INSTITUTE OF MARINE
Engineering, Science & Technology

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS
Handbook

Contents

1. Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this document is to act as a guide for the IMarEST Special Interest Groups (SIGs). It explains how to set up and run a SIG by providing tools and best practice. It is to be used alongside the SIG Toolkit where templates and supporting tools are stored. Access to the SIG Toolkit is only available for IMarEST SIG Committee Members.

2. What is a Special Interest Group (SIG)?

2.1. Definition.

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 vision, charitable objectives, and strategic plan.

They provide multidisciplinary forums which aim to address technical challenges, enable the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and best practice. SIGs provide independent scientific, engineering and technological advice both within the membership and across the wider IMarEST stakeholder community to deliver public benefit. As subject-matter specialists, SIG Committee Members are encouraged to contribute to IMarEST's consultative work with external national and international organisations and governmental bodies.

SIGs are established where there is **sufficient member resource**, capability and expertise and their activity is overseen by the IMarEST Technical Leadership Board (TLB) with events, marketing and communications and technical and policy assistance provided by the IMarEST Executive.

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

2.2. How is a SIG structured?

An IMarEST member can be part of a SIG as either a chair (or co-chairs) or honorary secretary, a committee member, or a corresponding member:

i. SIG Chair (or Co-Chairs) and Honorary Secretary
   - The SIG is led by a chair or co-chairs and an honorary secretary.

ii. SIG Committee Member
   - The SIG committee is a core group of members, including subject matter experts.
   - SIG Committee Members meet regularly to develop the SIG goals, objectives and technical programme and monitor progress.
   - SIG Committee Members review and agree work streams and the creation of technical outputs to deliver the SIG goals and objectives.
   - Members of the committee attend as individuals and bring their expertise but are not members of the committee to represent their own organisations.

iii. 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.

SIGs are expected to co-create and collaborate with each other, where synergies are identified. In

planning outputs SIGs identify opportunities to work together to maximise value to the IMarEST.

2.3.   The Technical Leadership Board (TLB) and SIGs

The SIGs are overseen and coordinated by the Technical Leadership Board (TLB). The TLB is one of six committees of the IMarEST Council. The TLB approves the establishment and monitor the work of the SIGs to ensure the technical outputs are relevant to the membership, wider stakeholders and provide public good.

The TLB, (which includes the SIG Chairs as of February 2023), meet regularly on a formal basis and informal dialogue is encouraged outside the formal meeting schedules.

3. How to start a new SIG

3.1.   Purpose of a SIG

SIGs set their own objectives and define their own planned outputs, which can be as broad or specific as the group likes, but generally there are three key requirements of a SIG:

i.   Inform the membership of legislative and technical developments in the topic area;

ii.   Provide a forum for members with shared topical interest to meet, network and exchange information;

iii. Provide a broader, outward facing, source of information for non-members, and wider stakeholders on specific topics.

As subject matter experts and/or sector experts SIG members are encouraged to contribute to the wider IMarEST technical and policy work which may fall outside the direct work of the TLB. The IMarEST Executive will be able to advise and support as needed.

3.2.   Send a proposal to the IMarEST Technical and Policy Team

A new SIG starts with a proposal to the Technical and Policy Team:

i.   Complete a New SIG Proposal Template by requesting a form from the Technical and Policy Team and send the completed form to technical@imarest.org.

ii.   The IMarEST Technical and Policy Team will review and provide feedback on the proposal prior to sending the final version to the TLB for approval.

Notes:

• The IMarEST Technical and Policy Team will support the initial set up process for a new SIG.

• When proposing a new SIG and its committee, consideration should be given to colleagues or experts who would be able to support this SIG. A SIG Committee should aim for 8-10 members.

• Any additional supporting information can be provided as appropriate.

3.3.   Hold the first meeting

Once approval to set up a SIG has been given and the SIG Committee Members identified, the first meeting can be held.

i.   Gather all the SIG Committee Member emails and names and send to the Technical and Policy Team technical@imarest.org.

ii.   Identify potential dates and times for the meeting (a Doodle Poll can be used for this).

iii. Send out a calendar invite (a Microsoft Teams meeting or similar) – the Executive will help with this.

