



ClfA

**Chartered
Institute for
Archaeologists**



ClfA Area and Special Interest Groups guidance

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CifA Area and Special Interest Groups guidance

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CifA Area and Special Interest Groups guidance

A. Purpose of this guidance document

Thank you for being part of a CifA Group. Whether you're new to a Group or already volunteering, this guidance will help support you in your role.

Building on CifA's Regulations governing Groups, this guidance covers your key responsibilities, how decisions are made, useful resources, and who to go to for help. It should give you the grounding you need to contribute confidently and effectively and understand how Area and Special Interest Groups can create meaningful change to the profession.

Additional support is available via

- [Groups Toolkit](#) - a suite of documents and templates to help committees run your Group
- [Groups webpages](#) – public information about each Group, their activities and how to get involved
- [CifA's Knowledge Hub Group committee page](#) – a space to share resources and discussions with other committee members
- [Email CifA staff with any questions](#) – direct support from staff for advice or clarification

B. Introduction and Group types explained

CifA Groups exist to support the professional development and engagement of CifA members by creating communities built around shared areas of interest and expertise. Whether a Group is shaped by a particular specialism, region, or experience, they provide platforms to share ideas, promote archaeology, network and develop new ways of doing things.

They all achieve this by exchanging knowledge, encouraging collaboration, advocating for the profession, and fostering innovation within archaeology.

The following four types of Groups can be formed

Area Group	Special Interest Group	Network	Working Group
geographical such as a country, region, or county	specific subject interest or area of technical expertise	subject interest, area of technical expertise, discussion topic, job role or career stage	specific piece of work or output

While each type has its own way of working and engaging with members, the overarching aim is the same: to benefit members by sharing good practice, building professional connections, developing skills,

and contributing to sector-wide standards as set out in CifA's three-year plan.

All group activities should provide value for members and be shaped around members' needs. As a volunteer, your involvement helps ensure that your Group's work is driven by members.

Groups check list

The checklist outlines the main outputs and actions expected from each type of CifA Group. The full version is available in the [Groups toolkit](#).

Activity	Area or Special Interest Group	Network	Working Group
AGM with optional conference	Yes	No	No
Regular meetings	Yes	Yes	As required
Meeting actions recorded	Yes	No	Yes
Informal online/in person events	Yes	Yes	No
Formal online/in person CPD	Yes	No	Optional
Bulletins or newsletters	Yes	Ad hoc	On completion
Three-year plan	Yes	No	No
Annual report	Yes	Yes	Yes
Group supporters to join for a fee	Yes	No	No
Member positions required	Minimum 5 members	2 facilitators	1 Chair or 2 Co chairs
Advisory Council representative	Yes	No	No
Obtain policy opinions and proposals	Yes	No	No
Knowledge-Hub use	Optional	Optional	Optional
Time/task limited	No	No	Yes

Group reorganisation or closure

To ensure that all Groups remain relevant and active, CifA may suspend, reorganise or close an Area or Special Interest Group if it no longer meets the requirements set out in the Group Regulations or if it is not delivering the expected activities and outputs. This helps maintain the value and consistency that members expect from each Group.

C. Area and Special Interest Group overview

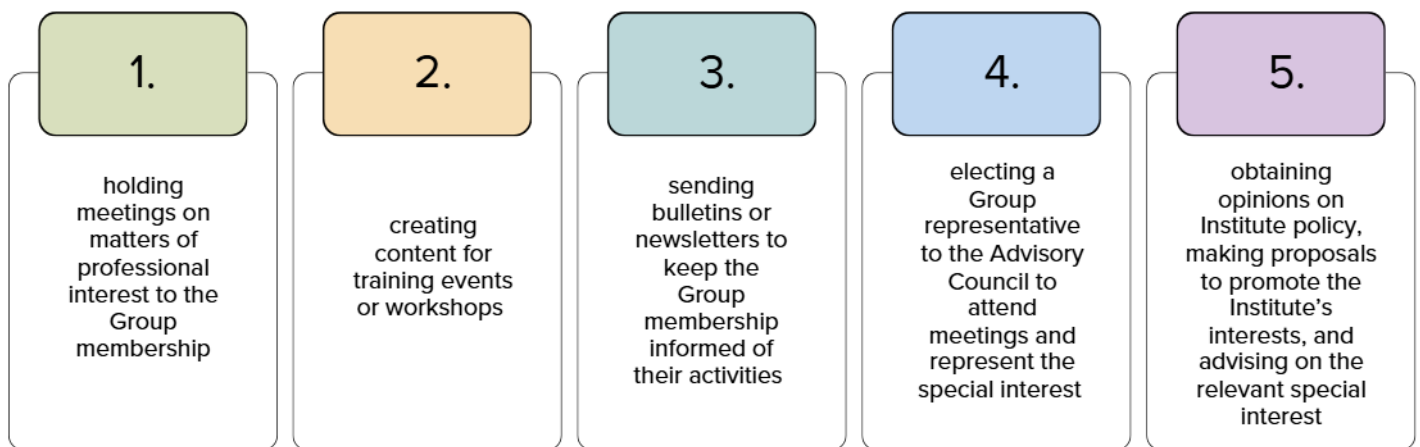
Area and Special Interest Groups are the most active of all Group types and are open to all CifA members to join. Area and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) main aims are



