

# Guidance for SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



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# 1. Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this document is to act as guide for the IMarEST Special Interest Groups (SIGs). It explains how to set up a new SIG and run it by providing tools and best practice. It is to be used alongside the [SIG toolkit](#) where all the templates and tools are stored. Access to the toolkit is only available for IMarEST members that are a member of an existing SIG.

## 1.1 What is a SIG?

A SIG is a voluntary group which brings together marine professionals globally to focus on subject matters or maritime professional sectors to deliver technical activity based on identified issues where 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 and 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 members are encouraged to contribute to IMarEST's consultative work with external national and international organizations 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 functional assistance provided by the IMarEST Technical. They are governed by a committee of members and are open for all members to participate directly or via correspondence, creating worldwide communities to support like-minded individuals.

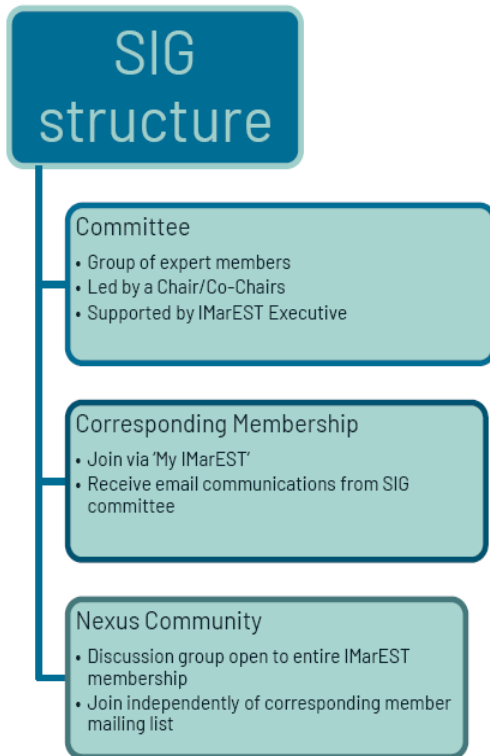
## 1.2 Organisational Structure and Governance



The [TLB](#) is one of four committees of the IMarEST Council. One its main responsibilities is to approve the establishment and monitor the work of SIGs to ensure the technical outputs are relevant and meaningful to the membership, wider stakeholders and importantly, provide public good.

### 1.3 SIG structure

SIGs are structured in 3 tiers of communities; details on the responsibilities are in [How to run a Special Interest Group \(SIG\)](#)



#### I. Committee

- Core group of expert members that meet regularly to develop the SIG programme and monitor progress;
- Committees review and agree work streams and the creation of outputs to deliver the SIG goals and objectives;
- Members of the committee attend as individuals and bring their expertise but do not represent their own organisations;
- Committees can use closed [Nexus](#) groups to manage committee-only matters.

#### II. Corresponding members

- Interested members can sign-up to a SIG mailing list by updating the SIG checklist through the '[My IMarEST](#)' portal;
- Corresponding members receive updates from the SIG committee on activities and progress and can provide expert input, advice or opinion as needed;

#### III. Nexus community

- Members can sign up to open discussion groups in the member-only platform [Nexus](#);
- SIG Nexus groups are hosted by committee members and provide a platform for members to raise questions, open topical discussions and share polls and events.

SIGs are empowered to work independently and 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.

SIG Chairs meet with the TLB twice a year on a formal basis and informal dialogue is encouraged outside the formal meeting schedules. Members of the TLB act as champions for technical themes and can assist in coordination of output related to the technical themes across SIGs.

A list of current IMarEST SIGs can be found [here](#).

For any queries regarding SIGs activities members can contact the [Chair of individual SIGs whose details are provided on the SIG webpage](#) or [technical@imarest.org](mailto:technical@imarest.org).

## 2. How to start a new Special Interest Group (SIG)

### 1 Send a proposal for a SIG to the IMarEST Technical

- I. The IMarEST technical team support the initial process to setup a new SIG;
- II. The proposer should complete the [SIG template](#) and send to [technical@imarest.org](mailto:technical@imarest.org);
- III. Any IMarEST member can propose a new SIG;
- IV. When proposing a new SIG consideration should be given to colleagues or experts who would be able to support this SIG;
- V. Any additional supporting information can be provided as appropriate;
- VI. The IMarEST technical team will review and provide feedback on the proposal prior to sending the final version to the TLB for approval.

