

# Section Activities

Section Councils represent unique groups of volunteers in that like a local organization, they determine what activities a section will participate in as part of an annual plan. The purpose of this document is to describe likely and appropriate section activities.. Whether a section is composed exclusively of SOA members or is a jointly sponsored section, all sections are governed by SOA Section Bylaws, SOA Section Policies (both approved by the Board), SOA Section Guidelines and Principles (approved by the Council of Section Chairpersons), and business operations required by the SOA. Our partnerships and co-sponsors are highly valued; however, the “bottom line” is that sections exist because the information is filed with the State of Illinois as part of the Society of Actuaries organization.

Most frequently, when this document refers to “Section” activities, it means the activities of the Section Council and key volunteers supporting the actions of the Council. This material should be reviewed for revisions on an annual basis.



## Foundational Activities: Stewardship

**Purpose:** To provide Section leadership, to ensure continuity, and to comply with SOA governance. Without a strong foundation, the Section will not be able to carry on its activities and continue as a future enterprise.

**Volunteer Management and Council Roles** - Stewardship is the primary responsibility of the Section Council, with infrastructure and support from the SOA Staff, and some participation by the Board Partner.

- Each Section (Council) is assigned a Board Partner, a Staff Partner, and a Section Specialist. The Leadership Team makes all Board assignments.
- Elected Council Offices are the Chairperson, Vice Chair & Secretary/Treasurer.
- All other roles may be assigned, may be Council members or “friends of the Council”, may be members or affiliates of the Section. Section roles and responsibilities are defined on the SOA website at:  
<http://www.soa.org/professional-interests/professional-interests/prof-Council-roles-and-responsibilities.aspx> Most frequently found of those other roles are:
  - Meeting Coordinators – Major meetings need to have coordinators 10 months in advance of the event. They may be asked to attend a face-to-face meeting at the SOA and participate in monthly conference calls or webcasts.
  - Section Newsletter Editors – The schedule for the following year is set in the fall. Variations from the established schedule must be worked out with SOA Publications, which supports all of the Section newsletters. Newsletters require 6-8 weeks turnaround in the SOA. Each Section is assigned a Staff Newsletter Editor.
  - Section Web Liaison – The web liaison participates in determining what content is appropriate for the section web pages.

**Governance** Section Councils and elected officers are defined in the Section Bylaws.  
<http://www.soa.org/professional-interests/professional-interests/prof-all-Section-bylaws.aspx>

**Leadership Training/ Events** - Serving with the Council should be a learning experience. These events provide information as to how to lead a Section, leadership skills in general, and the opportunity to provide Section input to the latest initiatives of the SOA.

- Fall Leadership Training – Incoming Section Chairs are invited to attend a one day workshop at the SOA in conjunction with incoming Board members.
  - Council of Section Chairs – These are held twice a year (Fall and Spring). The CSC is a leading body – this group has an ongoing agenda and often

makes decisions that impact the operations of all Sections They are also educational and provide networking opportunities for Section Leadership. Typically Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Board Partners are invited.

- Monthly Section webcasts – These one hour lunch time “theaters” are now open to all Council members on topics ranging from Operations to new SOA programs.
- Blast e-mails – Section Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Board Partners typically receive 2 informational e-mails a month from the SOA regarding Section activities or SOA activities that impact section leadership.
- New Council member orientation – An orientation is held at the Annual Meeting for new Council members only.
- Secretary/Treasurer orientation – This orientation is held in the late fall via webcast.
- Sectionchairs.soa.org website is available to any Council member. It is password protected only because there is no need to have it available to the public.

**Best Practices** It is critical for each Section to have representation at the Council of Section Chairs and on webcasts (at least ones covering procedures). The back up plan should be for Section leaders to view the PowerPoint presentations posted to Sectionchairs.soa.org and/or talk to their Section Specialists. Most presentations have a sound recording starting in 2009.

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**Financial Responsibilities** – The Chair, Council and especially the Treasurer have Section Financial responsibilities.

- Dues amounts are set annually (September) for the following year.
- Charges for events and Continuing Education are developed by SOA Staff. Revenue sharing is generally a function of how much the Section has at risk.
- The SOA Staff produces annotated quarterly financial statements for the Section Officers. These are typically available within 6 weeks after the close of the quarter. The Treasurer should report this information to the Council.

