, buying equipment, creating an event, or just need cash for operating expenses, you are able to use the MinuteFund. You are also able to use the MinuteFund platform to raise money for outside organizations in many cases.
    - **Are there restrictions on how we can use the MinuteFund?**
      - The MinuteFund is not a payment platform, and cannot be used to sell items or to collect dues from RSO members.
  - UMassGives is an annual two-day, online fundraising event. RSOs and agencies are encouraged to participate and enjoy incentives for most donations. Set up your outreach campaign by visiting: <https://www.umass.edu/umassgives>
- Collecting Dues
  - Some RSOs make the collective decision to collect dues from their members in order to build revenue. The first step to collecting dues is to consult your SEL Council Advisor. The Financial Matrix has set up a new online platform for groups to be able to collect dues from their members. Your Council Advisor will be able to guide you through this process.
- General Fundraising

## FAQs

- **I'm not sure how to put together a budget request. How do I ensure that my group will receive funding?**
  - The clearest and most transparent requests will follow these guidelines as closely as possible. In addition, the Committee offers Budget Workshop sessions in the Fall semester led by the Chair and other members of the Committee. We highly recommend that the person who submits your budget attend at least one budget workshop session. In addition, you may contact the chair, Pranav Joshi, at [sgawaysmeans@umass.edu](mailto:sgawaysmeans@umass.edu), with any further questions or to set up a meeting with them or the Committee as a whole.
- **How can I further clarify our mission statement to the committee?**
  - Mission statements can be vague, and the Committee understands this. If you feel that the Committee may not understand your mission statement, we encourage you to add a clarifying explanation in parentheses following the mission statement. If you feel it is helpful, you may also quote specific parts of the mission statement when explaining why your line items relate to the mission of your group.
- **Campus Pulse isn't working, what do I do?**
  - If there is a glitch or problem with Campus Pulse preventing you from filling out or submitting your budget request, please contact your SEL advisor or the SATF Financial Advisor, Casey Gaw ([cgaw@umass.edu](mailto:cgaw@umass.edu)). She can help you with the problem and ensure that your RSO is not penalized because of technical issues.
- **If my group is eligible to receive funding, is it possible to receive none?**
  - Yes, it is possible. Occasionally, a group will request funding only for ineligible line items (see funding guidelines for which items are ineligible). In this case, all of these ineligible line items will be reduced to zero and the group will receive an allocation of zero dollars. To avoid this, make sure to adhere to the funding guidelines.
- **Does the Committee review every single line item?**
  - Yes. No matter how much you write or how many line items you have, the Committee reads and considers everything that you include in your budget request.
- **How will Council Reviews work?**
  - An effective Council Review will serve as a peer review for your budget with the goal of helping you catch things like calculation errors, missing descriptions, or ineligible line items before your budget is submitted to the Ways and Means Committee. They might also provide meaningful feedback and help you interpret the guidelines. Each Council Review is overseen by the Council Treasurer and President through meetings of the Treasurers Board. Every Council will have a slightly different system, so reach out to your Council President to find out more

specifics. The Committee is happy to answer questions of the Treasurers Board about the process.

- **Who decides how much money is available every year?**
  - The SGA bylaws specify that the SGA Senate votes on how high the Student Activities Fee is each year. The Senate has the power to raise the fee up to 7.49% each year. Once the Senate has voted on the Student Activities Fee, that money is entrusted to the Ways and Means Committee to allocate. If you have any concerns about the level of the Student Activities Fee, please direct them to [sgaspeaker@umass.edu](mailto:sgaspeaker@umass.edu).
- **I only have evidence that is in a foreign currency, what do I do?**
  - Occasionally, petitioning RSOs will only be able to provide evidence that is in a foreign currency. The Committee is understanding of this challenge that many RSOs face. You *may* submit evidence that is in a foreign currency, but you will need to attach supplemental evidence which shows, **and proves** the current exchange rate between the foreign currency and U.S. Dollars at the time you're making your request. We recommend using the [Federal Reserve's page on exchange rates](#). You must also include this exchange rate in your cost-breakdown, and currency symbols should be explained in the description.
- **Can more than one person work on a budget?**
  - While the Committee does require the budget to be submitted by a singular person who holds SR, you *may* have as many individuals work on your budget as you'd like. However, the Committee strongly recommends keeping this number of other collaborators to a minimum, ideally of just one. Having "too many cooks in the kitchen" drastically increases the chance of your budget having errors. If you must have more than one person work on a budget, *please* coordinate with one another to ensure consistency.
- **If I don't use my entire fee allocation, does the remaining balance roll over to the next fiscal year?**
  - No. As stated in the Student Government Association Bylaws Title VI, Chapter 13, Section 4, fee money is "use or lose". Starting with FY23, **NO ROLLOVERS OF FEE MONEY WILL BE ALLOWED.**