### 2 Hold a SIG Kick-off meeting

- I. IMarEST technical team will facilitate a kick-off meeting in coordination with the SIG proposer, all meetings have a digital-first approach to allow any member globally to participate virtually;
- II. Launch events such as a roundtable, workshop or open invitation meeting can be suggested as the kick-off meeting;
- III. The outcomes of the kick-off meeting are to establish a SIG committee, appoint a SIG chair(s) and agree the main purpose of the SIG;
- IV. It should be noted that the Chair(s) should be an IMarEST Member or Fellow and members of the committee should also be members of IMarEST;
- V. The IMarEST Executive can issue a call to members to gain interest and support for committee membership. External experts can be invited to join meetings but for continued participation in SIGs will be encouraged to have an active membership with IMarEST.

### 3 Establish the SIG planned outputs

- I. Define the planned outputs and deliverables for the SIG as detailed in the SIG template;
- II. Identify what is needed to deliver these outputs and who the SIG will need to engage with;
- III. This will evolve over time as the SIG matures;
- IV. The planned outputs will be shared with the technical team and the TLB to ensure alignment with the technical themes.

## 3. How to run a Special Interest Group (SIG)

### 3.1 Objectives

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 policy work which may fall outside the direct work of the TLB. IMarEST Executive will be able to advise and support as needed.

### 3.2 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 in the [SIG template](#) with a timescale for delivery;
- II. The committee can establish workstreams, sub-groups or task forces as appropriate to deliver these planned outputs;
- III. The committee should aim to meet at least quarterly (in person or remotely);
- IV. Send a [letter from the Chair](#) (s) following each committee meeting highlighting what has been done and what is planned, that is 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. The Chair will attend a meeting with the TLB twice a year to provide an update on progress and new planned outputs;
- VII. Support and encourage growth in membership via participation in the SIGs;
- VIII. Engender positive behaviour. All SIG members are expected to abide by the [IMarEST Rules of Professional Conduct](#).

### 3.3 Hosting a SIG Committee meeting

- I. SIG chairs are responsible for arranging dates for SIG committee meetings;
- II. Details of the meeting tools, activity management tools and support available from the technical team are provided in the SIG toolkit – [overview of SIG management tools](#).

### 3.4 Types of technical output

Examples of technical outputs include but are not limited to;

- I. Events, roundtables and workshops; these can be for corresponding members or include non-IMarEST members. If you would like to host an event, the [event proposal form](#) can be found in the SIG toolkit;
- II. Technical lectures; if you would like to host this remotely or livestream a lecture details on [hosting remote events](#) can be found in the SIG toolkit;
- III. Contribution to IMarEST publications (including technical journals, Marine Professional and books);
- IV. Best practice guidance documents;
- V. Policy positions and activities; if you would like to propose a [policy activity a template form](#) is provided in the SIG toolkit;
- VI. Engagement with Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) for example submission of papers to the IMO; the [process for IMO submission](#) can be found in the SIG toolkit;
- VII. Contribution of technical expertise to [Public consultations and Inquiries](#).

In order to achieve some objectives or activities there is an increasing need to secure extra external funds either from working with industry partners or through the application to public funding bodies and foundations. SIGs are encouraged to work with engagement partners to help sponsor specific activities/thought leadership projects and broaden outreach (examples are given in the [Think Media Pack](#)). Additionally, IMarEST may support SIGs to submit funding bids for specific projects, the [process for applying for external funding](#) can be found in the SIG toolkit.

The IMarEST holds an extremely privileged position of having formal recognition across a range of intergovernmental organisations at a level unrivalled by similar organisations of our kind. Our contributions to the (inter)governmental decision-making process support the development of unambiguous, technically informed, scientifically supported and practically implementable outcomes. As subject-matter specialists, SIG members are encouraged to contribute to IMarEST's consultative work with external national and international organizations and governmental bodies. The [processes for participating in IMarEST's IGO representation](#) can be found in the SIG toolkit.

The dissemination of the outputs to the relevant audiences should be considered when planning technical activities to undertake.