If you're part of an Area or Special Interest Group, your efforts play a key role in shaping how CifA supports and represents specialist practice within archaeology.

D. Area and Special Interest Group activities

There are five activities listed in the Group regulations for Area and Special Interest Groups which are required to be carried out. These are:



Below is a more detailed outline of each activity.

1. Holding meetings on matters of professional interest to the Group membership

CifA encourages Area and Special Interest Group committees to meet at least four times a year. These meetings don't have to be lengthy. Sometimes a short meeting to confirm a decision is all that's needed.

Having a clear agenda will ensure the meeting runs smoothly. The Secretary should ensure meeting agendas reflect the Group's aims and align with its three-year plan. When discussing new activities or proposals, be realistic about your Group's capacity to deliver them to keep things manageable.

The minutes recorded by the Secretary can be a simple list of agreed actions. Assigning responsibility to individuals helps ensure tasks are followed up after the meeting.

All committee members are expected to contribute actively to discussions and take on tasks where possible. Sharing responsibilities fairly helps keep momentum and avoids overburdening individual volunteers.

2. Creating content for training events or workshops

To maintain consistent engagement, we suggest Area and Special Interest Groups deliver at least two online CPD sessions or discussion meetings each year, in addition to the Group AGM.

Area and Special Interest Groups play a key role in delivering activities that support members' professional development and promote the sharing of specialist knowledge. Events and resources are one of the most visible and useful ways that Groups engage with the membership, develop contacts, showcase expertise and contribute to wider sector practice.

Events can take many forms depending on what best suits your Group's audience and capacity. Examples include

- Annual General Meeting (which can also include a conference element if relevant)
- a lunchtime webinar or panel discussion
- a themed online Q&A
- a practical training workshop or eLearning module
- a collaborative event with another Group or external organisation
- informal networking events (online or in-person)

These activities don't need to be large or complex, but they should have a clear purpose, be well-timed and accessible. Planning ahead helps ensure that events are manageable and spread out in a way that supports regular member engagement.

For guidance on planning and promoting events including tips, templates, and support with logistics refer to the [Group's Toolkit](#).

3. Sending bulletins or newsletters to keep the Group membership informed

CifA recommends at least four communications per year. These don't have to follow a set schedule but regular contact shows members that the Group is active.

Regular communication is an important part of keeping your Group active, visible and relevant. Area and Special Interest Groups are encouraged to stay in contact with their members throughout the year as this helps maintain interest and ensures members feel included in the Group's work.

One simple but effective way to do this is through bulletins or newsletters which can be shared by email through your Group Coordinator to meet GDPR requirements. These updates might include news about upcoming events, opportunities to get involved, brief summaries of recent activity or useful resources related to your Group's focus. You don't need to write long pieces. Short, clear updates are often most effective.

4. Electing a Group representative to the Advisory Council

Each Area and Special Interest Group must elect a representative to sit on CifA's Advisory Council every year. This ensures your Group has a voice in wider discussions about the direction of the Institute and the profession.

Once elected the representative should attend Advisory Council meetings and keep the Group committee informed of relevant updates or opportunities to contribute. The meetings are held online four times per year.

For more information about Advisory Council view [the webpage](#) or the Advisory Council Group representative role and responsibilities graphic on the [Groups Toolkit](#).

