



# SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

## Handbook



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# INTRODUCTION

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This handbook provides a clear guide for members and committee members of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) on how to start, run, and deliver impactful outputs using best practices and available resources.

A SIG is a voluntary group which brings together marine professionals globally to focus on subject matters or maritime professional sectors to deliver activities and outputs where the IMarEST can contribute and add value aligned with the [IMarEST's mission, purpose, values, charitable purpose and strategic objectives](#).

As subject-matter specialists, SIG committee members are encouraged to contribute to the IMarEST's consultative work with external national and international organizations and governmental bodies. SIGs are also encouraged to convene conferences and deliver programmes of engagement on specialist topics.

Once established, SIGs are expected to be self-managing with all meetings, agendas, notes, and communication with SIG members. They are governed by a committee and are open to all members to participate directly or via correspondence, creating worldwide communities to support like-minded individuals.

## **The Technical Leadership Committee (TLC) and the SIGs Committee (SIGsC)**

The SIGs are overseen, coordinated, and supported by the SIGs Committee (SIGsC). The Technical Leadership Committee (TLC) provides thought leadership, strategic priority themes, and technical output sign-off to support the work of the SIGs.

The TLC and the SIGs Committee approve the establishment and monitor the work of the SIGs to ensure the technical outputs are relevant to the membership and add value to the wider Marine and Maritime community.

# STARTING A SIG

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## PROPOSAL FORM

- i. If you have an idea for a SIG that is not already covered by our existing portfolio, please submit the form template in the Appendix to [technical@imarest.org](mailto:technical@imarest.org).
- ii. This will be reviewed by the Technical and Policy Executive and submitted to the TLC and the SIGsC for approval.

Consideration should be taken to ensure there is appropriate voluntary support for a new SIG. The IMarEST Executive can issue a call to members to gain interest and support for committee membership.

## HOLDING THE FIRST MEETING

- i. Identify potential dates and times for a meeting using [Doodle](#).
- ii. Send out a calendar invite (Microsoft Teams or similar) to interested parties.

## Objectives of the first meeting

The objectives of the first meeting are:

- i. To appoint a SIG chair, vice chair and/or co-chairs, and an honorary secretary.
- ii. To detail the aims of the SIG, which should be outlined in an annual planning template (see appendix) on the purpose, direction, and timescale of the SIG.

The outputs from the SIG should be planned and recorded:

- Define the planned outputs and deliverables for the SIG to support the high-level outputs detailed in the SIG template.
- Identify what needs to be delivered and by when to deliver the planned outputs, and who the SIG will need to engage with and create a plan. This plan will evolve over time as the SIG matures.
- Share the plan with the Technical and Policy Team, the TLC and the SIGs Committee to enable alignment with the overall technical plan.

External experts can be invited to join meetings but for continued participation in SIGs we encourage contributors to have an active membership with IMarEST, unless explicitly stated otherwise in a Memorandum of Understanding.

Launch events such as roundtables, workshops, webinars, open invitation meetings, and/or mailers are encouraged and can be suggested by the SIG committee after the first meeting is held to engage with the wider membership and gather interest.

*Consideration should be given to participants from different locations and time zones.*

# CLOSING A SIG

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While SIGs are intended to be active, self-sustaining communities, there may be circumstances where a SIG reaches a natural conclusion or is no longer able to operate effectively. To ensure good governance and clarity for members, the following process outlines how a SIG may be formally closed.

## REASONS A SIG MAY CLOSE

- Sustained inactivity – the SIG has not met, produced outputs, or engaged members for a prolonged period (normally 6 months or more)
- Insufficient voluntary support – the SIG no longer has enough committee members to operate effectively (e.g. no Chair, no Secretary, or too few active committee members).
- Strategic realignment – the subject area is no longer aligned with the IMarEST’s strategic priorities or has been subsumed by other SIGs or programmes.
- Lack of community demand – low or declining interest from members or stakeholders.
- Completion of objectives – the SIG has successfully delivered its intended outputs and has reached a natural endpoint.

## CLOSURE INITIATION

- i. Committee of the SIG by majority agreement
- ii. The SIGs Committee (SIGSC) following a review of activity levels
- iii. The Technical and Policy Team, where operational viability is compromised.

