

TOPICAL INTEREST GROUPS

I. OVERVIEW: AEA members have diverse interests in different aspects of evaluation. To facilitate these interests, AEA created Topical Interest Groups (TIGs) as subgroups of the organization. AEA members may join up to five TIGs as a benefit of membership, and TIGs may only have AEA members as TIG members. The activity level of TIGs varies greatly from nearly dormant most of the year, to active participation in annual conference activities, to highly active year around with newsletters, web sites and working committee structures.

II. TIG COORDINATOR: TIG activities are coordinated by, and TIGs are represented on the Board by, a TIG Coordinator. The TIG Coordinator may be an AEA member appointed by the AEA President, but is generally an elected Board member who agrees to assume this responsibility. The TIG Coordinator shall hold a business meeting with TIG leaders at the AEA annual meeting. To the extent feasible, TIG leaders are expected to participate in communications networks or use communications methods established by the TIG Coordinator.

III. TIG ROLES: TIGs fulfill a variety of roles within AEA, among them:

- Provide a structure and conduit for sharing knowledge about common evaluation interests.
- Provide an alternative mechanism for communicating and disseminating professional information. Provide a focal point for collecting and synthesizing the literature in a specific area of the profession. Increase awareness of current research in that area and track its evolution.
- Nurture new members and help them feel connected to the organization.
- Serve as a showcase for the intellectual diversity of the organization.
- Generate and try innovative ideas.
- Serve as a conduit for outreach to related professional organizations.
- Provide an organized means of raising issues to the leadership of the association.
- Facilitate opportunities for collaborative research and evaluation.
- Create opportunities for mentoring (especially of young evaluators), evaluation-related training and enhancement of member services.
- Cultivate, foster and develop association leadership.
- Play a major role in annual conference programming and coordination, including:
 - Serving as a primary vehicle for organizing and sponsoring conference sessions, either by soliciting presentations or refereeing submitted proposals.
 - Serving as strong supporters of and contributors to the Presidential Strand.
 - Providing cohesion to and a vehicle for a natural clustering of similar topics for the conference program.

IV. TIG ESTABLISHMENT: Any member of AEA may petition the Board of Directors to establish a TIG. The steps in the TIG proposal process include:

A. PETITION DEVELOPMENT: Develop a petition that includes:

- i. TIG Name: The TIG name should clearly convey the TIGs purpose, identify the focused, topical interests of the TIG members, avoid confusion with other TIGs, and not be divisive when considered in the larger context of all TIGs and the Association.
- ii. TIG Purpose: A statement of purpose for the proposed TIG that is consistent with the mission of AEA. The American Evaluation Association's mission is to:
 - Improve evaluation practices and methods

- Increase evaluation use
 - Promote evaluation as a profession and
 - Support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human action.
- iii. **TIG Organizers:** A list of organizer's name and contact/ mailing information (including email when available) should include identification of an interim TIG Chair and TIG Program Chair. These positions may be held by the same person or by two different people. If the TIG is approved prior to October 1, these leaders will serve until the last day of the calendar year. If the TIG is approved after November 1, these leaders will serve until the last day of the following calendar year or until elected leadership has been identified. During the period of interim leadership, the interim leaders must conduct an election to identify those to succeed them.
- iv. **Planned Activities:** A list of activities planned for the proposed TIG for the coming year should include, at a minimum, a business meeting at the next annual conference.

B. PETITION SUBMISSION: The petition should be submitted to the TIG Coordinator at least 30 days prior to the AEA Board of Directors meeting at which the petition will be considered. The TIG Coordinator will review the petition, recommend any changes to strengthen the petition, review any revisions, and then present the petition to the Board of Directors for a vote on formal approval, along with the TIG Coordinator's recommendation for or against approval.

C. MAINTAINING ACTIVE STATUS: Once approved, a TIG must at a minimum do the following in order to remain in active status:

- i. **Business Meeting:** Hold a TIG business meeting at the AEA annual meeting.
- ii. **Elections:** Elect a Chair and conference Program Contact to serve terms of no longer than three years. The name and contact information for the Chair and Program Chair, and terms of office, should be provided to the AEA office immediately following the annual meeting.

V. MEMBERSHIP: To be a member of a TIG, an individual must be a member of AEA. An individual may designate or terminate TIG affiliations annually from a list of all formally approved TIGs on the AEA Membership Application or Renewal form, or by making a written (email, fax, or landmail) request to the AEA office at any time.

VI. MEMBERSHIP LISTS: The AEA office is responsible for maintaining the official list of TIG members. Upon the reasonable request of an officially designated TIG leader, the AEA administration shall provide the TIG with an electronic list of TIG members. TIG membership lists are for the exclusive use of the TIG for official TIG business and may not be shared with any third party or used for personal use by any TIG member or leader. A new list should be requested for each use as the membership of a TIG changes on a weekly basis due to member renewals and AEA membership expiration.

VII. LEADERSHIP: Each Topical Interest Group must elect a Chair (or co-chairs) and a Program Chair (or program co-chairs). The same person may serve in both positions. The leaders must be elected for a term of no more than three years, renewable. TIGs may have other leaders or officers as desired.

A. TIG CHAIR: The TIG Chair is responsible for convening the TIG business meeting at the annual conference. This meeting will be scheduled by the AEA office in consultation with the TIG Program Chair as part of the conference program. The TIG Chair is also responsible for overseeing the planning and development of any TIG activities outside of the annual meeting.