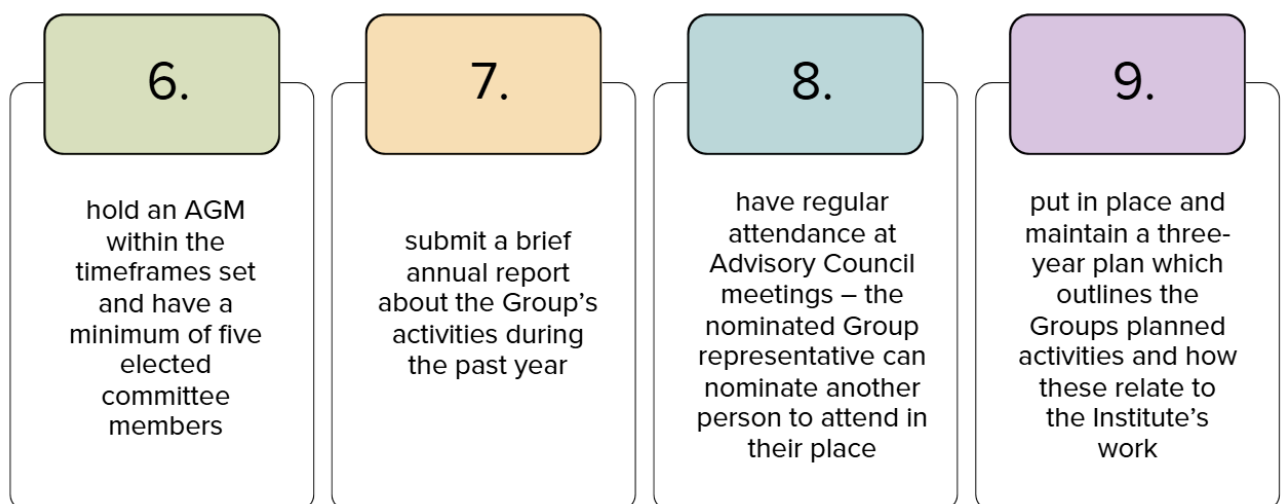
5. Obtaining opinions on Institute policy and advising on the relevant special interest

One of the key roles of your Group is to make sure your members' views are heard at a wider level. This includes gathering feedback on Institute policies, suggesting ideas or proposals that support CifA's aims and offering insight on your Group's specialist area or focus. This can be through responding to consultations in your specialist area, getting involved with Working Groups or the Group representative may also bring these perspectives to Advisory Council meetings for consideration. This is a good way for your Group to contribute to the profession beyond your own activities as it ensures your collective expertise and interests inform CifA's future direction.

Encouraging your members to share their opinions and feeding this into Group conversations also strengthens the link between CifA's strategic work and the real-world experience of professionals.

E. Additional requirements for Area and Special Interest Groups

In addition to the activities listed the regulations also require Area or Special Interest Groups to



Below is a more detailed outline of each activity.

6. Holding an AGM within the timeframes set

A Group AGM, or Annual General Meeting, is a yearly meeting that brings together members of a group. This meeting provides an opportunity to reflect on the past year's activities and set out plans for the year ahead. It is where formal decisions are made (see below). AGMs are announced in advance and accompanied by an agenda, ensuring members know what to expect and have the chance to participate meaningfully.

Area and Special Interest Groups should hold an AGM every calendar year to

- elect officers and members of the Group Committee
- announce the name of the Group representative on the Advisory Council
- receive reports from officers on the Group's activities over the past year
- receive a statement of income and expenditure of the Group informed by the relevant CifA staff member

At least three weeks (twenty one days) before the AGM date, we will send a notice to Group members by email and add this to the Group webpage with information about vacant positions. Group members (and committee if needed) can nominate themselves for election onto the Group committee by completing a nomination form.

Details about committee roles and the responsibilities of each can be found in the [Groups Toolkit](#). If you cannot access the toolkit or need more information, please get in touch.

7. Submitting an annual report

Each year the Group Secretary writes and submits a short report summarising their activities over the past 12 months, with input from the committee. This is an overview of what your Group has delivered such as events, resources, communications or contributions to wider CifA work. The template to submit [can be found here](#).

This report is important because it:

- helps CifA track the impact of Group activity across the Institute
- demonstrates the value your Group brings to members
- ensures transparency and accountability as part of your ongoing responsibilities
- helps you to reflect on progress, highlight achievements and identify any areas for future focus

To view examples of previous annual reports, view the [annual reviews and accounts webpage](#).

