



Guidelines for IHEA Special Interest Groups (SIGs)



PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES

This document outlines the nature of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) within the IHEA context, provides guidance for the establishment and management of SIGs, and clarifies roles and responsibilities around SIG activities.

PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS OF SIGS

The main purpose of IHEA SIGs is to promote collegial interaction among members with a common interest, particularly across geographic regions, and to support the achievement of IHEA's mission and strategic goals (see Annex A). In general, SIGs focus on a specific research area, but there is also an SIG focusing on health economics teaching and another on support for early career researchers.

SIGs are envisaged as being organized by IHEA members for IHEA members. While only IHEA members can join a SIG formally and benefit from mailing list engagements, most SIG activities (e.g., webinars, blogs, and resources on SIG webpages) are accessible to all.

SIGs are expected to:

- Communicate regularly with their members via the SIG mailing list to share information that would be of value to SIG members (this may include, for example, information on recent research publications, recent policy developments, upcoming events, and publication and grant funding opportunities).
- Host 2 webinars or networking events per year, ensuring that different time zones are accommodated to the greatest extent possible (e.g. don't always organize virtual events at the same time, but host one that will allow participation from some regions and another that allows participation from other regions).
- Comply with IHEA's [Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) by, for example, striving to ensure that: there is diversity in conveners and membership; resources and activities are accessible to a broad range of members; and webinars and other SIG activities are conducted in a respectful and inclusive manner.

SIGs are also strongly encouraged to:

- Contribute teaching materials (related to the focus of their group), to the IHEA training materials repository (submit via the upload portal [here](#));

- Support members from under-represented groups and regions where possible (e.g., through mentorship)
- For congresses, submit an organized session proposal (with diverse participants) and encourage SIG members to submit abstracts;
- Organize some congress activities that would particularly benefit early career researchers (ECRs). Examples of past activities include breakfast get-togethers and pre-submission abstract reviews.
- Have one or more of the SIG conveners participate in meetings with all SIGconveners (once or twice a year) to share experiences and learn from oneanother.

BENEFITS FOR SIGS AND MANAGEMENT TEAM SUPPORT TO SIGS

SIGs are offered the following benefits:

- [A page on the IHEA website](#) to advertise SIG activities, a link to recordings of past SIG events, access to a blog platform, and support in establishing and maintaining the webpage and blog site;
- A mailing list for SIG conveners to communicate with IHEA members who join the SIG;
- Support in communicating via the IHEA mailing lists and an option to promote SIG events via IHEA's social media channels;
- Publication of SIG items in the monthly IHEA newsletter, which goes out on the last business day of each month;
- Support in organizing, advertising, managing, and recording webinars (on the IHEA webinar platform) and posting the recording on a SIG-specific YouTube channel with links from the SIG webpage, which can also include the speaker's PPT presentation slides;
- Technical support during SIG webinars beginning prior to the webinar start time with a "tech-check" for convenors/facilitators/speakers to conduct a brief dry run and throughout the webinar to ensure all attendees have a smooth experience by monitoring IHEA inbox and chat box for potential issues from participants
- Guidelines on best practice for webinars, particularly to promote diversity and inclusion ([see Annex B](#));
- Opportunities for engagement between SIG members at the biennial IHEA congresses;
- Opportunities for conveners of SIGs to meet once or twice a year to share experiences or best practice tips.

For support in accessing these benefits, SIG conveners can:

- Book webinars using the shared [Google sheet](#) – this enables you to avoid scheduling conflicts with other planned events and provide all necessary information regarding your webinar to allow the team to post your event on the IHEA site, open up registration, and run promotions on IHEA socials leading up to your event.
- Contact the Association Manager (ihea@healtheconomics.org) for all support related to webinars. To avoid disappointingly low attendance at the webinar, please ensure you have provided all the necessary details to the IHEA management team well ahead of your webinar date (at least 3 weeks) to allow for ample event promotion, preferably including a notice in the monthly newsletter. Contact IHEA’s communication manager (communications@healtheconomics.org) for support in setting up or updating your SIG webpage, guidance on setting up and managing your blog, and accessing the SIG member mailing list. • Submit any contributions to the newsletter communications@healtheconomics.org.

While substantial support is provided by the IHEA management team to SIGs, IHEA is unfortunately not able to provide funding for SIGs from its operational budget. However, the management team will assist SIGs wherever possible to raise funds for specific SIG activities that are critical in advancing IHEA’s mission and strategic goals. Fundraising for SIG activities should not be undertaken independently of the IHEA management team to ensure compliance with IHEA’s fundraising principles, avoid competition between SIGs for the same funding source, and manage contractual deliverables specified by funders.

SIG GOVERNANCE

Each SIG decides on its conveners and the specific responsibility of each convener, using the following guidelines:

All conveners of a SIG must be IHEA members.

