



POLICY ON INTEREST GROUP FORMING, DISBANDING, AND REORGANIZING

FORMING A NEW INTEREST GROUP

The process of forming a new Interest Group (IG) proceeds through two phases: (1) Gaining approval as a “Provisional Interest Group” and (2) Gaining approval as a “Permanent Interest Group.”

Becoming a “Provisional Interest Group”

To become a Provisional Interest Group, those seeking to form a new IG will first submit a proposal to the Executive Committee (EC) of the SMS. This proposal describes how a new Interest Group will further the interests of the SMS and its members. To this end, such proposals should (1) briefly describe the new IG, (2) briefly summarize its proposed purposes and domain, (3) discuss possible overlaps between this domain and the domains of other currently existing IGs, (4) provide indicators of demand among current and potential members of the SMS for this new IG, (5) identify, by name, individuals who have agreed to serve on the Founding Executive Committee of the new IG—as Founding Chair, Founding Program Chair, and Founding Assistant Program Chair, (6) describe how and when elections will be held to nominate and elect members of the IG’s Executive Committee and Assistant Program Chair, and (7) discuss plans to encourage competitive submissions for the annual conference along with plans for other pre-conference and conference sessions.

All such proposals are submitted to the EC, in writing, for comment. After possible revisions, the proposal will be distributed to the leadership teams of other IGs for additional comment. This might lead to further revisions of the proposal. The EC will then consider a final revised proposal. If supported by the EC, the revised proposal will be distributed to the Board of Directors. If the majority of the Board of Directors supports the proposal, the proposed IG will be granted the status of a “Provisional Interest Group.”

Once approved, a Provisional IG will have all the same rights and responsibilities as a Permanent IG. As with other IGs, the number of sessions that a Provisional IG has on the program of the annual conference will be a function of the number of submissions it receives. A Provisional IG can also submit proposals for plenary or semi-plenary sessions during the annual conference, can develop content for Sunday sessions of the conference, distribute an electronic newsletter, and in all other ways act as an IG. A Provisional IG’s initial budget allocation will be established through discussions among members of the Founding Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the SMS, and will reflect an estimate of the number of people likely to join this new IG. All subsequent budgets will be determined based on the number of members of the IG, the same way as other IGs.

Becoming a “Permanent Interest Group”

Sometime within three years of being granted status as a Provisional IG, the Executive Committee of a Provisional IG can apply for status as a Permanent IG. It does this by forwarding to the EC a report that describes how the group has implemented the plans it articulated in its proposal to become a Provisional IG and how the group has continued to meet the needs of the SMS and its members.

Changing the status of a Provisional IG to that of a Permanent IG requires a majority vote of SMS Board of Directors following a recommendation by the EC. Once an Interest Group is granted this permanent status, it will continue as an IG unless it fails to meet IG requirements described in other SMS policies. If a Provisional IG is not granted the status of a Permanent IG within three years of its founding, it will be disbanded.

DISBANDING A CURRENT INTEREST GROUP

For a variety of reasons, an IG may no longer serve the interests of current and potential SMS members. In these settings, it may be appropriate to disband a current IG. Possible indicators of the need to disband a current IG might include: (1) very low numbers of IG submissions to the annual conference program, (2) very low number of IG members, (3) an inability to find people willing to stand for election in an IG, and so forth.

A member or leader in an IG, the EC, or a member of the Board of Directors can propose the disbanding of an IG. This is done by developing a report on the status of the IG in question that suggests why an IG should no longer be operated. This report is then submitted to the EC, where it is discussed, and after which it may be revised. If the EC concludes that a revised proposal may have merit, it then is forwarded to the Board of Directors where it is discussed, after which it may again be revised.

If, after this process, the majority of the Board of Directors supports the (revised) report's conclusions, it is forwarded to the current Executive Committee of the IG in question for comments and a formal written response. This formal written response could include plans for how this IG will improve its performance going forward. If no formal response from an IG is forthcoming in a reasonable period of time, then the process of disbanding an IG will continue.

The Board of Directors will consider the final report and any formal response from the IG in question. By a majority vote of the Board, this IG can be put on "formal probation." Alternatively, by majority vote, the Board can conclude that an IG should not be put on formal probation and it will continue in good standing.

Formal probation means that, unless the IG in question substantially improves its performance over the next two years, it will be formally disbanded. During formal probation, an IG will continue to receive funding and support consistent with the funding and support of IGs in good standing.

No later than two years after being put on formal probation, an IG's final status will be considered. If the Board concludes that an IG has not significantly improved its performance during its time on formal probation, it can, by majority vote, disband an IG. Alternatively, if the Board concludes that an IG has significantly improved its performance, it can, by majority vote, return an IG to good standing.

REORGANIZING AN EXISTING INTEREST GROUP

From time to time, it may be necessary to reorganize one or more IGs. Such reorganizations could take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to: (1) significant changes to an IG's domain statement, (2) changing an IG's name, (3) merging two previously separate IGs, and so forth. Some of these proposed changes may not be covered under policies outlined above.

In such situations, a proposal is submitted to the EC, in writing, for comment. After possible revisions, the proposal will be distributed to the leadership teams of other IGs for additional comment and possible further revisions. The EC will then consider a final revised proposal and might recommend it to the Board of Directors for action. If the majority of the Board of Directors supports the proposal, the proposal will be implemented according to the time table included in the proposal.