## CLOSURE PROCESS

1. Initial assessment by the SIGsC and Technical and Policy Team to confirm reasons for closure.
2. Consultation with the committee of the SIG to review any alternative options such as merging with another SIG, recruiting new volunteers, or restructuring activity.
3. If the above have been completed and closure is still the recommended outcome, a closure statement will be prepared and disseminated to the membership via email and Connect.
4. The SIG webpage and Connect group will be archived, and any ongoing workstreams, commitments, or outputs will be reassigned to another SIG or working group.
5. Where relevant, a brief legacy summary may be published on the website to reflect the SIG’s contributions.

# STRUCTURE OF A SIG

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## **SIG Chair and Vice Chair (or Co-Chair)**

- Chair(s) should be an IMarEST Member or Fellow and members of the committee should be members of IMarEST. [Please see role descriptor.](#)

## **Honorary Secretary**

- The Honorary Secretary is responsible for setting up meeting, distributing the agenda in collaboration with the Chair(s), and the meeting minutes. [Please see role descriptor.](#)

## **SIG committee member**

- SIG committee Members meet regularly to fulfil the SIG's objectives and monitor progress. Early career participation is encouraged in the committee. [Please see role descriptor.](#)

*Members of the committee attend as individuals and bring their expertise but are not members of the committee to represent their own organisations.*

## **SIG Corresponding Members**

- Interested members of the IMarEST can sign up to the SIG community by signing into their [MyIMarEST](#) member portal, selecting My Special Interest Groups, and ticking the boxes of the SIGs they would like to join.
- Corresponding Members receive updates from the SIG Committee on activities and progress and can provide expert input, advice or opinion as needed through [Connect](#) or e-mail.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR RUNNING A SIG

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After the initial set up of a SIG, it is expected that the SIG is run autonomously, working closely with the Technical and Policy Team to communicate technical plans and outputs.

- i. Ensure the SIG has tangible outputs which can be delivered, such as publications, webinars, conferences, outreach, mentoring etc. Although outputs vary across SIGs in both format and timescale based on each SIG's aims, it is important that the outputs are clearly defined with a timescale for delivery in the annual planning template (see appendix).
- ii. Each meeting should have a clear agenda: Agenda and notes templates are available in the [Toolkit](#).
- iii. The committee can establish workstreams, sub-groups or task forces as appropriate to deliver planned outputs.
- iv. The committee should aim to meet at least quarterly (in person or remotely).
- v. Send quarterly updates to the TLC and SIGs Committee, which may also be shared with the corresponding SIG members and posted on the [SIG webpage](#) for access by the general public.
- vi. Support and encourage growth in membership via participation in the SIGs, particularly for early career professionals.
- vii. Oversee and engage with activity on the SIGs discussion channel on Connect.
- viii. Early Career Outreach: SIGs are encouraged to engage with students and early career professional activities. These can be career and university open days, conferences aimed at early career professionals, and creating content for students (career matrices, training courses). These activities should be coordinated with the Sea Your Future initiative by liaising with the Technical and Policy Team.
- ix. Engender positive behaviour. All SIG members are expected to abide by the SIG Committee Code of Conduct.

*More templates for running a SIG can be found in the SIG toolkit. See here for details on how to access the Toolkit.*

## SUPPORT FOR SIGS

SIG Committee Administration		
Arranging SIG Committee Meetings	Use Doodle poll for dates and times. Send out Teams link (via the Honorary Secretary or IMarEST executive)	Technical and Policy Team: <a href="mailto:technical@imarest.org">technical@imarest.org</a>
Meeting agenda/ notes/ minutes	Completed and distributed by nominated SIG committee member (usually Honorary Secretary).  Use SharePoint for agendas, notes and collaboration. Technical and Policy team will set up a SharePoint area.	
Communications		
Engaging wider SIG Corresponding Members using Connect	The Technical and Policy Team will ensure a Connect page is set up for your SIG.	Technical and Policy Team: <a href="mailto:technical@imarest.org">technical@imarest.org</a>
Blogs (on IMarEST website)	Send outline of your blog to Marketing and Communications Team.	Marketing and Communications Team: <a href="mailto:marketing@imarest.org">marketing@imarest.org</a>
News articles (on SIG webpage)	Submit news form in the SIG Toolkit (see Appendix)	Marketing and Communications Team: <a href="mailto:marketing@imarest.org">marketing@imarest.org</a>