- The composition of SIG conveners should reflect [IHEA’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) principles](#).

It is recommended that conveners serve for a specific term (e.g., 2 or 4 years,

- which could be renewed) to give different members an opportunity to lead.

There should be proactive succession planning and phased convener changes to ensure continuity.

- SIG members should be engaged when identifying new or additional conveners; this is particularly helpful in identifying SIG members who may be willing to serve as conveners.
- The IHEA management team should be notified of any changes in SIG conveners.
- It is helpful for conveners to agree on how they will operate and for each convener to undertake specific tasks (e.g., regularly circulating information on recent publications or opportunities to SIG members via the mailing list; organizing webinars or networking events) to ensure that the load is spread, and all conveners are involved actively. An example of processes that one of the SIGs has adopted is provided in [Annex C](#).

It is recommended that SIGs operate on a two-year cycle, preferably following calendar years (January in one year to December in the next year). A two-year cycle would include one congress. SIGs should develop a plan for their next two-year cycle, outlining intended activities, the SIG objective that it relates to, which convener is responsible for, likely timing, and an indication of what support is required from the IHEA team. Each SIG outlined its objectives in its initial proposal submitted to the IHEA Board when it applied for IHEA SIG status. SIGs that were established some time ago may have updated their objectives, which should be reflected in the plan. The following table can be used for this plan:

Name of SIG: _____

Period of plan: [Indicate the beginning and end dates for SIG’s two-year cycle]

| Activity/‘project’ | SIG objective (as outlined in proposal or updated) | Brief description of activity | Convener(s) responsible | Timing / dates | Support required from IHEA management team |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

While most of the activities/projects will be focused on SIG member engagement, some SIGs are interested in undertaking “output projects” (e.g., a bibliography of publications in the last five years related to the research focus of the SIG; a structured literature review which the SIG publishes in a journal; a special issue of a structured literature review which the SIG publishes in a journal; a special issue of a journal featuring research undertaken by SIG members). Output projects can be a useful way of engaging SIG members actively.

A copy of this table should be submitted to the management team (ihea@healthconomics.org) by the end of January in each year. Even though the plan would cover a two year period, it may be updated during the cycle, hence requesting it be submitted annually. These plans will be the main basis for evaluation of SIGs

PROCESS FOR APPLYING FOR A SIG AND CRITERIA FOR BOARD ASSESSMENT

Proposals to establish a new SIG can be submitted (to ihea@healththeconomics.org) at any time for consideration by the Board at their next scheduled meeting, usually held quarterly. Annex D provides a template of the information that must be included in a proposal.

Criteria that will be used by the IHEA Board in assessing proposals for new SIGs include:

- The focus of the proposed SIG, its proposed activities, and its membership should align strongly with IHEA's mission and strategic goals ([see Annex A](#));
- The focus of the proposed SIG should fill a gap not addressed by existing IHEA SIGs or established networks outside IHEA, and which is of importance (e.g., is a relatively new area of health economics research requiring development, or of critical importance for promoting improved and equitable health and health care);
- Include activities outlined as expectations of SIGs (see earlier in document);
- The SIG should be diverse in conveners and members;
- The SIG should promote engagement across countries and regions and benefit early career researchers (ECRs).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SIGS

SIG activities will be monitored annually, with a more extensive evaluation every four years.

The following indicators will be used for annual monitoring (most of the data will be compiled by the IHEA management team, but SIG conveners will be asked to review the information and comment):

- Number of SIG members in each UN region;
- Number of webinars hosted during the year;
- Number of virtual networking events during the year;
- Other activities and outputs during the year, such as:
 - Number of blogs
 - Social media interactions
 - Number of IHEA newsletter pieces contributed
 - Any other outputs
- During Congress years, a number of session proposals were submitted.

SIG conveners will also be requested to indicate what they consider their SIG's most important accomplishment(s) of the year and provide feedback on any challenges they faced.

Evaluations will include a four-year overview of the above indicators as well as consideration of the following issues:

- The extent to which SIG objectives have been achieved and reasons for non-achievement of any objectives;
 - How the SIG has contributed to achieving IHEA's strategic goals;
 - The extent to which engagement across regions has been promoted by the SIG;
 - Diversity in membership and leadership of the SIG;
 - Whether or not the gap / need for the SIG identified when established still exists.

SIGs will undertake a reflective self-evaluation on these issues which will be considered by the IHEA Board.

The Board evaluation will consider whether any SIG changes are required. For example, if the health economics landscape has changed so that the gap, identified when the SIG was established, has been filled (e.g., through other networks outside of IHEA) or the SIG has become largely inactive, possible closure of the SIG will be considered in discussion with the SIG conveners. In some cases, it may be that there is considerable overlap between two SIGs, which may lead to a recommendation for a merger of SIGs. The Board may also make recommendations on SIG activities or structures.