8. Regular attendance at Advisory Council meetings

Please refer to the information above. Committees need to ensure the nominated representative attends as many meetings through the year as possible.

The nominated representative can substitute another committee member if they are not able to attend. They should let the staff member who sends the agenda and calendar invitations know as soon as possible if they are unavailable for any reason.

9. Put in place and maintain a three-year plan

Each Area and Special Interest Group maintains a three-year plan outlining intended activities and priorities. This isn't a rigid schedule, but a flexible working guide that can evolve as your Group's focus shifts or as new opportunities arise.

The three-year plan is valuable for several reasons. It

- helps you to stay on track with goals and supports long-term planning
- provides clarity for new volunteers stepping into roles making it a key part of effective succession planning
- offers a quick understanding of where the Group is headed and what's already in motion for Group members

It also allows CifA to better coordinate support by understanding what's coming up across all Groups and helps us to identify where we might need to offer staff time, or where Groups might have opportunities to collaborate.

Your plan should focus on realistic and meaningful activity. Prioritising quality over quantity helps keep things manageable and ensures that what you deliver is valuable to members. Think of it as a tool to help your Group work sustainably, with space to adapt as needed. For more information, download a copy of the [three year plan template](#).

6. Area and Special Interest Group volunteer roles and structure

Area and Special Interest Group committees are made up of volunteers who bring a range of skills and experience to support Group activities. Roles are designed to be flexible and manageable alongside your professional and personal commitments. On average, most roles involve around 4–5 hours of time per month. During busier periods such as planning an event or producing a resource you may be asked to contribute a little more, but this is usually short-term and shared across the team.

Success comes from working together, communicating well, and sharing a commitment to your Group's goals. Being flexible and working together as a group helps you all to contribute meaningfully without feeling overwhelmed.

Area or Special Interest Group Officer roles

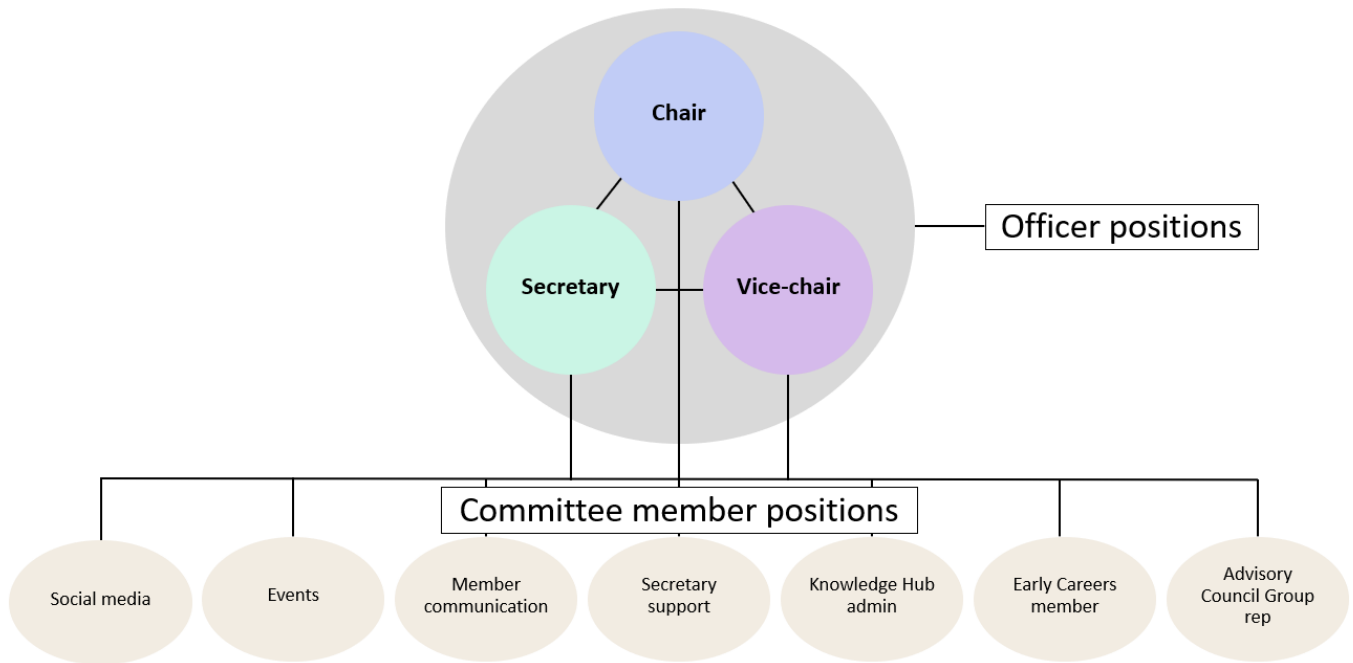
Each SIG is led by three Officers: a Chair, Secretary, and Vice-Chair, supported by the wider committee. These core roles have specific responsibilities that help the Group stay organised, compliant, and responsive to the Group members' needs. While each Officer has a defined focus, they all work together with committee members to keep things running smoothly.

