



Special Interest Group Reference Manual

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About the IGDA

The International Game Developers Association is a non-profit membership organization that advocates globally on issues related to digital game creation. The IGDA's mission is to strengthen the international game development community and effect change to benefit that community.

Overview

An IGDA Special Interest Group (SIG) is a community centered on a topic of interest relevant to game development. SIGs connect members with common professional interests, allowing them to learn from each other, promote their specialties, identify upcoming challenges and endeavor to advance the industry.

As a subgroup of IGDA, each SIG shares the overarching mission of nurturing Community, Professional Development, and Advocacy themed around that topic of interest. To accomplish this mission, SIGs typically maintain communications through lists and forums, have an area on the website for information and discussion related to that aspect of our profession, and develop IGDA programs and projects related to that specialty, such as the Writer's Quarterly, the Global Game Jam, and others. SIGs also provide leadership opportunities that enable members to hone their skills in leading a group and working with other volunteers at all levels of the organization to accomplish significant projects.

Starting a SIG

Anyone interested in starting a SIG should email the IGDA's Executive Director, Joshua Caulfield (Joshua@igda.org), with initial thoughts. In this email, describe the following:

- SIG topic
- reason/need for SIG
- goals/mission
- sample projects/initiatives
- who would likely be involved
- at least 10 names of individuals interested in participating in the SIG

The Executive Director will help refine the initial proposal before taking it to the IGDA's Board of Directors for approval.

Before submitting a SIG proposal, please familiarize yourself with the resources provided by the IGDA, other existing SIGs, and SIG guidelines.

Policies & Procedures

All SIGs must work within basic rules and operating procedures determined by being part of the IGDA, which is a not-for-profit mutual-benefit organization which has to abide by specific rules and guidelines. SIGs are afforded a great deal of autonomy and ability to follow member inspiration and energy in how they design and deploy the shared mission.

At the same time it is important to ensure the SIG works within the rules required of the overall IGDA member organization. This will ensure our IGDA is legally compliant and continues to grow and serve our membership.

Membership Requirements

While we would like all SIG participants to be IGDA members, this is currently NOT a requirement. In general, the IGDA takes a very open and inclusive approach and encourages SIGs to do the same. There are two communities to be served:

- members of the IGDA – these are the IGDA members who are the organizing force and who through IGDA “own” responsibility for the SIG as a service of IGDA members
- beneficiaries of the SIG – those that benefit and participate in the SIG programs. There may be several beneficiaries depending on the program. We encourage the SIG to think about who they are, and communicate this intended group when developing their programs.

It is the IGDA's hope that developers will be inspired to join the IGDA based on the meaningfulness of the SIG's work.

Each SIG must have at least 10 IGDA members active in the SIG to remain a supported active SIG. The SIG may need to provide a list of their membership periodically to review and update the IGDA annual report with the number of members per SIG. It is recommended that the website groups be used to facilitate the membership tracking and communications.

Annual Report

Each SIG needs to report on its annual activities each January. This allows the IGDA Board and overall membership to keep abreast of SIG activities. It will be used to produce the IGDA's Annual Report (which features a section for SIG updates).

There is no set format for the report, but SIGs should briefly mention any milestones, projects completed or underway, a summary of governance activities, as well as any other initiatives.

Financing

As a young organization, the IGDA does not typically have any funding to provide to SIGs beyond the cost of providing the listed shared services, resources and support tools.

The board will consider special requests for financial assistance if a SIG project is especially worthwhile (from a funding point of view). On occasion special SIG seed grants will be available to jump start major new SIG projects, such as the Education SIG's Global Game Jam. SIGs should think of this as a competitive process in terms of illustrating the impact of any such special funding.

Special Interest Group (SIG) Financial Transactions:

Summary: The IGDA seeks to support our SIGs in accepting funds and making them available for use by the SIG participants in their programming. In order to facilitate this, the IGDA has an official process for handling the receipt of funds and the transfer of such funds back to the designated agents of the SIG. The following process should make it easy for SIGs to use the headquarters accounting functions to support their needs.

1. Storage of SIG funds

- a. The Special Interest Groups of the IGDA are not separate legal entities. Thus they are not capable of holding bank accounts in their name.
- b. In addition since the activities of the SIG are part of the operations of the IGDA, the revenues and expenses which are associated with SIG activity fall under the accounting, tax reporting, and legal responsibility and liability of the overall IGDA organization.
- c. Thus funds received by the IGDA for use by the SIGs will be held within the overall IGDA accounts and accounting, and "earmarked" for the use by the SIG for their programs and activities, subject to the other processes below.
- d. Funds so earmarked will be listed as allocated or restricted assets in the IGDA financial statements until such time they are used for their intended purpose. The specific label will be determined by legal requirements for accounting. The Board of Directors, as with all funds controlled by the IGDA, has legal accountability and authority over the disbursements of these funds at all times.

