Guidance Notes for Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Issue Date – Sept 2007
Document Version Number – 1.6

Contents

Part	Title	Page
1	Purpose and Introduction	3
2	Executive Summary	3
3	AGI Mission	4
4	SIG Roles and Responsibilities	4
5	SIG Aims and Objectives	4
6	SIG Governance	5
7	SIG organisation and structure	6
8	Terms Of Reference	7
9	Communication	7
10	SIG Websites	8
11	SIG Events and Seminars	9
12	Membership	9
13	Finance	10
Annex A	SIG Objectives Template	11
Annex B	Standard Terms Of Reference Template	14
Annex C	SIG Communication Strategy Template	15
Annex D	SIG Budgeting	16

1.0 Purpose and Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to

- Provide help and advice to any new or existing AGI Special Interest Group (SIG)
- Set out minimum requirements which the SIG must achieve or meet
- Set out the support a SIG may expect from the AGI staff team and *vice versa*

1.2 This guidance asks for a minimum standard of administration by the SIG. However it is not AGI's intention to create excess bureaucracy. All main requirements are therefore set out in template form to minimise effort.

2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 The key points covered by this document are:

Deliverables from the SIG:

- To provide a regular contribution to AGI electronic Newsletters
- Set out an annual Action Plan/Business Plan
- Provide a brief report on each year's activities for the AGI Annual Activities and Achievements Report
- Maintain SIG pages on the AGI Website
- Organise at least one event per year
- To grow membership where possible in alignment with the Membership Action Working Group (AWG).

SIG Organisation - each SIG should have:

- A Management Committee at least consisting of the following:
- A Chair
- A Secretary
- A Web Co-ordinator
- A Membership co-ordinator
- An Event Organiser/organisers

In smaller SIGs it is permissible for some of these roles to be shared/merged; in particular the roles of Chair and Secretary.

SIG Management

- Each SIG should have clearly stated aims and objectives. These should be aligned with those of the AGI and its agreed annual strategy.
- Each SIG should hold minuted management meetings to set out budget forecasts, plans etc. These should be held at least twice a year. AGI should be notified of all meetings and the minutes published in the SIGs' web pages.

3.0 AGI Mission

3.1 The AGI's Mission is to maximise the use of GI for the benefit of the citizen, good governance and commerce.

3.2 The AGI pursues these aims through a wide range of activities including lobbying, an active web site, a number of publications, specialist meetings and seminars held throughout the country. These are all supported by our annual conference and trade exhibition.

3.3 There are also a number of special interest groups that provide services of specific relevance to users in various sectors as well as regional groups of the organisation in Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland.

4.0 SIG Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Special Interest Groups are voluntary groups, operating for the benefit of an area of identified interest, who aim to provide information and promote development in their sectors.

4.2 The overall operation of SIGs is a responsibility of the AGI Council, some members of which act as SIG Champions for one or more SIGs.

4.3 Each SIG has as an elected Chair who has overall responsibility for SIG Objective Setting, organisation, communication and finance.

4.4 SIGs may be called upon to assist Council on policy formulation or other activities. Likewise, SIGs may inform Council about sector specific issues and propose that Council consider such issues.

4.5 Further specific roles and responsibilities exist within each SIG, and these are detailed in later sections of these guidance notes.

4.6 SIGs are expected to hold a minimum of two meetings and organise one event per annum.

5.0 SIG Aims and Objectives

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have existed since the AGI's inception. In order to fit the AGI Mission, all SIGs should be aligned to the following Aims and Objectives

5.1 SIG Aims

The SIGs aim to provide information and promote development in their respective sectors. They are voluntary groups, operating for the benefit of an identified area of interest.

5.2 SIG Objectives

SIGs have a vital role to play in providing business and educational benefits to members. In particular, SIGs should:

- Arrange and facilitate specialist activities, meetings and visits relating to specific areas of GIS/GI theory, best practice and applications related to their interest area.
- Communicate their work by maintaining an informative, up to date section on the AGI website.
- Provide examples of applications and case studies in their area.
- Encourage participation and promote the benefits of AGI membership.
- Encourage members to submit papers for the AGI Conference.