Officer roles can only be carried out by accredited members, but committee member roles may also be held by Affiliate and Student members. For a breakdown of each role and what's typically involved, you can [view the roles and responsibilities infographic](#).

Area and Special Interest Group committee members

Committee members make up the majority of our Group volunteers and play a central role in helping deliver the Group's aims and activities. Whether you're contributing to events, communications or providing a particular perspective, your input directly shapes what the Group offers its members.

While some committee members hold specific roles, these can change depending on the Group's needs and current projects. Formal experience isn't essential - just a willingness to get involved, work with others and support the Group's objectives.



7. Area and Special Interest Group finances







CifA allocates an annual budget to each group to support the work of Area and Special Interest Groups and to cover the costs of in-person committee meetings. This funding is not intended to cover personal professional development, pay volunteers for their time or fund unrelated external activities. Unused Group budget cannot be rolled over to the next financial year or reallocated to other activities.

If you are representing CifA at an external event such as speaking on behalf of the Institute or running a stall then expenses such as travel, entry fees and accommodation may be covered. This must be agreed in advance and requests for funding are made on a case by case basis.

Events held by the Group will be priced accordingly by CifA to ensure that all costs will be covered by event fees, and there is a clear distinction between costs for members and non-members of CifA. There is more information about event costing on the [Groups toolkit](#).

8. Tips to help you run an Area or Special Interest Group

To help you get the most out of your role and to ensure the committee works smoothly as a team we've outlined a few key suggestions to keep everything running effectively.

	Read the Group aims and the current three-year plan. This will give you an idea about the 'now' and what you need to focus on, as well as the required outputs to consider.
	What topics matter to the Group members? Is it sharing knowledge, influencing policy, in person networking or promoting good practice? You can decide which activities will meet these needs and therefore those of your Group members.
	Meet regularly and keep in touch including welcoming new members and helping them to understand the responsibilities required of them. A Knowledge Hub page or email chain can allow committee members to communicate informally in between meetings.
	Keep it manageable. A few well delivered events, CPD opportunities or publications a year go a long way and represent good member value. This is better than trying to achieve too much and feeling as though you have failed when you don't reach your targets.
	Communicate! Use social media, the Group page on the CifA website, or email via the Group Coordinator to keep members in the loop by sharing updates or upcoming opportunities.
	Don't do it all alone. CifA staff can help with Group promotion, planning, events, advice and so much more. Other Groups might also have good tools or templates you can utilise. Reach out on Knowledge Hub with collaboration offers or ask for advice.

9. Area and Special Interest Group supporters

Non-CifA members can join Area and Special Interest Groups by signing up as Group Supporters for an annual fee. This gives them access to Group activities, events, communications, and resources on the same terms as CifA members. For information about joining as a Group supporter, view the [joining information page](#).

It's important that Groups offer clear value to both CifA members and Group supporters as everyone involved in the Group should feel they are gaining something of professional benefit. This can be built into your Group's planning through targeted communications or promotional efforts as part of your three-year plan. Groups should aim to recruit at least three new supporters each year as part of the criteria for receiving a budget allocation.

Groups are also encouraged to highlight the wider advantages of CifA membership/accreditation to their supporters. Promoting the benefits of joining the Institute not only helps grow the professional community but also strengthens the impact and reach of your Group.

10. Thank you

Thank you for volunteering as part of a CifA Group.

If you have any questions, need support in your role, or want to explore opportunities to get more involved, CifA staff are here to help.