**Governance** The SOA has specific policies on dues limits found under the Governance tab on the Sectionchairs.soa.org website.

**Governance** Volunteers may not contract for services. This must be done through a Staff member of the SOA.

**Governance** Surplus guidelines set by the Council of Section Chairs in 2006 urge that all surpluses should be between .25 – 2.0 of prior year's expenses by 2009.

**Best Practices** Treasurer develops a budget based on the annual plan of work for the Section. Staff archives.

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**Succession Planning - Elections** – Section volunteers/Councils are responsible for recruiting candidates for election. Typically the search for candidates begins around March. The SOA Staff works with candidates May and June to develop the ballot. Elections follow.

- Elections are concurrent with SOA Board elections.
- Section Chair may form an election committee or use the Council as his/her committee.
- This committee may form rules for the current election only as long as they do not contradict the Section Bylaws or the SOA election process.

**Governance** The Section Bylaws have highest authority over the elections. The SOA has procedures that apply to all Sections.

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**Section plan/priorities** – The Section Council establishes a plan of work under the leadership of the Section Chairperson. It may be informal or formal.

- The Council should gather information from members to determine their needs. Inputs for annual planning may include: new/ongoing projects, results from membership surveys, results of the Section Scorecard (see below), the SOA's Strategic Plan.
- SOA staff will provide each section chair with its Section Scorecard by late September.

**Best Practice** Annual or multi-year plans are strongly encouraged.

**Best Practice** Include Board Partner and other guests at planning meeting to obtain different points of view.

**Best Practice** While each Council member should serve a role, in order to accomplish larger projects, work needs to be delegated to other Section volunteers.

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**Board Reporting – Consent Agendas** - 5 weeks prior to each Board meeting, Section Specialists draft Consent Agenda reports. These are reviewed by the Section Chair, Board Partner, Staff Partner. Then they are reviewed by the Staff Partner to the Council of Section Chairs and the Volunteer Partner (President Elect).

- The Board Partner should be prepared to answer questions about the report should they come up at the Board meeting.
- The current format of the report and past reports may be found at: [http://Sectionchairs.soa.org/annual\\_report.htm](http://Sectionchairs.soa.org/annual_report.htm)

**Board Business Agenda Items** – Board Business agenda items do not come directly from the sections. Typically, if it is a strategic issue, the item will be recommended by the Issues Advisory Council (IAC) . The entire Board Agenda is approved by the Leadership Team. The Staff Partner and sometimes the Board Partner would be involved in developing business agenda items on behalf of the section council.

**Meeting Notes/Meeting Minutes** – Each Council meeting with quorum should be documented.

- Each Section has a Secretary (or meeting scribe) to create meeting notes.
- Financial commitments of the Section must be recorded in the meeting notes.
- Meeting notes will be posted to the Sectionchairs.soa.org by the Section Specialist and archived.

### **Council Communications**

- Monthly Section Conference Calls - Council sets up annual schedule. Section Specialists handle logistics and notification.
- Contact Lists – SOA Section Specialists maintain Council and network information on the SOA Administration system, can share with Council via excel rosters, and maintain Listservs, SharePoint groups, and LinkedIn groups, where applicable.
- Chair prepares agenda. Invitees are Section Council, “Friends of the Council”, SOA Staff, and Board Partner.

**Governance** Per By Laws, Council must meet 2X per year. Conference calls count as meetings.

**Best Practice** Board Partner and Staff Partners facilitate two way communications: to and from the Board and to and from the Section to the Board and the SOA.

**Best Practice** It is not recommended to try to follow Roberts Rules of Order for council meetings. They are informal.

**Best Practice** In voting matters that require discretion, section specialists can arrange a “Doodle” vote where results are kept confidential.

