ISSWSH Special Interest Group (SIG) Guidelines

1. Purpose

The purpose of each ISSWSH Special Interest Group (SIG) is:

1) collecting and disseminating information concerning its special interest or topic area. This can be done by working with any standing or ad hoc ISSWSH committee.
2) advising the ISSWSH Board on matters pertaining to the Group's special interest or topic area; and
3) organizing a SIG meeting for such interests and topic areas at the ISSWSH Annual Meeting.
The focus and work of all SIGs must align with the vision and mission of ISSWSH, and priorities as determined by the ISSWSH Board of Directors

2. Principles & Scope

ISSWSH SIGs are self-organizing and self-sustaining communities of ISSWSH members who share similar interests or specialties to connect with one another to share knowledge, ideas, and expertise with the goal of advancing ISSWSH's mission.

Besides managing the SIGs for the benefit of the members and organizing a SIG meeting at the ISSWSH Annual Meeting, SIGs are also asked to provide a brief report twice a year (once following the annual meeting) and encouraged to raise issues of interest with the Executive Committee and ISSWSH Office. Although SIGs are not commissioned by the ISSWSH Board of Directors, SIGs are encouraged to collaborate with committees and with each other where this will advance each of their purposes and ISSWSH's mission. The Board may also approach relevant SIGs for advice on policy or strategic issues.

Membership in a SIG is open to any ISSWSH Member as participation in a SIG provides ISSWSH members with opportunities to grow professionally and to establish new professional relationships within the individual SIG community and the larger organization. ISSWSH members can participate in multiple SIGs. ISSWSH members within a SIG are entitled to take part in any of the SIG's activities. Any ISSWSH member can join (or leave) a SIG at any time by changing their subscription preferences on their ISSWSH online membership profile on www.isswsh.org. No restrictions nor application reviews/confirmations are required nor apply to join/leave a SIG.

Each SIG will facilitate open and ongoing communications. Such communications may result in ISSWSH SIG members sharing ideas and/or making recommendations to develop projects, programs, publications, meetings or other activities within the topic area of the SIG. In order for such ideas and/or recommendations to be executed, Board of Directors review and approval is required (see section 5).

3. SIG Application & Set Up Process

Members interested in forming a SIG should contact the ISSWSH Executive Director first to make their intent known to the ISSWSH Executive Committee and to check if it is in line with ISSWSH's mission and does not overlap with already existing groups and/or planned/executed activities. Once the Executive Committee has reviewed the request, it will be shared with the Board of Directors. Once the Board of Directors has confirmed its support for the formation of the proposed SIG, the process of applying to set up a SIG is as follows:

1. Members interested in forming a SIG should acquire the support of 10 or more current active ISSWSH members by having them sign a petition to form the SIG. The signatories should be members representing a range of disciplines.

2. The petition form with all names and signatures, along with a written proposal, should be sent to the ISSWSH Executive Director. The written proposal to establish the SIG must include a statement of purpose, the motivation to form the SIG, the initial SIG Steering Group members including a Chair and Vice Chair (see 4.1 Group Leadership below, minimum 3 persons), and proposed focus areas and/or activities.
3. The proposal will be reviewed by the ISSWSH Executive Director to ensure compliance with the ISSWSH SIG guidelines and policies. If complied and complete, it will be submitted to the ISSWSH Executive Committee, followed by the Board of Directors for approval. If the ISSWSH Board of Directors approves the proposal and the formation, the special interest group will be officially established.
4. Officially established ISSWSH SIGs will have the name structure **"ISSWSH [topic area] Special Interest Group"**.

4. Infrastructure

4.1 Group Leadership

While each SIG functions independently and in a way that best meets the needs of the group's participants, each SIG must have a Steering Group in place existing of a minimum of 3 persons, two of which serve as Chair and Vice Chair. The SIG Steering Group will be responsible for the overall and day-to-day management of the SIG as well as for facilitating communications within the SIG and with other SIGs, ISSWSH Committees, Executive Committee, Board of Directors and Office. The ISSWSH members who submitted the original proposal to establish the SIG will be responsible for forming the initial SIG Steering Group (part of application process, see section 3).