5.3 SIGs are required to state their own specific objectives (keeping these in line with the overall AGI strategy). SIGs are also required to outline activities to be delivered against each objective during the year. To assist in this task, a template is attached at Annex A.

5.4 The SIG Chair is responsible for keeping the objectives up to date and compiling a summary of activities each year for the AGI Council. This is not an optional requirement and final versions of objective/action report summaries should be sent to the AGI's Director no later than the end of January each year for co-ordination and communication to Council.

5.5 The objective/activities summary is not intended to replace detailed planning. In SIGs with high activity levels it may be necessary to conduct more detailed tactical planning in order to co-ordinate ownership and scheduling of tasks. Please note that the SIG Champions, who sit on AGI council, are available to assist in this effort as is any Action Working Group (AWG) nominated by AGI council.

6.0 SIG Governance

6.1 Special Interest Groups are voluntary groups, operating for the benefit of members within an area of identified interest.

6.2 The overall operation of SIGs is a responsibility of the AGI Council - who may nominate a Council based AWG to act on its behalf. SIG governance is provided by SIG Champions and the Director.

6.3 Each SIG is to be represented by a SIG Champion on AGI Council. It is possible that the SIG Champion may also be the SIG Chairman. The SIG Champion provides governance and support, and is a link to Council. The role includes:

- Acting as a communications channel between SIGs and the AGI Council. (SIG Champions should attend at least one meeting of their SIG each year.)
- Ensuring that SIG issues are aligned with AGI policy
- Supporting SIG management and providing encouragement/support in keeping with AGI mission, strategy, aims & objectives.
- Feeding back SIG issues to AGI Council.

6.4 The Director, in support of the AGI Chairs and acting in concert with any AGI council nominated SIG AWG, is also responsible for guiding, advising and supporting SIGs:

- Acting as a communications channel between SIGs and the Executive Group as required. This may be in concert with any AWG nominated by AGI council.
- Co-ordinating and where necessary prioritising SIG issues
- Providing overall guidance and governance to SIGs
- Arranging cross-SIG events
- Updating the SIG Guidance Notes as necessary.

7.0 SIG Organisation and Structure

7.1 In recognition of the diversity of SIGs, they are not expected to conform to a standard model in terms of size or shape. However, there are a number of key roles which must exist. In smaller SIGs it is accepted that some of these roles may be shared.

Key roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- **SIG Chair**
  - Elected individual who holds overall responsibility for SIG Objective Setting, organisation, communication and finance.
- **SIG Secretary**
  - Ensures that the organisation and administration of the SIG is fit for purpose, arranges SIG Management meetings, owns the SIG Terms of Reference (see Annex B) and ensures that a SIG membership list is maintained.
- **SIG Web co-ordinator**
  - Responsible for maintaining the content of SIG's pages on the AGI website in accordance with AGI web and publication policies and the AGI Membership and Information Manager.
- **SIG Event organiser**
  - Nominated contact for events organised by the SIG. The SIG Event organiser should work in co-operation with the AGI Events Manager.
- **SIG Membership co-ordinator**
  - Nominated contact responsible for developing SIG membership. The SIG Membership co-ordinator should work in co-operation with the AGI Membership and Information Manager.
- **SIG Management Committee**
  - The SIG should have a Management Committee, which oversees the running and governance of the SIG. This should be made up of the post holders of the key functions outlined above, though it may also include other members of the SIG.

This committee can be open for any member of the AGI to join. The committee will be established in the first place in a transparent manner at an initial "kick-off" meeting.

SIGs are responsible for the administration of their own management meetings. The AGI has meeting facilities, which are available free of charge to SIGs and can be booked by contacting the AGI and completing the AGI Meeting Table request form.

8.0 Terms Of Reference

8.1 The Management Committee for each SIG must hold an agreed set of Terms of Reference for their meetings. These should be maintained by the SIG Secretary. This is not only good practice, but contributes to satisfying the requirements for AGI to confirm the independent nature of SIGs. A template for a standard set of ToRs is attached at Annex B.