ANNEX A: IHEA MISSION AND STRATEGIC GOAL

MISSION

IHEA's mission is to foster an inclusive global community of health economists, committed to strengthening the field, sharing ideas and resources, developing, and applying economic theory and methods, and generating evidence for improved, equitable health and health care.

PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS OF SIGS

- 1. Promote excellence in health economics research and teaching:** IHEA pursues excellence in the field by supporting early-career researchers, strengthening the capacity of health economics researchers, teachers and practitioners, and engaging around different methodological and theoretical approaches.
- 2. Promote international engagement and collaboration among health economists:** IHEA facilitates collegial engagement and promotes ethical collaborative practices between health economists across countries and world regions.
- 3. Expand the profession and its impact:** IHEA strives to increase recognition of the contribution of health economics to policy for social good, and to attract economists to the field, particularly those in low- and middle-income countries and from diverse backgrounds.

ANNEX B: GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN IHEA WEBINARS

These guidelines and checklist have been developed by IHEA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Promotion and Monitoring Group (EDI PMG) and are informed by existing online resources as well as the collective experience of IHEA SIG conveners. They were initially drafted for those organising SIG webinars, but they can also inform a range of other IHEA activities. It is designed as a 'living' document that can be updated as necessary, to ensure it reflects the current views and priorities of IHEA members.

Before an event

IHEA webinars often have facilitators, but their roles are varied and in some cases are limited to introductions. In other cases, facilitators moderate lively discussions, monitor the chat box (if the meeting is online), ask or direct questions to a specific speaker, and/or briefly summarise key take-home messages at the end. Whatever their role, a facilitator can play a pivotal role in engaging members and making the sessions as inclusive as possible. Some ways in which facilitators and other speakers can do this are:

- Try and familiarise yourself with the **names of speakers** to avoid incorrect pronunciation during the event. Getting names wrong can happen even with forward planning but at least a speaker knows you have tried!
- Be aware that many attendees are **multitasking during webinars** especially if they are home schooling or it's the middle of dinner time. Ensuring slides are not too jammed-packed with information and can be seen on smaller screens can be helpful.
- If there are multiple speakers, remind everyone how **important it is to keep to time**. Speakers at the end can (naturally) feel excluded and disappointed if they are made to rush or if audience members need to go.
- Consider **rotating the role of the facilitator** and giving early and mid-career researchers an opportunity to facilitate.

During an event

- Explicitly acknowledging that participants come from **different cultural and linguistic contexts and time zones** is a good place to start. This also helps to signal that IHEA recognises that some people will be juggling work and home life. Where appropriate, a facilitator may also choose to acknowledge the **traditional owners of the land** where they are joining from.
- The facilitator can introduce discussion guidelines or '**ground rules**' to promote a culture of respectful engagement. Some suggestions include:

ANNEX B: GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN IHEA WEBINARS

- Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
 - Listen actively and with an ear to understanding others' views. (Don't just think about what you are going to say while someone else is talking.)
 - Criticize ideas, not individuals.
 - Commit to learning, not debating or argumentation unless these are the goals of the session. Comment in order to share information, not to persuade.
 - Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
 - Allow everyone the chance to speak.
 - Avoid assumptions about any of the presenters/audience or generalizations about social groups. Do not ask individuals to speak for their (perceived) social group.
 - Requesting questions come through the speaker's preferred channel (e.g., posting questions in the chat box for Q&A after the presentation; some prefer the person unmutes and poses a question during the presentation)
- At the start of a Zoom webinar when the facilitator is going through housekeeping rules, they can encourage everyone to **share the phonetic spelling or pronunciation of their name**. This creates an opportunity to learn people's names if you are meeting people for the first time. Platforms like Zoom allow participants to edit their name. It's important that everyone does this, not just those with uncommon or unfamiliar names. We could also ask people to add their pronouns and their (phonetic) name to guide others.
 - Instructions on how to use polls to gauge feeling in the virtual room is often a good idea. These can be anonymous in Zoom if appropriate. We may also encourage facilitators or speakers to ask questions to which people can respond in the **chat function**. Then, the facilitator can call on people to discuss. This can be a good way to break the ice. Information on how to set up and poll as well as the pros and cons of polls can be found [here](#).
 - **Allow time for people to type in their answers** when doing polls or asking questions in the chat box. Many people find it difficult to process both auditory and text inputs at the same time. Those using a small device like a phone may need extra time to type in a response.
 - Inclusiveness, especially during meetings, can be promoted using what are sometimes called '**white board apps**'. These are designed for visual brainstorming and collaboration. Some participants are reluctant to ask a

ANNEX B: GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN IHEA WEBINARS

question during a meeting but more willing to post anonymous ‘sticky notes’ on a virtual note board.

