



Creating a Scholarship Program: Legally Structuring a Lasting Educational Impact

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Overview

- Legal structuring options
- Setting up the scholarship program
- Selecting a recipient
- Documenting, monitoring and reporting the scholarship
- Taxability of scholarship grants



Legal Structuring Options

- Public Charity
- Private Foundation
- Donor Advised Fund



Legal Structuring Requirements and Options

- **Public Charities vs. Private Foundations**

- Under IRC Section 4945, **private foundations**, which are one sub-category of Section 501(c)(3) organizations, **must obtain pre-approval** from the Internal Revenue Service (the “IRS”) of their procedures for selecting recipients of scholarship grants in order to pay scholarship grants
- **public charities** are **not** obligated to obtain IRS pre-approval, but public charities generally look to the federal tax rules for private foundation scholarship grants when structuring scholarship grant programs



Legal Structuring Options

- **Donor Advised Funds (“DAFs”):** A DAF is a separately identified fund or account that is maintained, operated, and legally controlled by a 501(c)(3) organization, called the sponsoring organization.¹

Applicable Law²

- Donor has advisory privileges over the distribution of funds from the DAF, but the sponsoring organization must have legal control over the funds in the DAF and the right to disregard the donor’s advice
- Donor can claim a charitable deduction for income-tax, gift-tax or estate-tax purposes only if the donor obtains a written acknowledgment from sponsoring organization stating that it has exclusive legal control over the assets contributed to the DAF

BUT

- IRC Section 4966 prohibits DAFs from granting scholarships to individuals unless they fall within specific exceptions

1. <https://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Charitable-Organizations/Donor-Advised-Funds>

2. <https://www.guidestar.org/Articles.aspx?path=/rxa/news/articles/2007/new-rules-affecting-donor-advised-funds.aspx>



Donor Advised Funds (Cont.)

Applicable Law²

- IRC Section 4966 outlines types of funds that are excluded from the definition of a DAF
 - The definition of a donor advised fund in the Code does not include any fund which makes grants to individuals for travel, study or other similar purposes if
 - (i) the fund is advised by a committee all the members of which are appointed by the sponsoring organization,
 - (ii) the committee is not controlled by the donor or donor advisor to the fund (or any persons related to the donor or donor advisor), and
 - (iii) all grants from the fund are awarded on an objective and non-discriminatory basis pursuant to a procedure approved in advance by the governing board of the sponsoring organization, provided that the procedure meets the requirements for private foundation grants to individuals for travel, study or other similar purposes
- Therefore, if a fund falls within this exception, scholarship grants to individuals may be paid out of the fund without violating the general prohibition in the Code on donor advised fund distributions to individuals



Establishing Governing Documents for a Scholarship Program

- The “purposes clause” of governing documents must permit the public charity to make scholarship grants to individuals
- Does not have to be explicit, but must be able to infer from the clause that scholarships can be awarded
 - “Purposes clause” **can be more narrow** than the purposes stated in IRC 501(c)(3):
 - ☒ “To grant scholarships to deserving junior college students residing in Gotham City”
 - “Purposes clause” **must not be broader** than the scope of IRC 501(c)(3). Examples:
 - ☒ “To provide scholarship assistance to individuals” could include providing assistance to pre-selected individuals
 - ☒ “To provide scholarship assistance to individuals” AND “notwithstanding any other provision in this instrument, organization will not further any specified purpose other than those described in IRC Section 501(c)(3)”



Reviewing Governing Documents for Existing Public Charities

- Make sure purpose clause allows the granting of scholarships
- If an amendment is required, regulatory approvals may be needed
 - Attorney General: a New York not-for-profit corporation must obtain the approval of the NYS Attorney General's Office to amend
 - Other regulatory agencies may also require approval and/or notice



Obtaining Tax Exempt Status for a Scholarship Program

- Describe scholarship grant program in the narrative portion of Form 1023
- Respond to specific questions about scholarship grant program in Section I of Schedule H of Form 1023 application



Obtaining Tax Exempt Status for a Scholarship Program

Schedule H. Organizations Providing Scholarships, Fellowships, Educational Loans, or Other Educational Grants to Individuals and Private Foundations Requesting Advance Approval of Individual Grant Procedures

Section I *Names of individual recipients are not required to be listed in Schedule H.*

Public charities and private foundations complete lines 1a through 7 of this section. See the instructions to Part X if you are not sure whether you are a public charity or a private foundation.