2. Receipt of Funds by the SIG

- a. As the SIG is not a separate entity, funds for SIG activities must be made payable to the IGDA.
- b. Funds paid to the IGDA for SIG activities should include the following information in addition to the funds:
 - i. The full contact info of the person paying the funds to the IGDA
 - ii. The amount of the payment
 - iii. The SIG for which this funding should be earmarked

- iv. The program/event/activity for which these funds are being provided
 - v. The contact person in the SIG the payer is working with
 - vi. Any additional agreements or notes on the transaction
- c. Funds may be collected in the following manner
- i. Checks may be made out to "IGDA" with the reference field noting the SIG the funds should be earmarked for and mailed directly to: IGDA (SIG Name) C/O Joshua Caulfield, IGDA, 19 Mantua Rd, Mt. Royal, NJ 08061
 - ii. Credit Cards may be accepted, but will be subject to a 4% processing fee to cover charges from the card issuing company, gateway, and other processing fees. For credit cards to be accepted on behalf of the SIG, please have the cardholder call Joseph Sapp +1 (856) 423-2990. In addition to the card processing information, please ask the caller to indicate which SIG this transaction is for, and also which event/sponsorship/etc.
 - iii. Cash is not preferred. Should cash be the required form of payment, the IGDA will handle this in a case by case manner, which may require processing fees to be incurred
- d. In the event that there are any fees incurred by the IGDA for the acceptance of funds, these fees will come from the earmarked amounts related to the SIG.

3. Disbursement of Funds on behalf of the SIG

- a. As SIGs are not entities and their funds are technically the property of the IGDA, and bound to the rules and regulations which govern the organization, the authorization of all payments must come from the Executive Director, or the Board Level Officers of the Organization.
- b. Funds will be authorized based on the SIG administrator/chair's recommendation, in accordance with all binding laws, accounting practices, and the bylaws and policies of the association.
- c. All payments for SIG activities must be approved in advance by the Executive Director or the Officers, before the cost is incurred. The IGDA reserves the right to refuse to authorize payments that are not preapproved.
- d. **No binding commitment may be entered into between a SIG and any third party without advance review and approval of IGDA. All contracts for SIG activities must be signed by IGDA; SIG officers do not have the authority to**

execute contracts for the SIG or IGDA. These restrictions apply regardless of the necessity for an expenditure of funds.

- e. SIGs are encouraged to present budgets to the Executive Director and Board during the IGDA budgeting process. In this manner the Board and ED may pre-approve a funding limit, and allow the SIGs to act without requiring approvals for every individual expense.
- f. Funds may be disbursed in the following manners:
 - i. The authorized SIG participant may submit an expense report to the IGDA with receipts for approval by the Executive Director and payment via check from the IGDA CENTRAL which will then be reimbursed from the earmarked funds.
 - ii. The authorized SIG participant may request a check to be cut and sent directly to an entity, by submitting such a request and a documented invoice to the Executive Director for approval and disbursement. The IGDA CENTRAL will copy the participant and SIG chair on any correspondence related to such a payment, and will inform them at the time such a check is sent. (If requested by the SIG, a notification of the check being cashed may also be done.)

Marketing/PR Policy

SIGs can conduct a variety of marketing activities to promote their existence and work (for instance using the various IGDA shared resources listed below, such as the IGDA website, newsletter and conferences).

Where appropriate, we encourage SIGs to build relationships with media and journalists specific to their topic area, to garner coverage for the SIG's work. SIGs are NOT allowed to put out official IGDA press releases. SIGs *are* allowed to send updates, memos, or informal announcements to the media interested in their topic area. If a press release is needed to support an activity the SIG should contact the Executive Director.

SIG leaders are NOT allowed to endorse specific products, platforms, or companies while representing the IGDA. SIG leaders are NOT allowed to give interviews on behalf of the IGDA. If an interview or endorsement is requested please coordinate with the Executive Director to identify a response that can fit with the overall IGDA commitments and communications.

SIGs are strongly encouraged to use all of the built-in announcement functionality via the IGDA web site and newsletter to reach their members and potential members. Look to using these targeted marketing ideas to drive developer awareness and involvement in SIG activities.

Contact IGDA headquarters if there is ever any confusion over how to handle a specific marketing or PR need or opportunity.

Non-Recruitment Policy

SIGs are urged NOT to post job listings on their website or via their other communication mechanisms (e.g., mailing list, online forum, etc).

IGDA SIGs succeed by providing a safe place for developers to share ideas on the given topic of interest. Employers will not support employees' participation or provide company resources if they perceive SIGs as potential job-poaching tools, versus professional development opportunities.