**General Section Governance** – the entire Section Council but especially the Chair is expected to be familiar with the Bylaws and policies governing the Sections. The Staff will help provide information on Guidelines and SOA operations. Ultimately, all Sections serve at “the pleasure” of the SOA Board. Some of the rules are:

- Bylaws – All Sections share a core “body” of by laws. Councils may recommend changes for the Board to approve. Changes can be made only at Board Meetings.
- Policies – Sections and the SOA share a set of policies. Changes to policies must be approved by the Board and can only occur at a Board Meeting.
- Guidelines/Principles – Those pertaining to the Sections are on [Sectionchairs.soa.org](http://Sectionchairs.soa.org). These were established by the Council of Section Chairs.
- Rules of Election – Election Committees (usually the Section Councils) may establish rules for the current year election, such as reserving a seat for a Canadian on the Council.
- Procedures – Established by SOA Staff. Examples:
  - Newsletter formats and timelines
  - Membership enrollments
  - Use of the SOA Brand

**Governance** Documentation on these issues may be found at:  
<http://Sectionchairs.soa.org/governance.htm>

## SECTION ACTIVITY - CREATE GRASSROOT COMMUNITIES

**Purpose:** To provide opportunities to interact and network with actuaries and other professionals with similar interests and challenges. Activities that support grassroots communities include: networking and communications and any other activities that are clearly membership benefits.

**Targets:** The 2008 Strategic Plan approved by the Board has a 2012 goal of 80% participation by all SOA members in at least one section.

**Networking** – There are several ways Sections members can network.

- Face-to-face at SOA events
  - Section Councils (& friends)
  - Membership).
- Some Sections actively participate in local actuarial clubs.
- Remotely
  - Conference Calls
  - Other networking facilities – some sections currently have **Listservs**. In 2009 the SOA started **LinkedIn** Pilots. There are also some **Sharepoint** sites. A minority of Sections have these.
  - “Tracks” or Networks within a Section – Section Specialists will facilitate the ability for these groups to interact via phone or mail. Examples include the Younger Actuary Network within the Actuary of the Future Section, tracks within the LTC Section, Health Disability Income and Medicare groups. (*These groups are fairly rare.*)

**Governance** The rules for forming a Section are found at: <http://Sectionchairs.soa.org/governance>. Contact your Staff Partner regarding establishing networks or tracks within your Section. Networks or tracks are section subsidiaries and do not receive the same support as a full section.

**Governance** With the exception of ListServes or LinkedIn groups, section members must go through SOA staff to communicate with the larger membership. Our member contact lists are not shared with outside organizations. The SOA discourages the creation of independent sites such as FaceBook sites or wikis. Only SOA sponsored sites can use SOA branding.

**Communication Strategies** – The following are used to engage and educate Section membership in current industry trends, activities or the Section, and to provide an opportunity to contribute.

**Blast e-mails** – sent to Section Membership. (These must be approved by SOA Marketing & Communications.)

- ` Council (or Chair) may send on a scheduled basis (i.e. “Tech Update” & “Health E-News”) or as needed (call for volunteers). Usually the Section Specialist will assist. These are not archived or usually posted to the web.

**Newsletters** – Publications are a tangible member benefit for most Sections.

- There is no requirement to have a newsletter but currently all Sections do.
- Newsletters are hardcopy or electronic, according to the formats available from SOA Publications. All are posted on soa.org.
- Newsletter schedules are developed with SOA Publications to balance the needs of all Sections.
- Section Newsletter Editors partner with SOA Staff Editors to produce the publications. SOA Staff has final edit on all publications. SOA Staff ensures the newsletters are of the highest quality to ensure a good representation of the **Actuarial Brand**.

**Section Marketing** – Marketing materials for Section membership or Section events are developed by SOA Staff.

- Individual Section Membership examples include: Flyers, free memberships, recognition items, newsletters with enrollment forms. Note: These have not been very successful, generating few memberships and having low persistency when people have to pay.
- All meeting and event collateral is developed and distributed by SOA Staff. Volunteers create course descriptions.
- Materials the SOA Staff Develops for All Section awareness:
  - SOA (All) Sections Brochure
  - Information package to new ASA's, FSA's & CERA's.
  - Web presence
  - Online enrollments and renewals
  - Meeting programs identify section session sponsors

**Surveys** - Sections may survey their membership for input on issues – from an area of practice to operational issues within the Section. This is a form of environmental scanning that could lead to more strategic initiatives.

- For formal surveys, Section Specialists will create the survey, consolidate the results, and archive the results for future reference on Sectionchairs.soa.org.



- Some electronic newsletter formats allow for feedback questions. These are at the discretion of the Section Newsletter Editor and are not part of the formal survey process.
- With the web redesign, there is the capability to pose a question for feedback on the section's landing page.