Social Media	Send photo + short description for LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, X posts (especially relevant before/after events).	Marketing and Communications Team: <a href="mailto:marketing@imarest.org">marketing@imarest.org</a>
<b>Events</b>		
Webinars/Lectures /Panels	<p>Details should be submitted at least 6 weeks in advance for marketing purposes via the <a href="#">Events Submission Form</a> before the date to ensure maximum marketing. This is usually 2 SIG mailers and 1 e-marine mailer.</p> <p>Social media posts on request to the marketing team - see above).</p>	Events Team: <a href="mailto:events@imarest.org">events@imarest.org</a>
Conferences	Request a proposal form from the Events team. Events team will help organise and set up the conference.	
<b>Technical and Policy</b>		
White papers, literature reviews, position papers, scientific reports, other technical reports	<p>Once you have drafted the report, send it to the Technical and Policy team who will ensure it undergoes appropriate review from the TLC.</p> <p>The Technical and Policy team can help advise on technical activity.</p>	Technical and Policy Team: <a href="mailto:technical@imarest.org">technical@imarest.org</a>
Submissions to Policy Forums e.g. IMO	Once you have drafted the submission, send it to the Technical and Policy Team who will ensure it undergoes appropriate review from the TLC and appropriate representatives.	Technical and Policy Team: <a href="mailto:technical@imarest.org">technical@imarest.org</a>

Consultations	The Technical and Policy team can help communicate and advertise consultation opportunities and gather member input.	Technical and Policy Team: <a href="mailto:technical@imarest.org">technical@imarest.org</a>
Learning Management System	Send any suggestions for training courses on the IMarEST Learning platform to the Learning and Development team.	Learning and Development Team: <a href="mailto:develop@imarest.org">develop@imarest.org</a>

# APPENDIX

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## ANNUAL PLANNING TEMPLATE

SIG Information					
SIG Name				Lead Contact(s)	
Planning Year					
Objectives					
Vision and Mission	[State SIG's purpose and long-term goals]				
Key Outcomes	[Define what success looks like and how it will be measured]				
Collaboration					
Stakeholder Engagement	[List stakeholder or other SIGs to inform or involve]				
Resource Requirements	[Outline resources needed from Executive or others]				
Risk and Challenges	[Identify potential challenges]				
Planned Outputs					
Activity Name	Description	Lead Person	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Resources Needed

## NEW SIG PROPOSAL FORM

If you would like to start up a new Special Interest Group (SIG) please complete the form below for the SIGs Committee (SIGsC), Technical Leadership Committee (TLC), and the Technical and Policy Team to review.

Please send a completed form to [technical@imarest.org](mailto:technical@imarest.org).

SIG Operations	SIG Name*	
	SIG Chair/s Name*	
	SIG Secretary Name*	
	SIG Committee Members*	
SIG Background and Purpose	Strategic Content and Background* - how does this SIG fit into the wider marine/maritime industry?	
	Purpose of SIG* - how does this SIG fit into the strategic plan of the IMarEST?	
	SIG Goals and Objectives* - what does this SIG want to achieve?	
Stakeholders	Who are the 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties you will engage to achieve your objectives?	
SIG Outputs and Links	Key technical outputs/deliverables that the SIG wishes to produce* (can change overtime) - how does this SIG want to achieve the above? - what are you going to produce?	
	SIG Regulatory and Policy Links - what forums does this SIG want to be involved in? (If any)	
	Links to other SIGs - what other SIGs can this SIG collaborate with? (If any)	

## **ACCESSING THE SIG TOOLKIT**

1. *Please note that before attempting this you must be logged into the site - you can do this by selecting 'Login' from the top-right of the site homepage.*
2. Visit your SIG page. You can find this by visiting 'Communities' at the top of the website, selecting 'Special Interest Groups', and searching from the list of SIGs.
3. Access the SIG Toolkit from the blue box on the right of your SIG page. This is only accessible to SIG Committee Members and looks like the below photo.