The SIG Chair and/or Vice Chair will serve as the SIG's main contact person(s) and will be the focal point for receiving communications from and sending communications to the SIG as well as to the ISSWSH Office. Notwithstanding the above, all SIG Steering Group Members, including the Chair and Vice Chair, are expected to respond promptly to all inquiries and requests, both from ISSWSH SIG members as well as from the ISSWSH Office.

Terms
The SIG Chair and Vice Chair serves a non-renewable three-year term in his/her respective position. Other SIG Steering Group Members all serve three-year terms that are renewable twice (maximum 3 terms of 3 years each). No one can serve on the SIG Steering Group for more than 9 years.

Chair (non-renewable 3-year term)
•   Provides overall leadership to the SIG.
•   Leads on-going communication (such as newsletters and discussion groups) to and among SIG members.
•   Serves as the first liaison to the ISSWSH Office.
•   Submits all SIG suggestions and/or proposals to the ISSWSH Office for ISSWSH Executive Committee and Board of Directors review.
•   Organizes and chairs/facilitates the annual SIG meeting at the ISSWSH Annual Meeting.
•   Submits 2 written reports of the SIG activities to the ISSWSH Board each year.
•   Organizes the succession planning/election of new SIG Steering Group Members.

Vice Chair (non-renewable 3-year term, becomes Chair)
•   Assists the SIG Chair.
•   Assists in the communication with all SIG members.
•   Chairs or Co-chairs SIG meetings in coordination with Chair.
•   Serves as the second liaison to the ISSWSH Office.

Steering Group Member(s) (renewable 3-year term)
• Provides continuity for SIG activities.
• Serves as a consultant to the Chair and Vice Chair.
• Assists in the communication with all SIG members.

4.2 Changes in Group Leadership

Any member from the SIG Steering Group, including the SIG Chair and the Vice Chair, can step down from their role at any time. The ISSWSH office should be informed of such decisions to do so preferably with at least 1 month's' notice if possible. SIGs plan for their own succession and need to democratically find another community member to provide leadership for the group without the intervention of the ISSWSH Board of Directors or the ISSWSH Nomination Committee. A 1-month or more lead time will allow the ISSWSH Office to support this process, if necessary.

Therefore, following the end of the term of the SIG Chair, Vice Chair or any other SIG Steering Group Member, all ISSWSH members within the SIG will be invited to submit a letter of interest with their CV for any vacant position. This call for new leaders will be announced on the ISSWSH SIG's Community Forum and will be open for at least 2 weeks (14 days). If there are more SIG members expressing interest in serving on the SIG Steering Group than there are available positions, then an election will be held among ISSWSH members who are part of the SIG. The election will be facilitated by the ISSWSH Office using the Community Forum polling functionality and the voting window will be open for 2 weeks (14 days). The candidate for each open position with the **most votes** wins, meaning that if there are 3 or more candidates for the same position then a majority vote is not required for a candidate to be elected.

4.3 Resources & Support

ISSWSH will provide all SIGs by default with the following:

- A dedicated SIG channel on the ISSWSH Community Forum which will be accessible to all SIG members through www.isswsh.org (after log in);
- A listing on the ISSWSH website on the special interest groups page: https://www.isswsh.org/membership/special-interest-groups/about-the-sigs
- Disseminating SIG communications on the ISSWSH communication channels, including social media, e-mailings, newsletters, all subject to editorial policy, availability and scheduling.
- Support with the dissemination of approved outputs on the ISSWSH website.

  We can provide on request (based on availability of resources and with the Board's approval, also see section 5):

- Zoom meeting links for your regular calls (subject to availability, SIG leader will be assigned as host);
- Support with managing your SIG e.g., facilitating connections with or communications to other ISSWSH groups, committees and/or members interested in your topic, general advice on managing workflows and support with reporting (templates, guidelines).
- Project Management & Coordination on Board approved projects.

4.4 Role of the ISSWSH Office

ISSWSH SIGs are meant to be self-organizing and self-sustaining communities of ISSWSH members. Although this should require only minimal staff involvement, ISSWSH has a dedicated SIG Staff Liaison serving as the main contact for all SIG related business and communications.