Event Support Policy

The IGDA limits endorsement of external non-IGDA-led game development events to the select few with which we are closely involved (in terms of program development, exhibiting, etc.). The IGDA and its SIGs may NOT make reciprocal marketing agreements with events that don't have an overall IGDA endorsement to define legal commitments. If the SIG has a suggestion or idea for IGDA endorsement of an event, they should contact the Executive Director to develop the idea and coordinate with other possible resources.

If an unendorsed event wants to work with your SIG you can offer any of the following:

- Discounted registration for SIG/IGDA members at the event organizer's discretion. Membership status can be checked via the IGDA community liaison or website.
- If the event organizer wants an SIG/IGDA rep to speak at the event, please contact the IGDA to coordinate.

Where possible, SIGs are encouraged to get involved with local IGDA chapters and their monthly meetings.

Governance

The goals of SIG governance are:

- **leadership** of the SIG to pursue the IGDA mission of Community, Professional Development and Advocacy
- **continuity** of the SIG to enact that mission over the long term, with volunteer contributions from diverse members

- **leadership development** of SIG members to gain skills and experience in leading and supporting a volunteer-based organization

Naturally, each SIG will support different levels of involvement and contribution from members. Leadership development of members is a core mission of every SIG, and should always be considered as an overarching goal.

Leadership Structure

Each SIG should have the following at a minimum:

- A **Chair** to oversee the activities of the SIG
- A **steering committee** composed of at least three IGDA members active in the SIG to assist the chair with SIG activities. The steering committee should have a chair to effectively serve as the overall leader of the SIG.
- A **content manager** to report news of SIG happenings to the IGDA board, the membership and to compile the yearly SIG annual report with the assistance of the chair and steering committee for distribution in January. The content manager also ensures that the SIG's homepage on IGDA.org is up-to-date. The content manager serves the chair and the steering committee. The chair or a steering committee member may fill the position or appoint an IGDA member active in the SIG to do so. The content manager may work with one or more content providers within the SIG to prepare this information.

The role of the chair and steering committee is to provide a basic level of governance/control, not unlike the Board and Chair of the Board of the overall organization. As each SIG is unique, to a large extent, it is up to the SIG itself to design and evolve the level of governance that is appropriate for the members. As needed, SIGs may also have advisory boards or committees created for a specific purpose.

Elections

SIGs should hold elections at least every three years. The SIG's chair emeritus should expect to assist the new chair for a period of six months, especially as the chair's responsibilities relate to existing conferences such as GDC, The IGDA Leadership Forum and the like. Existing SIG leadership may also run for re-election.

The normal timing for SIG elections is in October-November, so that the new leadership can be involved in annual budget planning for the parent organization.

Please announce upcoming elections within your SIG, and solicit candidates through your mailing list. Actual elections may be scheduled with the assistance of our management group, Talley. Votes will be tabulated, processed and verified by Talley. Results will be posted on the IGDA web site.

Transition period: *SIGs whose leadership has been in place for more than three years as of July 2009, or which have never had elections, must prepare for elections. Going forward, when a new SIG is started the Board will coordinate as to whether an election is needed.*

Election and Voting Format

The election framework and leadership structure is designed to provide for a variety of elections to suit existing and successful SIG practices. These elections include:

- Electing a chair directly (the default form of election) who then may appoint steering committee members.
- Elect a steering committee which then appoints a chair from its members.
- Electing a chair and steering committee, for instance having the next highest vote getters form the steering committee

Note: An appointed steering committee may not elect a chair in a following year. Elected steering committees can appoint a chair. Elected Chairs can appoint steering committee members.

Win is by majority of votes received. Only IGDA members who are members of the SIG may vote.

Transition: Each SIG should report its desired election structure (typically the default one or one they currently have) and report this to the IGDA as well as their planned election date. The normal cycle of elections is expected to be held in October or November so that the new elected leader can transition in December.

SIGs who have not declared an election method are also encouraged to select the default method, and SIGs created after that day should select the default form of election upon their creation. Changing the election structure of the group requires IGDA Board approval and a vote among SIG members.

The IGDA will assist current chairs with administrative duties for the election and transition. Your SIG members should be informed of this prior to the election to allow interested members to renew their membership so that they can vote.

In the event of issues which affect the membership, the SIG and/or the IGDA as a whole, the IGDA Board retains the right to remove the Chair and/or members of his or her leadership.

Candidates

The qualifications to be a candidate for SIG Leader are as follows:

1. The candidate must be a member in good standing.

2. The candidate must have been a member of IGDA at least two (2) membership years prior.
3. The candidate must adhere to the Leadership (Board of Directors) Code of Ethics.
4. The candidate must agree to read and follow this IGDA SIG Reference Manual with respect to their legal, financial, and organizational responsibilities.

