**Interest Group Guidelines**

[Revised in Motion 149E-43B (June 2022). Restated in Motion 102-27D; adopted in discussion item 94/23 (May 1995); also see discussion item 93/NB/21 (September 1994); revised in motion 140B-27.2 (November 2017).]

**Role**

The role of an interest group within the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) is to foster the creation of networks through which members who share intellectual interests and/or professional issues can come together to exchange information and discuss common issues. An interest group is an informal, self-selected, self-governing group approved by the Board of Directors (Board). It is a part of SAA for which SAA is legally responsible and liable.

***Length of Existence and Procedural Information***

An interest group will continue as long as the membership continues to meet the minimum requirement for number of members, providing that the group reports annually each fall (please see below for reporting requirements), as well as maintains an organizer or organizers as outlined in their formation plan to the Board.

The interest group leadership is responsible for their self-governance as well as the procedures for implementing their process for selecting and rotating organizers/co-organizers. Procedural information should be passed down from organizer to organizer.

In 2018, the Society implemented iMIS Communities, a module from SAA’s database management system that creates an e-Community. It is a webpage “bulletin board” that is viewable by members of the interest group and serves as a type of archive for that interest group.

***Scope of Interest Groups***

Interest groups may not issue public statements or make unapproved commitments. Interest groups must make sure that any activities undertaken are in line with current Board policy. Interest groups, unlike committees and task forces, are not advisory to the Board. This does not preclude interest groups from raising Board awareness on appropriate issues.

***Board Oversight and Interest Group Reporting***

The executive director, an ex-officio member of the Board, is responsible for oversight of all interest groups, and all interest group reports will be sent to the executive director in the fall. Any issues that require Board attention will be brought forward from the interest group through the executive director to the Board.

**Formation**

***Timing to Submit Interest Group Proposals to the Board***

Before forming an SAA interest group, organizers must prepare a proposal for Board approval. New interest group proposals are generally only reviewed at the spring meetings of the Board. The reason for this timing is that an interest group, when approved, must be added to the membership forms for the coming year in order for members to be able to join. The deadline for documents for the spring meeting can be from early January to early February, depending on the dates of the annual meeting that year.

***Proposal Content***

The proposal must contain a concise statement that articulates the following:

* the proposed group’s unique area(s) of interest and concern, consistent with the mission of the SAA
* needs the interest group will address
* a statement of purpose
* services or activities the interest group will deliver and the resources required to do so; and
* a procedure for selecting (and rotating) the leadership.

The statement of purpose will be used in SAA promotions, communications, and billings as appropriate. An interest group must maintain a minimum participation of 50 SAA members, and the proposal should include the signatures of at least 50 participants. Signatures may be submitted digitally, but backup emails for the signatures must be retained by the organizer(s). All signatories must be members at the time the proposal is submitted as well as at the time the proposal is approved. A call for participation may be carried in *The SAA Archaeological Record,* once interest group formation has been approved and space for such a call is requested from the editor.

**Activities**

***Annual Meeting Activities***

An interest group may request space for one meeting at the SAA Annual Meeting and may submit proposals for symposia, forums, workshops, or special events (e.g., a field trip) that will be identified as being sponsored by the interest group. All field trip logistics will be handled by SAA staff for insurance purposes. The interest group should work with the Local Advisory Committee (who will work with SAA staff) on proposed field trips. The deadline for field trip proposals is July 1, in the year prior to the meeting.

Given the growth in numbers of interest groups, SAA will schedule meetings of all new interest groups for Friday evening after the business meeting, using session rooms. This has benefitted many of the interest groups who wish to make use of the AV equipment for their meetings.

***Email Communications***

An interest group organizer can request SAA staff send out an email message at any time to the members of the interest group. Because membership changes from day-to-day, SAA handles the blast email. The interest group organizer is asked to provide full text of the final message and the subject line. SAA staff will schedule the email in the first available slot. (Please note that there may be a small delay if there are other emails already in the queue.)

