

# Yale Shared Interest Groups

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is a shared interest group?**

Shared interest groups allow alumni to engage and connect through a broad range of interests, affiliations, identities and professional fields that crosscut class years, majors, regional clubs and associations, Graduate and Professional Schools groups, and other constituencies. More than simply mechanisms through which alumni can organize social events and functions, SIGs are mission-driven groups that aspire to have a positive impact for alumni, Yale University, local communities, and beyond.

Shared interest groups tend to fall into four general categories: (1) identity (2) vocation (3) student-affiliated associations and (4) avocation. Examples of SIGs include the Yale Veterans Association, YaleWomen, Yale Black Alumni Association, Yale GALA (Yale's LGBT alumni group), Yale in Hollywood and the Yale Alumni Nonprofit Association among others.

For a complete listing of SIGs, click [here](#) or visit: <http://aya.yale.edu/find/sig>

### **What is the SIG department?**

As part of the Association of Yale Alumni (AYA), the SIG Department engages the entire alumni community and works strategically with SIG officers, leaders and volunteers to position their respective groups for sustainable success. The scope of assistance and level of support, which is determined on a case-by-case basis, range from counsel and guidance on governance, mission discernment, strategic planning, programming and institutional development, to the planning and hosting of SIG-affiliated reunions, conferences and special events, both on campus and around the world.

### **How are new shared interest groups created?**

Alumni who have an interest in establishing a particular SIG should first contact the SIG department to discuss their ideas and confirm that the proposed SIG is aligned with University principles and is not in conflict with existing organizations. Upon confirmation from the SIG department, alumni are encouraged to complete the initial organizational efforts on their own. After there is a determination that initial grassroots organizing has yielded the foundation of a sustainable SIG, the SIG department works with alumni leaders in building up and developing the SIG. As emerging SIGs mature and evolve, increasingly they are able to function more autonomously—governing their own affairs, organizing their own programming and events, and independently sourcing funds for their own activities.

### **What are the requirements to become a SIG?**

In brief here is a summary of guidelines for an alumni group to become a recognized SIG:

- **Mission statement or statement of purpose:** This document should answer the questions, “What is the group’s intended purpose?” The group’s purpose should be well defined and complement Yale’s larger mission.
- **Membership:** The prospective membership base for a SIG must be at least 100 alumni, with a commitment from at least 50 actively participating alumni.
- **Nonprofit status:** While not a requirement, nor necessarily desirable depending on the circumstances, each SIG has the option to pursue nonprofit 501(c)(3) status. Nonprofits cannot be involved in any significant commercial activity. They cannot engage in lobbying or political activities, as well as activities that would jeopardize their, or Yale’s, not-for-profit status.
- **Constitution or operating principles:** To ensure good governance, each group should have a constitution or set of operating procedures.
- **Bylaws:** In accordance with the constitution and to ensure good operating procedures, a SIG should have bylaws, or an “operating manual.”
- **Volunteer leadership:** Each groups should have identified officers (minimum of three) as set forth in their by-laws.
- **Long range or strategic plans:** It is recommended that a proposed SIG draft and submit for review a multi-year plan (three years recommended) outlining its aims, goals, objectives and activities.
- **Annual Reports:** It is recommended that SIGs submit an annual report, including an overview of activities, goals achieved, financial statements, and current members.

Contact the SIG Department if you have any questions or require clarification about these guidelines.

### **How can I start a SIG?**

Alumni who are interested in starting a new SIG should contact the SIG Department to discuss the best way to proceed.

### **What type of financial support do SIGs get from the AYA?**

Shared interest groups, like other Yale alumni groups, are expected to be self-sustaining, self-supporting organizations. On occasion the SIG Department may be able to provide strategic supplemental funding to assist SIGs on select events and initiatives, depending on the circumstances. Funding requests should be submitted in writing to the SIG Department for consideration. These proposals are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **How does a SIG become officially recognized by AYA and the University?**

Emerging SIGs seeking official recognition by AYA, and the University, should contact the SIG Department. An emerging SIG is eligible for official recognition and potential delegate representation at the AYA Assembly after completing two years of sustained programmatic activity.

### **Final Note**

You are encouraged to contact the SIG Department with any questions you may have not covered by this FAQs page. Thank you.