8.2 The SIG Champion and Director are available to assist and advise on setting ToRs.

9.0 Communication

9.1 The issue of communication is central to the success of both the AGI and the SIG.

9.2 SIGs should maintain an active Communication Strategy covering the following areas as a minimum requirement:

- Establishing the key messages and priorities
- Focus on Informing, Instructing, Persuading, Challenging, Promoting, Educating and Motivating members and potential members.
- Consider the target audience and when the message will be delivered
- Methods of delivery, e.g. Seminars or presentations, Newsletters and articles, briefing papers, SIG WebPages
- Consider how receipt of the information will be monitored, how feedback will be structured and when to review feedback
- Who owns the delivery of the message

A template for a standard Communication Strategy is attached in Annex C. The SIG Champion and Director are available to advise on this strategy.

9.3 For major issues considered by the SIG Management Board to require a central statement or policy from AGI, the SIG should provide a summary of the issue and the recommended action to the Executive Group/Council. The SIG may be asked to present any recommendations.

9.4 The SIG must not make any public statement on behalf of AGI without first clearing it, via the Director, with the AGI Executive Group/Council. The

SIG Champion and Director are available to assist and advise on these issues.

9.5 Contributions are expected to the AGI news section of the website as well as the SIG pages. As outlined earlier, a formal report on activities for the year is also required. This forms part of the AGI Annual Report.

9.6 The SIG Chair should also be prepared to provide a brief update on activities to the Director prior to each quarterly Council meeting.

10.0 SIG Websites

10.1 The AGI Website is the main tool for communicating with the membership at large and the GI Industry as a whole.

10.2 Each SIG has a section of the AGI's website. The content, presentation and currency of these pages are key to the successful recruitment of new sponsors, the promotion of AGI events or ventures and to the exchange of information between AGI members. All SIG content can now be uploaded to the relevant SIG website in an easy manner.

The following section outlines the basic requirements for SIG Webpages.

10.3 SIG Homepage. This should be informative but brief, the emphasis being on providing an overall picture of the SIG and appropriate hyperlinks to more detailed information.

As a minimum content should include;

- Welcome Note and brief introduction, with possibly a link to a more detailed "About the SIG" section
- SIG Objectives – in brief with a link to the full document
- Summary report of any events held
- Diary of future events – next event agenda summarised with a link to full year's events and agendas. This should be linked to the main AGI Events page with a download option for registration forms
- News linked to the AGI news pages.
- Case Studies – introductory note of recent additions with link to detailed case studies. Each SIG should aim to have at least 4 current case studies and updates should be linked to the main Case Studies section
- Key contacts – link to pictures and details of the key post holders
- How to get involved in the SIG – link to promote the benefits of being active and a feedback button
- Link to SIG Forum and general feedback button
- Link back to AGI homepage

10.4 Support and advice over content, format and design is available from the AGI.

10.5 As with any website, maintenance is essential not only to keep the content current, but also to retain credibility. For this reason the website co-ordinator should ensure that reports of events are updated to the website within 1 week of the event. A full review of the site should be conducted quarterly.

10.6 Material on SIG Web pages must not be of a defamatory nature, nor should it be seen to bring the AGI into any form of disrepute.

11.0 SIG Events and Seminars

11.1 SIG events are key opportunities for SIGs to spread their message across the AGI membership and the wider GI community. They are also occasions where decision makers may be educated and lobbied. Well-planned, focussed events can have an important impact on the adoption of GI principles and practices.

11.2 SIGs are expected to stage at least 1 major event per year. Assistance and advice with respect to events is available from the AGI Events Manager. Please see the AGI Events Charter for more information.

11.3 Approval of the AGI Events Manager should be sought when a SIG is intending to stage an event or seminar. In part, this is to ensure that the event does not clash with any others in the AGI calendar. The Events Business Case form should be completed and sent to the Events Manager.

11.4 All major events and seminars are expected to show a profitable return. This requirement may be relaxed under certain circumstances, such as inaugural events and seminars targeted to sectors driving to recruit new members.

11.5 The income and expenditure budgets for events are held centrally. SIGs wishing to organise a seminar or meeting should liaise with the AGI Events Manager and prepare a business case for the event.

11.6 Not withstanding the above, SIGs are also encouraged to hold more informal, low, or no-cost events and social gatherings. These can be an important source of networking, communication and deriving benefits from SIG membership.