**Web Pages** – Each Section has a reserved area of the soa.org website.

- SOA Staff establishes the basic format for web pages on the soa.org website.
- SOA Staff populates Section web pages with the following, when available: Council members and responsibilities, newsletters, notes, research results. Staff also maintains general Section information such as enrollment forms, marketing Sections, meetings & events, election information, etc.
- The Section has latitude as to what other information on their Section or Section activities they would like to include and is responsible for informing the SOA when information is out of date.

**Governance** SOA Staff has final editing of all publications, blast e-mails, surveys, marketing materials, and what is posted on the web. This is to provide consistency with the Actuarial Brand. The SOA uses AP Style in all publications. Guidelines for use of the brand and SOA image are found:

<http://Sectionchairs.soa.org/Branding%20Principles.pdf>.

**Governance** The Sections should view the SOA as their preferred provider in any communications.

**Governance** Any advertising of events or services that are external to the SOA must be reviewed by staff. For example, when a Section Council wants to inform members of an upcoming event sponsored by another organization.

**Governance** One enrollment form (printed or online) will be used for all Sections to ensure pricing and procedures are current. On the web: <http://www.soa.org/professional-interests/files/pdf/SOAMembershipForm.pdf>.

**Best Practice** Technical articles/issues have a systematic tech edit by members of the Section who are experts. The Taxation Section has a highly disciplined approach.

**Best Practices** Surveys ask questions that produce actionable results.

## SECTION ACTIVITY – TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE

**Purpose:** To plan a portfolio of educational programs that best attract and meet the needs of Section members, SOA members and fellow professionals at all levels of experience by addressing topics that are educational, relevant, practical, timely and thought-provoking in an engaging way. Sections are involved in both professional development (AKA PD, CE, Continuing Education) and basic education. Communications described in Grassroots Activity also apply here.

### **New Events That Are Section Sponsored Events (Typically webinars & seminars)**

- Section Councils or volunteers work with Staff in the “idea creation” stage of a PD event. Staff ensures council is aware of the risks and rewards.
- The approval process to proceed is expected to change in 2010.
- If given a “green light”, a project manager from SOA Meeting & Events.

### **Large Meetings**

- Large meetings are run by volunteer committees working with SOA Staff Partners and Project Managers. Staff Partners may assist with developing topics, recruiting, or presenting, as appropriate.

### **Non-Section Sponsored Events**

- In order to meet membership value and/or financial goals established by the Board, the SOA may also develop non-Section sponsored CE events either solely through the efforts of staff or through relationships with third-party organizations (private firms or other associations). In these cases, relevant Sections will be informed about the events at the time they are being initially developed. This communication will come from your Section’s Staff Partner.

**Governance** Section Council members cannot sign contracts (hotel, keynote speakers, etc.) on behalf of the Section or the Society of Actuaries. All contracts must be signed by SOA staff due to the risk-bearing nature of the contracts.

**Governance** Principles concerning both the Sections’ use of the brand and use of outside vendors may have applicability for a given CE idea.

**Basic Education** All practice area sections have a Basic Education liaison to serve as a contact person for Education and committees on exam and syllabus issues. Some special interest sections also have a liaison.

**Governance** All final decisions on exams or study materials lie with the SOA Education Department Staff and their volunteers.

## SECTION ACTIVITY – DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE

**Purpose:** To identify, prioritize, encourage, sponsor and oversee the research activity and experience studies. This knowledge benefits the section members, the SOA members, fellow professionals, and the world at large.

**Research Projects** - The SOA has several research committees with Section Council oversight. Each of these committees are allocated an annual budget from the SOA. :

- CKER (Committee on Knowledge Extension Research) – Education & Research Section
  - CLIR (Committee on Life Insurance Research) – participants are Product Development, Financial Reporting, Reinsurance, Marketing & Distribution, and Smaller Insurance Company Sections
  - Pension Research is determined by the Pension Section.
  - Health Research is determined by the Health Section.
- Enterprise Risk Management Research is determined by the Joint Risk Management Section.

Practice Area and Special Interest Sections also commit additional funds to support their research efforts.

Significant research projects can remain open for several years.