- 1 a** Describe the types of educational grants you provide to individuals, such as scholarships, fellowships, loans, etc.
- b** Describe the purpose and amount of your scholarships, fellowships, and other educational grants and loans that you award.
- c** If you award educational loans, explain the terms of the loans (interest rate, length, forgiveness, etc.).
- d** Specify how your program is publicized.
- e** Provide copies of any solicitation or announcement materials.
- f** Provide a sample copy of the application used.
- 2** Do you maintain case histories showing recipients of your scholarships, fellowships, educational loans, or other educational grants, including names, addresses, purposes of awards, amount of each grant, manner of selection, and relationship (if any) to officers, trustees, or donors of funds to you? If "No," refer to the instructions. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
- 3** Describe the specific criteria you use to determine who is eligible for your program. (For example, eligibility selection criteria could consist of graduating high school students from a particular high school who will attend college, writers of scholarly works about American history, etc.)
- 4 a** Describe the specific criteria you use to select recipients. (For example, specific selection criteria could consist of prior academic performance, financial need, etc.)
- b** Describe how you determine the number of grants that will be made annually.
- c** Describe how you determine the amount of each of your grants.
- d** Describe any requirement or condition that you impose on recipients to obtain, maintain, or qualify for renewal of a grant. (For example, specific requirements or conditions could consist of attendance at a four-year college, maintaining a certain grade point average, teaching in public school after graduation from college, etc.)
- 5** Describe your procedures for supervising the scholarships, fellowships, educational loans, or other educational grants. Describe whether you obtain reports and grade transcripts from recipients, or you pay grants directly to a school under an arrangement whereby the school will apply the grant funds only for enrolled students who are in good standing. Also, describe your procedures for taking action if the terms of the award are violated.
- 6** Who is on the selection committee for the awards made under your program, including names of current committee members, criteria for committee membership, and the method of replacing committee members?
- 7** Are relatives of members of the selection committee, or of your officers, directors, or **substantial contributors** eligible for awards made under your program? If "Yes," what measures are taken to ensure unbiased selections? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Note: If you are a private foundation, you are not permitted to provide educational grants to **disqualified persons**. Disqualified persons include your substantial contributors and foundation managers and certain family members of disqualified persons.



Obtaining Tax Exempt Status for a Scholarship Program

SECTION I of SCHEDULE H

- The types, purposes and amounts of scholarship grants awarded
- How the scholarship grants are publicized
- The eligibility and selection criteria for the scholarship grants
- The composition of the selection committee
- Procedures used to supervise use of the scholarship grants



Scholarship Eligibility: Choosing Your Charitable Class

- “Charitable class”
 - Sufficiently large and indefinite³
 - Cannot benefit a small group of pre-selected or pre-named individuals
 - No magic number

Examples of qualifying “charitable classes”

- ☑ Students at colleges and universities in New York City
- ☑ High school students from low-income families in California
- ☑ Female students
- ☑ High school students in a particular school or specified geographic area
- ☑ High school seniors graduating in the top 10% of their class

³ <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3833.pdf>



Objective and Non-Discriminatory Selection Criteria

- Recipients must be selected on an “objective and non-discriminatory basis”⁴:
 - Financial need
 - Academic performance/merit
 - Performance on standardized tests (e.g., SAT/ACT)
 - Community involvement and/or extracurricular activities
 - Recommendations from teachers and others in the community
 - Personal interviews

⁴ See, e.g., 26 U.S. Code §4945 and 26 U.S. Code §170.



Objective and Non-Discriminatory Selection Criteria (Cont.)

- A public charity may consider an applicant's race or national origin
- But **CANNOT** preclude groups that have traditionally faced discrimination from consideration
 - Public charities that are schools will lose federal funding if they discriminate on the basis of race
 - Race-based scholarships to remedy present effects of prior discrimination or to enhance diversity, so long as the scholarships are narrowly tailored to achieve that goal, are constitutional
 - Colleges and universities can also grant scholarships provided by private organizations if the organizations select the recipients themselves⁵

⁵ <http://www.finaid.org/educators/affirmativeaction.phtml>



Insiders and Scholarship Grants

NO GRANTS TO INSIDERS

- ☒ Directors, trustees, officers, or senior managers, or their family members
- ☒ Members of selection committee, or their family members
- ☒ Substantial contributors (generally, major donors who are listed on Schedule B of the charity's IRS Form 990 annually), or their family members

- Scholarships for employees of public charities and their family members are permissible, but consult with counsel



Due Diligence for Non-U.S. Citizen Scholarship Grant Recipients

- Check the names of scholarship grant recipients who are foreign citizens against the “Specially Designated Nationals List” (“SDN List”), which is a terrorist watch list maintained by the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (“OFAC”)
 - The search engine for all of the OFAC sanctions lists (including the SDN List) may be found here:
<https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>



Selecting Recipients and Awarding Scholarships

- Ensure selection criteria and methods comply with your own stated requirements!
- Consider documentation you might need to obtain from the recipient:
 - Financial eligibility, if applicable
 - Academic records
 - Release to recipient's story



Documentation of Scholarship Grant

- Document the terms and conditions of the scholarship grant in a short letter agreement countersigned by the recipient **BEFORE** the funds are disbursed

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Length of the scholarship grant (e.g., for one year only or renewable)

If the scholarship grant is renewable, the specific conditions for renewal

Specific use of the scholarship grant funds (e.g., tuition and course-related fees, books, supplies and equipment, room and board, other expenses, etc.)