***Newsletters***

SAA will publish digital newsletters for an interest group that provides copy. Interest groups may suggest special publications by submitting a proposal to the Publications Committee. Newsletters will be produced in accordance with the SAA’s editorial policies and production procedures. All newsletters are subject to review in order to ensure that accurate information about the Society is being distributed as well as to ensure that all permissions are secured for images and photographs. Interest group publications must include both the interest group name and the Society for American Archaeology’s name and/or logo.

***Social Media***

Because the e-Community is available only to members of the interest group and because the e-Community functionality is limited (e.g., the notification of new content is very cumbersome), some interest groups elect to create a social media page. The executive director must review a proposal from the interest group prior to creation of the social media page to ensure clarity about important details (e.g., that comments are statements of individuals, not the SAA).

**Finance**

An interest group may not assess dues or accumulate a general fund. An interest group may assess a fee for a service (i.e., the Paul Goldberg Award by the Geoarchaeology Interest Group), with the review of the executive director, and if necessary, the approval of the Board. Fees must be collected through the Society’s headquarters. Any service fees collected must be used in a single fiscal year (January–December). Monies cannot be carried over from one fiscal year to another. Leftover monies remain in the general fund, with specific exceptions. Per Board policy, the Society can request $1 of the service fee to support the activities of the interest group. In reality, the executive director has never set that aside; therefore, the retention of unused funds (in most cases) in the general fund is a reasonable counterbalance to that practice.

Service fees should be as low as needed to fund the specific service for which they are established. At this time, very few interest groups have such fees.

**Organizational Support**

The Board support to all interest groups will be from the SAA’s executive director, as noted above. Day-to-day support will be provided by the senior manager, Meetings and Membership, and the coordinator, Meetings and Membership.

SAA will provide the following services to interest groups:

* maintain rosters (using the same address the interest group member uses for his/her SAA membership);
* provide to interest group leadership a list of names of members upon request of the organizer/co-organizer. Because of the General Data Protection Regulation, SAA is not allowed to share email addresses;
* collect and disperse any fees for a service;
* coordinate the electronic distribution of any newsletter or special publication;
* schedule one meeting at the SAA’s annual meeting;
* provide occasional space, as available, in *The SAA Archaeological Record* for information on interest group activities and services, as determined by the sitting editor of *The SAA Archaeological Record*; and
* provide website space, including a description of the interest group and its purpose, as well as host an iMIS e-Community or a similar successor. ***Please Note: All archaeological web content needs approval before it can be posted.***

**SAA Archive**

The purpose of the SAA archive, curated at the National Anthropological Archives (NAA), is to retain official records that document the history of archaeology in the Americas; the organization's accomplishments and contributions to the major debates about practice, methods, and knowledge of the field; and to record the history of the SAA. Therefore, final official records as identified in the [SAA Scope of Collection Statement](https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-careerpractice/saa-scope-of-collection-statement_2021-05-24.pdf?sfvrsn=d19a56bb_2) (Scope) and pertaining to interest groups must be preserved for future research and other uses.

Various interest group records are included in the Board books and are archived as such. These include annual reports to the Board, proposals for the formation of an interest group and their social media pages, mission statements, and inaugural membership lists submitted to the Board for approval. It is expected that an interest group leader knows what records they have submitted to the Board during their term of leadership. Additional official records may include newsletters, guidelines, best practices, or other products (e.g., reports, white papers) created by an interest group as part of their purpose and objectives. It is strongly advised that the interest group leader consults with the SAA executive director and/or SAA staff member who supports membership on what records to submit for archiving.

If the interest group leader has records to be archived, s/he submits them in digital format (PDF/A) to the SAA Archive Committee within six (6) months after the end of her/his term or on an annual basis, if that is preferred (a reminder will be sent by the Archive Committee chair with instructions). The interest group leader must also provide the Archive Committee with an inventory of the records submitted in an Excel file using the “Types of Records to be Archived” section of the Scope, along with the record format. Once an interest group leader submits records and an inventory, the SAA Archive Committee reviews, accepts or discards, and transfers the appropriate records to NAA.

Additionally, the iMIS e-Community webpage module or its successor for each interest group will be archived when the SAA webmaster saves a copy of the SAA website on an annual basis and sends it to the NAA.