Other considerations

- IHEA benefits enormously from the **diversity** of our members. Webinar organisers are encouraged to think about how this can be reflected in their meetings, aligning with our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement](#). This includes encouraging variety across regions and countries both within a webinar and across webinar series. Questions that organisers might ask themselves include: *Are there researchers in particular countries that given the opportunity might want to hold a webinar but haven't yet had the chance? For webinars presenting research from specific countries - is there adequate representation from researchers in those countries?*
- IHEA already records most meetings and webinars. The recording allows our members to listen later and stay in the loop. **Recording** may make some uncomfortable or be problematic for other reasons. Zoom now asks people to agree before joining. If for some reason you are using another platform (unlikely) always seek permission. If a session was recorded, make sure that the recording is made available to members.
- Zoom offers automatic **closed captioning**, which can be useful in a wide variety of circumstances, such as when someone has hearing impairments, when some participants are engaging in a non-native language, and when individuals are trying to block out background noise while listening. It is good to make sure everyone is aware of how to turn this function on and off.
- IHEA is already testing software for **translation**. This is an important step to support inclusivity. For webinars that are targeting particular regions/countries, we could consider asking those organising a session to make translated abstracts available to members. Or ask for a few ‘key messages’ from the session available (written or audio) in the **language of a country where the research has been undertaken**. This could be uploaded with slides on the IHEA website.

ANNEX B: GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN IHEA WEBINARS

Checklist

Before an event

- Designate a facilitator or chair who will balance airtime and bring out a range of perspectives.
- Design slides that are easy to read, especially on smaller screens.

During an event

- Introduce discussion guidelines or ground rules applicable to the event.
- Ask participants to include a phonetic spelling of their names and their pronouns next to their names on Zoom or another platform.
- Turn on the closed captioning feature on Zoom, or other platform, and let participants know about the functionality.
- Use polls or chat box to gauge mood or feeling of participants.
- Use white board app for brainstorming or question submissions.

After an event

- Disseminate recording of event if it was recorded.
- Share abstract, slides, or key messages from event in different languages.

ANNEX C: IHEA MENTAL HEALTH ECONOMICS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP STATEMENT OF PROCEDURES

DEFINITIONS

- Convener = a member of the SIG leadership team
- Project = any planned activity conducted by the SIG leadership

ROLES

1. The SIG will be led by a group of Conveners.
2. A Lead Convener will provide overall direction and leadership.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Each Convener must lead (or co-lead with another Convener) at least one Project.
2. The Lead Convener will work with the Conveners to ensure that project objectives are met.

PROCESSES

1. The SIG will operate on a biennial (two-yearly) cycle, which will normally renew at the beginning of a calendar year.
2. The Lead Convener will serve in that position for two years, in line with the cycle specified above.
3. Conveners are expected to serve for at least one full cycle.
4. There is no upper limit on the term that a Convener may serve.
5. SIG members may self-nominate for the role of Convener at any time during the cycle.
6. New Conveners must be approved by the current Conveners.
7. A Lead Convener must be selected by the current Conveners prior to the end of the cycle.
8. In the first month of each cycle, Conveners will agree a Business Plan for the cycle.

ANNEX D: TEMPLATE FOR PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A NEW IHEA SIG

- Proposed name of the SIG.
- Background and motivation:
 - Explain the focus of the proposed SIG, why the area of focus is of particular importance and why it is likely to be of interest to IHEA members in a range of countries;
 - Indicate how the SIG will be distinct from existing IHEA SIGs / how the SIG addresses a gap not covered by an existing SIG or well-established community of practice or network outside IHEA.
- Aim and objectives of the proposed SIG.
- Proposed activities of the SIG:
 - Please provide some information on each the proposed activities (rather than just a list of activities).
 - These activities should include those related to IHEA congresses (e.g., explain how the SIG will facilitate the submission of more organized session abstracts) as well as how regular, active engagement among SIG members will be promoted between congresses.
 - Explicitly indicate how these activities will contribute to IHEA's mission and strategic goals (see Annex A).
 - As IHEA is an international association, indicate how these activities will promote engagement across countries and regions.
 - Indicate how early career researchers (ECRs) will benefit from the SIG.
 - Indicate how the SIG will ensure diversity and succession planning in conveners.
- List of IHEA members willing to contribute to SIG activities: a basic requirement for consideration of a SIG proposal is having at least 10 IHEA members expressing a willingness to participate in the SIG. Geographic diversity should be demonstrated with at least some members from high-income countries and some from low- and middle-income countries.
- Names and brief biographies of proposed founding conveners of SIG who would take responsibility for developing the program of work and its implementation - we encourage geographic and gender diversity in the convener group.

If you would like to discuss your ideas for a SIG proposal, please contact the Executive Director (diane.mcintyre@healtheconomics.org).