Objectives of the first meeting:
- The objectives of the first meeting are to establish a SIG Committee, appoint a SIG chair(s), an honorary secretary and agree the main purpose of the SIG.

Notes:

- The IMarEST Executive can issue a call to members to gain interest and support for committee membership.
- It should be noted that the Chair(s) should be an IMarEST Member or Fellow and members of the committee should be members of IMarEST.
- External experts can be invited to join meetings but for continued participation in SIGs will be encouraged to have an active membership with IMarEST.
- Consideration should be given to participants from different locations and time zones.

3.4.   Establish the SIG planned outputs

The outputs from the SIG should be planned and recorded:

i. Define the planned outputs and deliverables for the SIG to support the high-level outputs detailed in the SIG template.
ii. 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.
iii. Share the plan with the Technical and Policy Team and the TLB to enable alignment with the overall technical plan.

Notes:

- Launch events such as a roundtable, workshop, webinar or open invitation meeting and a SIG Mailer is encouraged and can be suggested by the SIG Committee after the first meeting is held to engage with the wider membership and gather interest.

4. How to run a SIG

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.

4.1.   SIG Committee Responsibilities

i.   Ensure the SIG has tangible outputs which can be delivered. Although outputs vary across SIGs in both format and timescale based on each SIGs aims, it is important that the outputs are clearly defined with a timescale for delivery.
ii.   The committee can establish workstreams, sub-groups or task forces as appropriate to deliver planned outputs.
iii.   The committee should aim to meet at least quarterly (in person or remotely).
iv.   Send a letter from the Chair(s) at least once a year as an update on what the SIG has been doing and what it wants to do next. This should be distributed to the TLB, corresponding SIG members and posted on the SIG webpage for access by the general public.
v.   Source and provide content for the SIG webpage.
vi.   Support and encourage growth in membership via participation in the SIGs.
vii.   Oversee and engage with activity on the SIGs discussion channel (Discourse).
viii.   Engender positive behaviour. All SIG members are expected to abide by the IMarEST Rules of Professional Conduct (See SIG Toolkit).

Notes:

- Depending on the aims, number of meetings and technical outputs of the SIG, the typical volunteer time for a SIG Committee Member is between 2-5 hours per month. Across the year this equates to 3-8 days.

4.2.   Chair and Honorary Secretary; additional Responsibilities

In addition to their responsibilities as a committee member, SIG Chair (or Co-Chairs) and/or the honorary secretary are responsible for:

i.   Arranging the SIG committee meetings, setting the agenda, and ensuring minutes or notes are taken as needed and communicated as appropriate.
ii.   Ensuring the activities of the SIG are communicated to the TLB and Technical and Policy Team.
iii.   Participating in the TLB. It is expected that each SIG will be represented at the TLB. Usually this will be the chair (or co-chair) – although it may be delegated to another committee member.

Notes:

- In addition to the 2-5 hour per month commitment of a committee member, TLB participants are expected to attend four 2-hour TLB meetings. Across the year this equates

to an additional day. Plus any additional work an individual volunteers for to assist with delivering the TLB's tasks.

4.3.   Best Practice for running a SIG Effectively

Experience has provided some pointers to ensure that the SIG Committee is successful:

i.   Have regular meetings: It is advised meetings are at least every quarter. Some SIGs have monthly or bi-monthly meetings.
ii.   Have a clear agenda: Chairs should write an agenda and make it available to their committee before the start of a meeting via shared storage (currently Google Drive but this will be migrated to SharePoint). *Template available in SIG Toolkit*.
iii.   Have a clear plan of the technical outputs for the SIG: maintain a calendar of deliverables and events. *Template available in SIG Toolkit.*
iv.   Have a clear action plan and log for the SIG Committee Members. *Template available in SIG Toolkit.*

Notes:

- Typical output for a SIG should be at least two main technical outputs (technical report, policy submission) and two minor technical outputs (technical webinar, news article) every year. Templates available in SIG Toolkit.
- Make sure the technical activities are in line with the Institute's strategy and charitable objectives.