How the scholarship grant funds will be paid (e.g., to the academic institution or to the recipient)

Conditions under which scholarship grant funds need to be repaid by the recipient (i.e., if diverted for a purpose inconsistent with the grant terms)

Reporting obligations (particularly if scholarship grant funds are paid to the recipient)

A statement that the scholarship grant recipient is responsible for any liabilities or obligations incurred in connection with the scholarship grant, including, but not limited to, U.S. federal, state or local income tax obligations



Monitoring Scholarship Funds after Disbursement

If to Academic Institution	If to Scholarship Grant Recipient
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not need to obtain reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Require recipient to annually report on use of the scholarship grant funds
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Require a report in the form of a verified copy of the recipient's transcript and a statement from the recipient that the scholarship grant funds have not been diverted for a purpose inconsistent with the grant terms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Require recipient to submit documentation (e.g., receipts, tuition invoice, etc.) substantiating the use of the scholarship grant funds
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If recipient diverted any funds, the recipient must repay the diverted funds



Reporting of Scholarship Grants on IRS Form 990

IRS FORM 990 REQUIREMENTS

Domestic Individuals	Foreign Individuals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">An individual who lives or resides in the United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An individual, including a U.S. citizen or resident, who lives or resides outside of the United States, <u>at the time</u> a scholarship grant is paid or distributed to the individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Part III of <u>Schedule I</u> of IRS Form 990	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Part III of <u>Schedule F</u> of IRS Form 990
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Total number and total amount of scholarship grants paid during the applicable tax year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Total number and total amount of scholarship grants paid during the applicable tax year <u>by specified geographic region (e.g., Europe, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia)</u>



Recordkeeping Requirements

“RECORDS AND CASE HISTORIES”

The name and address of the scholarship grant recipient

The amount paid to the scholarship grant recipient

The purpose of the scholarship grant

The criteria used to select the scholarship grant recipient

Any application forms completed by, letter agreement(s) with and reports received from the scholarship grant recipient

The manner in which the scholarship grant recipient was selected and the relationship, if any, between the scholarship grant recipient and

- (a) members, officers, directors and/or trustees of the public charity,
- (b) a grantor or substantial contributor to the public charity or their family members, **OR**
- (c) a corporation controlled by a grantor or substantial contributor to the public charity

- Records should be maintained for at **least three years** after the filing of the 990 for the year in which the scholarship was given
- Must also maintain a list of scholarship grant applicants that were rejected **within the past three years**
 - Name and address of the declined individual
 - Record of the denial and
 - Reason(s) for the denial



Taxability of Scholarship Grants

- When are scholarships not taxable to the recipient?
 - When it is a “qualified scholarship grant” - used for “qualified tuition and related expenses” by an individual who is a degree candidate at a defined educational organization
 - IRC Section 117 of the Internal Revenue Code

“QUALIFIED TUITION AND RELATED EXPENSES”

- ☒ Tuition and fees required for the enrollment or attendance of the student
- ☒ Course-related fees, books, supplies and equipment

NOT “QUALIFIED TUITION AND RELATED EXPENSES”

- ☒ Room and board or travel expenses
- ☒ Tuition charged by a degree-granting for-profit school (e.g., University of Phoenix and certain vocational schools)



Taxability of Scholarship Grants

Tax Reporting and Withholding	
U.S. CITIZENS and RESIDENT ALIENS	NON-RESIDENT ALIENS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generally no need to report payments of scholarship grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report payments of scholarship grants to non-resident aliens to the IRS that do not fall within the definition of “qualified scholarships”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generally no need to withhold tax on the scholarship grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do withhold U.S. Federal income tax on such scholarship grants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to file IRS Form 1042-S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withholding rate is generally 30%, subject to reduction to 14% if the recipient is in the United States under certain visa categories (specifically, “F”, “J”, “M” or “Q”)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The public charity will be liable for any tax required to be withheld, independent of the liability of the non-resident alien receiving the scholarship grant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See IRS Publication 515 for additional detail



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