

# Guidelines for Shared Interest Groups (SIGs)

Shared Interest Groups (SIGs) are a benefit offered to all OLLI-USF members. They foster fellowship by encouraging OLLI-USF members to engage with others who share a common interest. **SIGs do not take the place of OLLI courses. They complement and enhance classes and other programs offered by OLLI-USF; they are not to compete with or duplicate them.**

Shared Interest Groups are member-driven, not staff-driven. That is, they are established, managed, and run by OLLI members who share an interest. OLLI-USF provides opportunities for SIGs to organize, advertise and promote their activities. A SIG's vitality, therefore, depends mainly upon the active participation and commitment of its own members.

These guidelines outline how SIGs are established and how they operate within OLLI-USF, and includes tips for maintaining a thriving SIG.

## Establishing a New SIG

1. Begin by reading these guidelines completely so that you understand the purpose, structure and operation of a SIG and the entire process for establishing one.
2. Complete a SIG proposal form.
3. Submit your proposal to OLLI-USF. Return your completed proposal form to the OLLI offices on campus in the NEC building, attn.: Cath Mason, or email your proposal to [cmason6@usf.edu](mailto:cmason6@usf.edu).
4. The Operations Manager will review your proposal in consultation with the SIG Liaison. Proposals for new SIGs may be approved, rejected, or returned to the applicant for additional information or with suggestions for revision. The SIG Liaison will work with you should additional information be needed.
5. When a proposal is accepted it is first granted provisional approval pending the successful outcome of the new SIG's organizational meeting.
6. Schedule an organizational meeting of at least 12 founding members. A member of the OLLI staff must attend. (See the section below on scheduling rooms.) If you don't know 12 committed members, don't give up. See the section below on recruiting and publicity, and discuss your concerns with the SIG Liaison.
7. Hold your organizational meeting with at least 12 founding members and accomplish the following:
  - Agree upon a SIG Coordinator and other "officers" who will assist in the organization and management of the group. Each SIG is required to have a Coordinator who is responsible for the group's activities and compliance with OLLI-USF's rules for SIGs. Successful SIGs "share

the load” of running the SIG by distributing tasks among several members, planning when and how they will turn over responsibilities, and designating back-up persons for key tasks.

- Decide whether it is appropriate to require that members have a certain level of competence or experience or have completed a specific OLLI course to join the SIG. For example, a Bridge SIG may specify that it is for beginning, intermediate or advanced players.
  - Confirm that there is sufficient interest among members and prospective members to maintain a viable SIG.
  - Agree on a meeting schedule and format.
  - Review the rules set by OLLI-USF for SIGs.
8. The SIG is granted final approval upon effective completion of the organizational meeting. Enjoy your SIG!

## Operation of SIGs

**Meetings:** Special Interest Groups meet on a regular schedule, monthly or on another schedule, according to the needs of the group. Most SIGs meet off campus, and may meet at other locations—regularly or occasionally—according to the SIG’s needs and preferences. Meetings may be held, for example, at restaurants, bowling alleys, or parks, but the location needs to be available and accessible to any OLLI member. **Generally, OLLI class venues are not available for SIG meetings. OLLI’s Zoom licenses are available for SIG meetings and events.** Commercial or professional solicitation for services or products is not permitted at SIG meetings.

**Joining SIGs:** Each SIG must designate a contact person who provides information about their SIG. The information contact is often the Coordinator, but may be a different person. OLLI-USF members who wish to join a SIG are encouraged to call or email the information contact to confirm meeting times and locations.

**Current OLLI-USF membership is required for regular participation in Shared Interest Groups.** Visitors who wish to learn more about OLLI-USF or a specific SIG are welcome to visit one time. To continue participating, individuals *must* become OLLI-USF members. Refer interested persons to OLLI-USF Registrar Charise Dixie at 813-974-5848 to join OLLI, or join online via [www.usfseniors.org](http://www.usfseniors.org). SIG Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that all of their regular members comply with this requirement.