The ISSWSH SIG Staff Liaison assists SIG leaders and members in using the Community Forum for dissemination of information to SIG members and setting up polls for surveying the SIG (e.g., with elections), while at the same time monitoring the discussions and ensuring compliance with the forum's rules of engagement. The ISSWSH Staff Liaison will be able to help with disseminating SIG information through other ISSWSH communication channels like the ISSWSH mailings or social media accounts. The scheduling and arrangements for SIG meetings at the ISSWSH Annual Meeting will also be supported by the Staff Liaison. The ISSWSH Office will maintain a log of SIG members and ensure that all members can subscribe to and unsubscribe from a SIG, of which periodic updates (statistics, no personal information) will be provided to SIG leadership.

5. SIG Meetings, Projects, Programs, Activities, and Reporting

5.1. Meetings of the SIG

All ISSWSH SIGs may meet at or during the ISSWSH Annual Meeting. The ISSWSH Scientific Program Committee will schedule a minimum 60-minute to maximum 90-minute time slot for all approved SIGs to meet (at the same time). The allocated time may be used for meeting, programming, or both, but meetings must be open to all registrants. SIGs may collaborate with other SIGs and/or organize joint sessions where appropriate. Programs during the annual meeting must be submitted through the ISSWSH Scientific Program Committee and the ISSWSH Board of Directors as part of the program approval process at least 60 days prior to the meeting.

5.2. Projects, Programs, Webinars and Other Activities

ISSWSH SIG members may share ideas and/or make recommendations to develop projects, programs, publications, meetings, or other activities within the topic area of the SIG. In order for such ideas and/or recommendations to be executed, Executive Committee review and approval is required before the planning of such an undertaking begins.

To obtain Board approval for any SIG project, webinar, program, publication or any other initiative, a written proposal should be submitted to the ISSWSH Staff Liaison which should include a detailed description of the proposed activity, its purpose/scope, the SIG members involved, realistic timelines and, if applicable, required resources and/or staff support. Complete proposals will be forwarded respective committee(s) for their review and feedback before being sent to the ISSWSH Board of Directors.

Examples of initiatives that **must receive prior approval of the ISSWSH Board of Directors** include, but are not limited to:
- Agenda/Program of the yearly SIG Meeting that will take place at the ISSWSH Annual Meeting;
- Proposals for organizing ISSWSH SIG-endorsed or branded projects, meetings, webinars;
- Developing ISSWSH SIG-endorsed or branded publications, including promotional materials, recommendations, reviews, statements, whitepapers, guidelines, terminology, standardization documents, etc;
- Making public statements, speaking at non-ISSWSH events or meetings, or acting on behalf of ISSWSH or the SIG;
- Promoting any individual or commercial interests on behalf of ISSWSH or the SIG;
- Providing information, materials, products, or services in exchange for compensation of any kind.

If approved and if the required resources are available, the ISSWSH Board of Directors will involve one or more of the ISSWSH Committees to supervise or approve the project, provide guidance, and further implement and/or assist in executing the program. The Board may also appoint an oversight committee to support the development of the project by and/or within the SIG itself. For example, for an educational SIG meeting/webinar the ISSWSH Education Committee will be involved for a program review while the SIG itself can organize and run the webinar.

5.3. Reporting

Once a year, the SIG Chair provides a brief written report to the Board on behalf of the SIG Steering Group and its members. The report is an end-of-year report, to be provided by January 31st, summarizing the activities of the previous year, and plans for current year, including Annual Meeting activities.

6. Responsibilities & Conditions (Compliance)

ISSWSH welcomes contributions from all those who share our goals and want to contribute in a healthy and constructive manner within the ISSWSH SIGs. ISSWSH therefore encourages ISSWSH members to participate in either new or existing SIGs. Both SIG Leaders in the Steering Group as well as anyone who participates in a SIG are bound by the following terms and conditions:

Applicability

The activities of the SIG should be and are always limited to those addressed in their purpose statement. If the SIG wants to revise their purpose statement, then this should be documented in writing and resubmitted to the ISSWSH Board for approval.

Disclaimer

Information exchanged in a SIG and all related communications are intended for discussion purposes only as this does not necessarily represent the views of ISSWSH or any of its officers, directors, employees, agents, and representatives thereof.