- B. TIG PROGRAM CHAIR:** Although the office of TIG Program Chair may be shared, each TIG shall designate one and only one TIG member as the lead Program Chair for the AEA annual meeting. The lead TIG Program Chair will coordinate the planning, development and implementation of the TIG's program at the annual meeting.
- C. TIG LEADERSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION:** Immediately following the AEA annual meeting, and as changes occur throughout the year, TIGs shall provide the AEA office with current contact information for TIG leaders. The contact information will be shared on the AEA website unless the TIG leader requests one or more pieces of contact information to be confidential. Complete contact information should include:
- TIG office title
 - Officer Name
 - Organization
 - Mailing address
 - Telephone number
 - Fax number
 - E-mail address
- D. DUES:** TIGs shall not collect or maintain dues independently of AEA.
- E. BUSINESS MEETING:** Each TIG shall request and conduct a business meeting at the AEA annual meeting.
- F. TIG ROLE AT THE AEA ANNUAL MEETING:** The TIGs are key players in developing the program for the annual conference. The following apply to this process:
- i. Orientation: At the annual meeting or within thirty days following the meeting, the AEA office will distribute a TIG Program Chair Manual to each person who will serve as the lead Program Chair for the coming year. The Manual will elaborate on the items identified in ii-vi below.
 - ii. Sessions: TIGs may organize professional sessions at their own initiative, may co-sponsor sessions with other TIGs, and will be asked to review and coordinate proposals that fall within a TIG's topical area. If a TIG leader develops a session, he or she must submit that session via the Call for Proposal guidelines. **All proposals, including those for invited speakers and those chaired by the TIG leadership, must be submitted through the regular submission process by the deadline specified in the Call for Proposals.**
 - iii. Presidential Strand: TIGs will have the opportunity to nominate a session from among those that they review for the Presidential Strand.
 - iv. Proposal Review: TIGs will receive from the conference office a packet of proposals for review and will be asked to rank the final sessions. All proposals must be reviewed by at least two people. The lead TIG Program Chair is responsible for contacting other reviewers, coordinating the review, and integrating reviews received into such as the overall diversity of sessions represented on the program. a single ranking. The lead TIG Program Chair must submit complete information on all of the reviewed proposals, in the format prescribed by the conference committee, by the required deadline.

- v. Session Scheduling: The Conference Chair and the AEA office are responsible for session scheduling. All sessions accepted by a TIG may not be scheduled if there are space or scheduling limitations at the conference venue or due to other considerations
- vi. Announcing the Program: After the program schedule is fixed, the AEA office will notify individual participants of the acceptance or rejection of their proposal, and provide them with scheduling and conference registration information. The TIG Program Chair will be sent notification of which proposals and TIG-sponsored sessions have been accepted or rejected, and the date, time and location of those sessions (including the required TIG business meeting).

G. MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS: At a minimum, TIGs should communicate with all TIG members prior to the AEA annual meeting to inform members of planned TIG sessions and activities, to identify prospective TIG leadership, to solicit input on the agenda for the coming year, and to identify topics for discussion at the annual TIG business meeting.

H. FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES: Currently, the Board budgets \$300 per TIG per year to support routine TIG activities. This amount is subject to change with the budget for each fiscal year and the TIG leadership will be notified prior to the beginning of the fiscal year should the amount change. The following procedures apply to accessing and using these funds:

- i. Reimbursable Expenditures: TIG funds should be used in the furtherance of the goals of the TIG and are expended at the discretion of the TIG Chair. Routine expenditures include costs for producing and mailing newsletters and announcements, administrative support for meetings (e.g., name tags, equipment rentals, document reproduction), reimbursement for invited speakers or special meeting room fees, refreshments at an annual business meeting, website design and maintenance, etc.
- ii. Reimbursement Requests: Reimbursement requests should be sent to the AEA office at any time during the year, but no later than the first of the month prior to the end of the Association's fiscal year. The Association's fiscal year ends on June 30, thus requests should be received no later than June 1. Requests for reimbursement must be submitted by the TIG Chair. The request should itemize and total the amount requested and include originals or photocopies of receipts for all expenses. The AEA Office will send TIG Chairs a notice 60 days prior to the end of the association's fiscal year reminding them to submit any reimbursement requests. The request should include an identification of the party to receive the reimbursement and the exact name that should appear on the reimbursement check.
- iii. Special Expenditures: Requests for special expenditures (i.e., in excess of the annual allocated amount, or for non-routine projects or activities) require approval of the AEA Board and TIG Coordinator. A TIG leader must obtain Executive Committee approval in writing (either hard copy or electronic) through the TIG Coordinator prior to the event/expenditure. A copy of that approval must accompany the request to the AEA Office for payment. Requests for payment for special expenditures should be made as a formal proposal to the AEA Board as described in the AEA Policies and Procedures Manual section under "Budgeting and Proposal Processes".
- iv. Accounting: The AEA office will maintain a balance sheet of expenditures and remaining balances separately for each TIG on an annual basis in accordance with the Association's fiscal year. TIG chairs may consult the office at any time to check on the account balance.
- v. Fund Rollover: Individual TIG allocations will NOT be carried over into the subsequent fiscal year.