4.4.   SIG outputs and communication channels

4.4.1. SIG Technical Outputs

Outputs from SIGs can take many forms including:

i.   Events: webinars, technical lectures, panel discussions, conferences, exhibitions, and other events. For IMarEST hosted events submit the events submission form via the SIG Toolkit. See Appendix 1.
ii.   Technical reports: white papers, position papers, technical reports, other reports. The Technical and Policy Team can help research and write technical outputs.
iii.   Policy: submissions to policy forums via the IMarEST and reviewed by the TLB.
iv.   Early Career Outreach: SIGs are encouraged to engage with students and early career professional activities. These can take many forms such as career and university open days, conferences aimed at early career professionals, and creating content for students (Career matrix, training courses). These activities should be coordinated with the Sea Your Future initiative by liaising with the Technical and Policy Team.

4.4.2. SIG Communication Channels

There are various communications channels available to SIGs to communicate internally, or external to the SIG:

i.   SIG Mailers: this can be a SIG update, or a Letter from the Chair and is sent specifically to the SIG corresponding members (those who have signed up to be part of the SIG).
ii.   SIG Webpage: news article on the SIG webpage (template available in the SIG Toolkit), this can be viewed by the public. See Appendix 1.
iii.   Discourse: engagement on topics of interest submitted either by the committee or by members of the SIG using the Discourse platform. Each SIG has its own Discourse Channel. Discourse is only available to members.
iv.   IMarEST Blogs: submit a technical blog for the IMarEST website. These can be viewed by the public.
v.   Magazine and Newsletter Articles: submit a news article to be added to the Marine Professional or one of four e-newsletters.
vi.   Social Media: submit a social media post to the marketing and communications team to increase your SIG visibility and presence, particularly after an event (photos are welcome).
vii.   IMarEST TV: where recorded events are posted for IMarEST members (webinars, seminars, workshops).
viii.   Volunteering Opportunities Webpage: submit a request to the Technical and Policy Team to find new SIG chairs, co-chairs, secretaries, or committee members for the SIG.

Notes

- The IMarEST has various channels that are used by the Marketing team to publicize the activities of the Institute, including that of the SIGs. These include the website, IMarEST TV, the marine professional (online and in print), and social media channels. They have an insatiable appetite for content, and so may (unsolicited) pick up on topics of interest and promote items of interest through these various channels.

5. Support for SIGs

Support is available to the SIGs from across the Executive:

SIG Activity	Description	How to do it	Who to contact
SIG Committee Admin	Arranging SIG Committee Meetings	Arranged by SIG chair(s) or secretary. • Doodle poll is effective to try and find a date. • A teams meeting sent by one of the committee members, or if you have the details, the T&P Team can send it out.	Technical and Policy Team: technical@imarest.org
	Meeting agenda/ notes/ minutes (Google Drive or Sharepoint)	Completed and distributed by nominated SIG committee member. • Google drive (to be migrated to Sharepoint) is effective for sharing the agenda and taking notes, minutes. Also good for collaborating on technical documents. The T&P Team will set this area up.	
Communication			
Engaging wider SIG audience (corresponding members)	Mailers: Letter from the Chair, SIG update	SIG committee - draft mailer and send to the marketing and communications team.	Marketing and Communications Team: marketing@imarest.org
	Discourse	SIG committee - engage with Discourse platform and member contributions.	Technical and Policy Team: technical@imarest.org
Blogs and news articles	Blogs (on IMarEST website)	SIG committee - send outline for a blog to the marketing and communications team.	Marketing and Communications Team: marketing@imarest.org
	News articles (on SIG webpage)	SIG committee – see SIG toolkit (See Appendix 1).	
	News articles (Marine Professional, e-newsletters, Press releases)	SIG committee – discuss idea and content (or submit material) to the marketing and communications team.	