**Record Keeping:** SIG Coordinators need to keep an up-to-date list of their members that includes email addresses and phone numbers in order to communicate with them regularly. Inactive members should be purged from the list periodically. SIG Member Lists are collected occasionally to verify that SIG participants are OLLI-USF members.

In addition, a record of attendance needs to be kept for all SIG meetings. It is helpful to use a bound sign-in notebook with a page for each meeting, or sign-in sheets kept in a binder. Some SIGs pass a copy of their membership list and have attendees initial it. Choose a method that works best for you. Report monthly attendance to the SIG liaison.

**Scheduling Rooms:** SIG Coordinators are responsible for finding appropriate meeting space. Feel free to contact an OLLI-USF staff member to discuss options for meeting space. SIGs that meet at an OLLI-USF venue are required to select a regular meeting schedule and to work with OLLI staff, who make space reservations in advance. These times are reviewed each term and may be changed to accommodate class schedules and other OLLI activities. Due to the demand we place on our classroom venues (on campus or off), these are generally not the best option for SIG meetings.

## SIG Liaison

Shared Interest Groups are supported by OLLI's SIG Liaison, an appointed member of OLLI-USF's leadership team and Board of Advisors. The Liaison's job is to help develop, promote and assist where needed with the operation of SIGs. They are SIGs' champion at OLLI: don't hesitate to reach out to them when in need of guidance, advice, or resources. Our SIG Liaison is currently Kathy Palmer, herself an active member of several SIGs, assisted by Nancy Baily.

## Recruiting and Publicity

Each SIG is responsible for recruiting participants, notifying their members in advance of meetings, generating their own publicity and communication materials, and for helping to keep information published about their SIG up to date. While SIG Coordinators may be responsible for this, some SIGs designate other members to be responsible for publicity, communication, and recruiting. A variety of methods are available for publicizing SIG activities and recruiting new members. Please note the contact person for each method below:

- **Revisions to the OLLI Course Catalog SIG pages are due October 1 / February 1 / July 1.** These should go to Cath Mason, OLLI Operations Manager, at [cmason6@usf.edu](mailto:cmason6@usf.edu); 813-974-8422.
- **Open Houses**—SIGs are encouraged to send representatives to provide information at SIG tables set up at Open Houses.
- **Classroom Announcements**—to visit a class that is closely related to your SIG topic and make a brief announcement, contact the course instructor to request permission and make arrangements. Review our current catalog for instructor names; staff can provide contact information.
- If you are trying to get a new SIG up and running and a **general announcement** would be useful, provide a brief written announcement to Joseph McAuliffe, (813) 974-5166, [jmcauliffe@usf.edu](mailto:jmcauliffe@usf.edu). **Please provide several weeks lead notice of announcements** you wish to have included in the weekly eblast.
- **OLLI Master Calendar**—regularly-scheduled meetings should appear on OLLI's public calendar. OLLI staff will post regularly-scheduled meetings, once notified of them. Go to <http://bit.ly/OLLIcalendar> to view the OLLI Master Calendar.

## Notification of Changes or Problems

- Immediately notify staff of the following changes: your SIG's Coordinator, other designated information contact persons, these person's current phone numbers or email addresses, or your group's regular meeting schedule.
- One-time changes in your SIG's meeting time need not be reported. However, please do notify OLLI so staff can answer inquiries when people are looking for your group.
- Please notify the SIG Liaison of any SIG formation problems or desire to dissolve your SIG so that OLLI-USF's SIG listings remain current.

## Contacts

SIG Liaison: Nancy Baily, [nwilliamson100@yahoo.com](mailto:nwilliamson100@yahoo.com) OLLI Operations: Cath Mason, [cmason6@usf.edu](mailto:cmason6@usf.edu), 813-974-8422

OLLI Registration: Charise Dixie, [olli-inquiries@usf.edu](mailto:olli-inquiries@usf.edu) or 813-974-5848