As determined by the SIG's existing leadership, membership or steering committee, SIGs may choose to place certain additional restrictions on who can and cannot run for Chair or a seat on the Steering Committee. In some cases and similar to the industry itself, service work to the SIG may be necessary before running for a leadership position. All cases where the SIG wishes to require candidate pre-requisites must be approved by the IGDA board and these will be reviewed annually.

In addition, the membership of the SIG can request the Board of Directors review the SIGs elections process for fairness at any time. This requires 10 IGDA SIG members in good standing to make the request of the Board. Requests can be submitted through the Executive Director. The IGDA Board has the final authority on all SIG activities.

Programs, Resources & Support

The IGDA provides basic resources, tools and support to start and maintain SIGs. SIGs are member-driven and it is the responsibility of SIG members to work together to grow, maintain and manage the SIG to accomplish the mission. As a volunteer-based non-profit organization, the central IGDA office cannot provide significant financial resources to the SIG, but can assist in organization structure, coaching SIG direction and goals, communicating the goals and accomplishments of the SIG, and assist in obtaining underwriters and sponsors for the SIGs projects that require additional funding. On occasion special SIG seed grants will be available to jump start major new SIG projects, such as the Education SIG's Global Game Jam.

Below are some examples of the resources and programs a SIG would typically develop and build on, in accomplishing its mission. These programs are primarily built on shared services funded through IGDA member dues.

Web Space

Each SIG is provided with its own space on igda.org to host a mini-site. The SIG is responsible for initial set-up and maintenance of this space.

The SIG home web page should contain basic information about the SIG (mission, goals, and contact info), along with links to relevant materials, articles, and interviews.

Wiki: This is a possible option for member created content and information supporting the SIG area of interest.

Web Volunteers: If SIGs are unable to recruit a volunteer to handle website responsibilities, or needs assistance with getting desired content or services online, the IGDA Web Team is available to advise and help with basic setup. Please contact the IGDA's community liaison, Joseph Sapp, at Joda@igda.org.

Mailing List

In addition to the Group communication features of the website, SIGs can request a dedicated mailing list for email based member discussions. The IGDA will setup the list, but the SIG is responsible for ongoing administration and moderation.

A mailing list is a powerful way to build a virtual community and engage in meaningful dialogue. It may be necessary if the SIG's beneficiaries include people who are not IGDA members.

Online Discussion Forum

To complement the mailing list and web site, each SIG has a dedicated discussion sub-forum in the IGDA's online forums. The SIG is responsible for providing a forum moderator.

Email Redirect Alias

To facilitate the group's communication with SIG leaders, each SIG has an email alias (e.g., signature@igda.org). This alias can redirect to any number of SIG leaders and/or coordinators.

News Dissemination

The IGDA can help disseminate SIG news to the larger IGDA membership via the monthly IGDA newsletter and from the IGDA homepage. Please contact the IGDA Web Team (webmaster@igda.org) for specific information and assistance in promoting SIG news on any IGDA news channel.

Conference Presence

The IGDA has several meeting rooms and booth space at GDC (San Francisco) and often has a presence at other professional conferences and trade shows. These resources

can be leveraged by a SIG to conduct roundtable sessions, or private working meetings. Many SIGs use this opportunity for an annual gathering or planning.

Before such meetings, the IGDA will email SIG leaders/coordinators with the details and process for requesting space. The IGDA may not be able to satisfy every request, as space is limited.

SIG Activity Examples

Here is a short list of examples of SIG work to give a sense of the breadth of activities that can be undertaken. A complete list of SIGs and their efforts is available online: New SIGs and SIG Leaders are encouraged to visit other SIGs to get ideas of new programs and services.

White Paper

The Online Games SIG has produced extensive reports detailing the business and technology of online and web based games. Each year's white paper is downloaded several thousand times and freely provides a wealth of knowledge to the development community.

Best Practices

The Game Accessibility SIG is working on development and design best practices for creating games playable by those with disabilities.

Standards

The Artificial Intelligence SIG has a sub-committee working on AI interface standards, with the hopes of creating an open API for AI development

In Summary

IGDA Special Interest Groups are a key element to how IGDA can serve our members and our industry. The work you as members put into nurturing and growing a SIG is a worthy and rewarding effort but it **will** bring challenges in overcoming roadblocks and working with a volunteer organization. Please see the IGDA Executive Director, Staff and Board as resources to help you and your SIG be successful and important in moving IGDA forward.

Contact Info

Please contact us with any questions or concerns. Be sure to keep us posted!

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