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Social Media	Social media posts on IMarEST accounts (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, X)	Send a photo/brief description for a social media post to be posted on your behalf to increase your SIG visibility. Especially relevant before or after an event.	Marketing and Communications Team: marketing@imarest.org
Events Should be submitted at least 6 weeks before the date to ensure maximum marketing (2 SIG mailers, 1-2 events mailers, and a social media post)	Webinars, Technical Lectures, Panel Discussions etc	Request completed yourself via events submission form through the SIG toolkit (See Appendix 1). Events team will set up the event for you.	Events Team: events@imarest.org
	Conferences	Request completed yourself. Events team will set up the event for you. Ask the events team for a proposal form.	
Technical and Policy			
Technical	White papers, literature reviews, position papers, scientific reports, other technical reports	Write technical report, send it to T&P team who will arrange for the TLB to review . The Technical and Policy Team can help advise on technical activity and can help research and write the report.	Technical and Policy Team: technical@imarest.org
Policy	Submissions to Policy Forums (e.g. IMO)	Write policy, send it to T&P team who will arrange for the TLB to review it. The Technical and Policy Team can advise on policy development and help research and write the policy.	Technical and Policy Team: technical@imarest.org
	Consultations	The T&P Team can also help communicate policy consultation activity and solicit input from the IMarEST membership.	

6. Appendix

6.1.   Appendix 1. Using the SIG Toolkit

Accessing the SIG toolkit

Please note that you must be logged into the IMarEST site - you can do this by selecting 'Login' from the top-right of the site homepage.

1. Visit the SIG page (you can find this by visiting 'Professional Community' at the top of the website, selecting 'Special Interest Groups' and searching from the list of SIGs).
   https://www.imarest.org/professional-community/special-interest-groups.html

2. Access the SIG Toolkit from the blue box on the right of the page (this is only accessible to SIG Committee Members).

Submit SIG news and upcoming events via the SIG toolkit here.

Access Toolkit
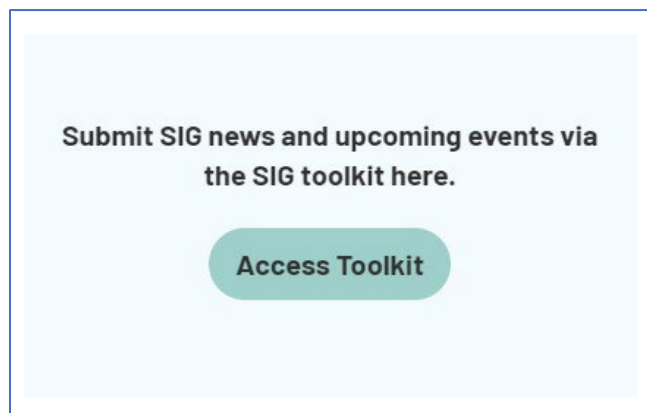
Submitting event details using the event template

1. Fill out the form with as much detail as possible. Please note that to make the most of the marketing options available, it is advised to submit events no later than **6 weeks** in advance.
2. Events include webinars, workshops, panel discussions, networking events (virtual, hybrid and in-person), please do not submit conference proposals through this link. For conferences, the conference proposal form should be requested from the events team and completed at least nine months in advance.

Submitting SIG news for the IMarEST website using the template

1. Complete all sections on the page. The 'Description' box contains the body of the story, and the 'Title' box is for an informative title to the article. The 'Teaser' is a short line of text that briefly explains what the article is about.
2. You must attach an image to be used as a banner. The dimensions for this are 1800x300 pixels if you want the picture to be crystal clear, but it's not crucial.
3. SIG News includes webinars and work that the SIG has done, new and interesting research being done in the field, new standards/ guidelines/ policy/ regulations coming into effect, committee member 'successes' (either work or SIG related), i.e. any interesting news relating to the SIGs area of interest.

*Template*s

The SIG Toolkit contains templates to help run your SIGs efficiently:

1. **Meeting Agenda**: this template is for detailing the agenda for the meeting and capturing notes and actions as the meeting progresses. It can be used as a shared 'live' document, potentially with multiple participants contributing during online meetings.
2. **Action Log**: this will help you organise your tasks and assign committee members to certain tasks. Remember to assign owners of tasks and required dates for the actions to be completed.
3. **Calendar**: this will help planning of tasks and other events and key dates for the year. This should be used as a rolling calendar.

Working versions of these documents should be kept in the shared repository (Google Drive or SharePoint).