### 3.5 SIG communication channels

There is a vast range of communications channels through which the SIG technical outputs can be disseminated both to the corresponding members, wider membership, external IMarEST stakeholders and general public.

A full description is available in the [SIG communications guide](#) in the SIG toolkit and the IMarEST Executive can advise on communication channels and how best to use them.

### 3.6 SIG Toolkit

- I. A [SIG toolkit](#) is available to all SIG committee members and visible on the member tab once logged in to the IMarEST website. This is a library of reference documents, templates and copies of processes that relate to SIG activity. Members can request any new guidance to be added to this toolkit;
- II. All SIGs have a dedicated shared drive on GSuite, this platform provides storage and a collaborative workspace;
- III. SIGs are also encouraged to collaborate where there are overlapping interests with other SIGs and when new groups are launched members are encouraged to engage with other SIGs and get advice from active groups, (e.g. on how to run a SIG, how to develop engaging content etc.)

### 3.7 Review of SIGs

A periodic review of SIG committee membership will be conducted by the IMarEST Executive in conjunction with the chair(s) of the SIG to ensure:

- I. Membership composition is correctly recorded;
- II. The contact details of members are up to date;
- III. Members are aware of their responsibility to abide by the [IMarEST Rules of Professional Conduct](#).

## 4. SIG engagement with IMarEST Branch community

The global branch network is a key member community and provides members with a networking platform and local events programme. Most of the specialist fields covered by the SIGs are based on global issues, and SIG events and committees can be linked with branch programmes.

[Branch officer details](#) are freely available to all IMarEST members on the website. SIG members should be encouraged to join local branches to maximise their member benefits and to provide a link for proposing joint activities.

The branches are responsible for their own local events and will need to liaise with SIG speakers directly and follow existing protocols for any live or recorded events. Branch officers will be kept informed of active SIGs in their own toolkit including main points of contact so that branch officers can communicate directly with SIGs to organise events such as a technical lecture, “meet-the-SIG” panel/interviews, contribution to judging panels for branch events etc.

Similarly, SIGs can be given a summary of their corresponding membership which will give an overview of their total number of members and general geographic patterns. SIG committees are encouraged to plan events that can support their corresponding membership for example



live events in relevant time zones and connecting with local branches, or working with branches to identify local/national public consultations that members can support with the SIGs.

Ad hoc calls for branch officers and SIG members can be arranged on demand. Branch officers can request to attend SIG meetings in order to discuss opportunities for developing new events. Branch officers will be invited to contribute to joint sessions for the IMarEST annual conference.

## 5. Support for SIG Chairs and Committee Members

IMarEST Executive will be able to advise on any SIG activities and opportunities and will provide operational support to facilitate SIG outputs, each committee will be responsible for setting and delivering their group's activities. Executive support for SIG committees will include:

- Facilitation and management of committee meetings [which will be led by the Chair] and communications with SIG committee and SIG corresponding members as detailed in the [SIG management tools](#);
- Planning and logistics support for SIG planned events as agreed in the [Event proposal](#) ;
- Review technical publications and copy-edit any documents before publication;
- Facilitate participation in IGO activities or consultations including the internal review and approval with the TLB and submission on behalf of IMarEST;
- Facilitate development of web pages and training [for dedicated volunteer editors from the SIGs] to manage the SIG website;
- Support for posting on IMarEST communications channels as detailed in the [SIG communication channels](#);
- Encourage participation with SIGs across the IMarEST network;
- Encourage new, young and international members to participate in SIGs;
- Support the distribution of the letter from the SIG chair;
- Provide examples of planned outputs from other SIGs, especially for new SIGs;
- Encourage co-creation and cross collaboration across the SIGs;
- Liaise on behalf of all SIGs at TLB meetings.

TLB support:

- SIG Chairs will be added to a [private Nexus group for SIG Chair and TLB members](#) to correspond directly;
- TLB members will act as champions for technical themes and can support in coordination of technical theme outputs;
- Encourage co-creation and collaboration across SIGs;
- Host workshops twice a year with SIG chairs to share experiences, plan technical outputs and provides updates on wider technical leadership activities;
- Support in dissemination of outputs across networks and connect SIGs with relevant external stakeholder where appropriate;
- Resolution of any conflicting matters on opposing opinions.