Diversity & Inclusion

ISSWSH welcomes diversity and inclusion in our international organization and is therefore dedicated to ensuring that all our members, regardless of sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, physical appearance, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, education, career stage or socio-economic status, have a solely positive experience participating in the ISSWSH SIGs.

Leadership

SIG Steering Group Members, led by and including the Chair and Vice Chair, are expected to lead and maintain an active SIG. As such, the Steering Group responsibilities include the following: initiate discussions of interest to the SIG community, share relevant news and/or (links to) important publications, be responsive to queries both from members and staff, organize the annual SIG meetings, and deliver brief written reports twice a year.

SIG Steering Group Members must refrain from abusing their position or the association's staff, services, equipment, resources, or property for their personal or third-party gain or pleasure and shall not represent to third parties that their authority as a SIG Steering Group member extends any further than it does.

Conflicts of Interest

All Steering Group Members, including the Chair and Vice Chair, must agree to fully comply with the ISSWSH conflict of interest policy and are required to annually submit the conflict of interest disclosure form to the ISSWSH Office. SIG leaders should maintain and promote high ethical standards including good-faith SIG leadership and avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest with other activities, interests, and/or organizations with which they may be involved.

SIG members may **never** use the SIG for self-promotion, to promote personal or local agendas, or ideas that do not support the ISSWSH mission. All SIG members should act in the best interests of the association and not for personal or third-party gain or financial enrichment.

Authority
SIGs and/or (groups of) SIG members, whether individually or as a group, are only allowed to execute ideas, projects, or publications on behalf of ISSWSH or on behalf of the ISSWSH SIG if and once written approval from the ISSWSH Board has been obtained prior to the commencement of the project. SIGs and/or (groups of) SIG members are not allowed to independently implement such programs without prior approval from the Board.

Staff Support
ISSWSH staff may not be active members of every SIG in the ISSWSH community nor do we have the resources to co-lead and/or coordinate each SIG. Staff support is aimed to support our SIGs and their members in meeting their needs collaboratively. However, in cases of particular strategic importance of a SIG, staff would join groups and aim to participate in a way that is both sensitive to their status and collaborative in orientation.

Resources and (Commercial) Funding
If a SIG itself requires substantial resources (funding, staff/hours, etc.) for its activities, a specification of required resources (hours/funding) should be included in the written proposal as submitted to the Executive Director for Board review (see section 5.2). If it is suggested and/or recommended that such resources may be funded by external sources (e.g., through grants/sponsors), then the approach needs to be discussed with the ISSWSH Executive Director to ensure coordination with ISSWSH's overall industry relations strategy. For more information, please consult with the ISSWSH Executive Director.

Community Rules of Engagement
By participating in member communications on the ISSWSH Community Forums, all ISSWSH members are automatically bound by and agree to the Rules and Conditions of the ISSWSH Community Forum.

Non-Compliance
Any individuals who are non-compliant to any of the above rules, responsibilities and conditions, put themselves at risk for either a temporary or permanent ban from either the Community Forum and/or the actual SIG. If applicable and required, the Board will appoint a replacement.

7. Dissolution

ISSWSH reserves the right to dissolve and/or close any SIG at any time. The ISSWSH Board of Directors will dissolve a SIG if it fails to meet the criteria for maintaining a SIG, if it does not hold a formal meeting of the SIG for two-years, if its membership drops below 10 members, or if the ISSWSH Board of Directors decides that it is not in the best interests of ISSWSH to have the SIG as presently structured. A SIG that has been inactive for several months and/or whose leaders are unresponsive to attempts to communicate with them may also be closed, although the Board may opt for any other measures to reactivate the SIG in a different way. The ISSWSH Board of Directors will always endeavor to give adequate notice of such action and to preserve any resources generated by the group.

A recommendation to dissolve may also come from the SIG itself e.g., because it has met its original objectives or there is no longer interest in it. Interest in the subject area covered by a SIG may also change, its members may decide that there are other ways within ISSWSH to accomplish the SIG's purposes, or other factors may lead to the need to dissolve a SIG. Its members may propose dissolution, but it will always need the ISSWSH Board of Directors approval.

*These guidelines have been approved by the ISSWSH Board of Directors on September 17, 2022