12.0 SIG Membership

12.1 Within the new AGI website, SIG membership is recorded within each member's profile. It is therefore possible to identify membership of SIGs. This was previously not possible, with members merely indicating an 'interest' in a particular SIG. It is hoped that the ability to formerly record SIG membership will assist in communications between the SIG and its members.

12.2 If membership of a SIG is not specified when a new AGI member is signed up, it can be added at a later date. It is essential that each SIG helps to keep membership information up to date.

12.3 Wherever possible, communications from the SIG to its members should be delivered to the entire membership.

12.4 SIG members must be paid up and current members of the AGI.

13.0 Finance

13.1 Financial support is available to SIGs in order to assist their day to day business and to arrange events. The financial arrangements differ between these two activities.

13.2 Running costs are claims for Travel, Subsistence AGI will pay part or all of the costs incurred on SIG business (including SIG Management meetings) up to a reasonable level, by receipted re-imbursement and according to the agreed AGI expenses policy. However, to support the AGI's central budgeting policy, SIG chairs are required to provide an estimate of expenditure for the year, profiled to each quarter. As for running an event, a business case is also required for ad hoc expenditure.

13.3 During the year this running cost will be reported back to the SIG Chair summarising the expenditure by each quarter Year to Date. Chairs are asked to provide a forecast outturn should the forecast expenditure be +/- 10% of the annual budget. Annex D provides an example of what is required.

13.4 The SIG Champions and Chief Operating Officer (COO) are available to advise on this budgetary process.

ANNEX A – SIG OBJECTIVES TEMPLATE

AGI XXX SIG OBJECTIVES	***Date……***	***Version……***	***EXEC Approved……on……***

SIG AIM
The SIGs aim to provide information and promote development in their sectors. They are voluntary groups operating for the benefit of members in an area of identified interest. SIGS have an invaluable role to play in providing real business and educational benefits to members. SIG objectives and actions should be recorded in the following format. A completed example is also provided on the following page:

Overall SIG Objective	*SIG Objectives*	*Action Summary*
Arrange and facilitate specialist activities, meetings and visits on specific areas of GI theory, best practice and applications		
Communicate their work through the maintenance of an informative website and through contributions to publications		
Provide illustrations of real world applications in their specialist areas through the production of case studies		
Encourage active participation from SIG members and promote advantages of AGI membership		

ANNEX A – SIG OBJECTIVES TEMPLATE, completed example

AGI XXX SIG OBJECTIVES	***Date……***	***Version……***	***EXEC Approved……on……***

Overall SIG Objective	*SIG Objectives*	*Action Summary*
Arrange and facilitate specialist activities, meetings and visits on specific areas of GI theory, best practice and applications	To organise at least one main seminar this Year.	2 main events to be staged in 2006. One in April, one in September. Both London based, Strap line for each is to focus on the two main issues for the XXX GIS community of XXX and XXX. Other seminars have been held by partner/non partner organisations on these issues so the aim of these SIG events is to pool the vested interest together and present an independent view. Each seminar will include an example of how the sector has adopted GI principles to provide a solution, the criteria used to decide approach and how the solution was implemented.
	To contribute to the yearly AGI conference	SIG should also present a seminar within the main conference. Subject matter is XXX GIS policy and funding, subject to ratification by AGI. SIG Chair is to ensure that content, presentation and papers available at the seminar are fit for purpose for the anticipated audience.
	To seek opportunities to joint stage and/or facilitate meetings or seminars across the regions	The SIG will use its wider network of membership and involvement in AGI partner events and non AGI events to identify opportunities where the SIG may share a platform. AGI would both be expected to contribute costs and extract revenue from such events, which may be indirectly through new membership fees.
	To identify opportunities to lobby at appropriate events	The aim of such events is to influence decision makers, particularly within the political arena.

ANNEX A – SIG OBJECTIVES TEMPLATE, completed example, continued

Communicate their work through the maintenance of an informative website and through contributions to publications	To develop and maintain WebPages on the AGI website To provide an update article to each AGI annual report and intermediate publication	The XXX SIG WebPages will continue to be maintained according to standard AGI template. Content will be reviewed and refreshed at least quarterly from January. Updates from key events described under Objective 1 will be within 1 week. An article of the required length updating on progress and work within the SIG will be provided in advance of the editorial closing date in all cases.
Provide illustrations of real world applications in their specialist areas through the production of case studies	To provide guidelines on best practice and case studies of GI applications in LAs	The communication media for this will be the SIG WebPages. Case studies will be provided as and when they are forwarded, however they will be the subject of a refresh at least quarterly. At least 1 new Best Practice or Case study will be provided per quarter
Encourage active participation from SIG members and promote advantages of AGI membership	To retain existing members and attract new members	Each event staged or co-presented should include a closing presentation slide to promote AGI for new or continued membership. This is to include a weblink to the AGI recruitment page All events will have membership information packs and application forms available. All email correspondence conducted on behalf of AGI should contain a hyperlink to the AGI website in the electronic signature

ANNEX B – STANDARD TERMS OF REFERENCE TEMPLATE
For SIG Management Meetings

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT MEETINGS OF THE XXX SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Purpose of Management Committee Meetings	
Management Committee members and roles	
The quorate level shall be	
Frequency of Meetings	
Agendas compiled by (whom)	
Advanced notice for compilation and circulation of agenda	
Minutes will be recorded and circulated by (whom)	
Minutes will be circulated no later than (days following meeting)	
Date of Agreement of TORs	
Version Number	

Record of formal acceptance of meeting minutes is required.
Action issues emanating from meetings must be time specific and have a nominated owner

ANNEX C – SIG COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TEMPLATE, completed example,

AGI XXX SIG COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	***Date…….***	***Version……***

Key Message, aim of communication and essential content	Audience and delivery media	When & Review interval	Feedback	Owner
1. Advise the industry sector of the existence, aims and role of the XXX SIG To Inform, promote and educate.	Whole Industry Sector, through • robust Website maintenance, • presence at major industry gatherings, • seeking stand or presentation at partnership events	 January, then every 3 months At each SIG Management Meeting Ongoing, reviewed at each Management Meeting	 Forum on SIG WebPages and feedback button Verbal Verbal	 SIG Web Co-ordinator All SIG members SIG event organizer
2. Advise industry and XXX SIG membership of forthcoming event and arrange follow up Promote and motivate response	Advise sector through Website Advise membership through group email postings and Newsletter Keynote presentations Reporting back to; Industry - Website Members - Newsletter EXEC – briefing note to Director	From April April edition, editorial date of xxxx May Update Website within 1 week Sept edition, editorial date of xxxx July	Through web applications to attend Through web applications to attend Forum on SIG WebPages and feedback button Invite comments From EXEC	SIG Web Co-ordinator AGI Event Organiser SIG event organiser SIG Web Co-ordinator SIG Chair SIG Chair
3. Disseminate information on new Government initiative, compile and communicate SIGs stance on this major issue for this sector Inform the members, Challenge, Promote. Educate EXEC of major issues and Persuade an AGI central response	Advise sector through Website SIG members through Website and newsletter EXEC – briefing note to EXEC members through SIG Champion/COO	May Sept 2006 edition, editorial date of xxxx	Through web applications to attend Invite comments From EXEC	SIG Web Co-ordinator SIG Chair SIG Chair

ANNEX D – SIG BUDGETING TEMPLATE

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
TRAVEL					
SUBSISTENCE					
OTHER COSTS					
TOTALS					

ACTUAL SPEND & VARIANCE

	Q1	*VARIANCE*	Q2	*VARIANCE*	Q3	*VARIANCE*	Q4	*VARIANCE*	TOTAL	*VARIENCE*
TRAVEL										
SUBSISTENCE										
OTHER COSTS										
TOTALS										

1/4LY FORCAST OUTTURN

	ACTUAL Q1	PROJECTED Q2 TO Q4	OUTTURN	ACTUAL Q1 & Q2	PROJECTED Q3 TO Q4	OUTTURN	ACTUAL Q1 TO Q3	PROJECTED Q4	OUTTURN
TRAVEL									
SUBSISTENCE									
OTHER COSTS									