The SOA's Research Staff serve as the partners to the research committees in the identification, prioritization, scoping and management of research projects

**Governance** No more than 25% of the annually allocated SOA research funds generally can be rolled over from one year to the next

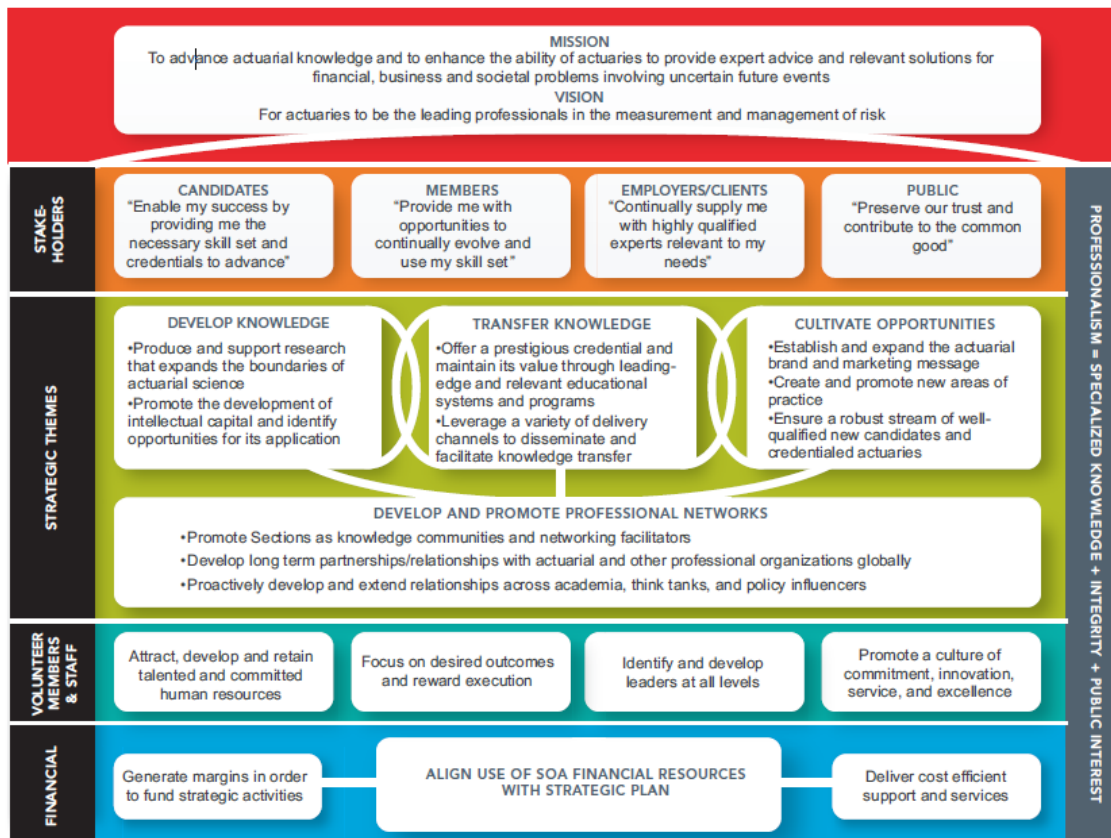
**Experience Studies** - The SOA sponsors a number of experience studies for the benefit of the profession and the industries in which our members work. Often these studies are initiated at the request of another organization, such as the Academy or the NAIC. Experience studies are often cyclical, and are funded from non-Section funds. Section volunteers from Practice Area oriented sections may be asked to serve as advisors to the SOA Staff or the Project Oversight Group (POG) for the experience studies.

**Other Publications** – In addition to section newsletters, there are many other original publications – monographs, contributions to The Actuary, essays, and forums that are sources of new content and also qualify as “transfer knowledge” activities.

## SECTION ACTIVITY – CONNECT TO STRATEGY

The SOA developed a new strategic plan in 2008. It is in effect until 2012. For details see: <http://www.soa.org/files/pdf/stramgt-strategic-plan.pdf>

### Strategy Map



In general, the perspective of the SOA Board and the Section Councils differ in that the Board makes decisions for the good of the SOA and the profession while Section Councils view activities from the perspective of their special interest.

There are, however, several key ways sections contribute to new ideas or developing projects that are part of the strategic plan in addition to the themes already covered.

**Section Input into the Strategic Management System** – There has been a process available to individuals but also used by sections to contribute ideas to the SOA via the Issues Advisory Committee (IAC). It is the responsibility of the IAC to review issues and recommend them to the Board or SOA Management for action. “Untapped Opportunities for Actuaries in Health” came from the Health Section Council through this process. Sections may use their grassroots connection or try environmental scanning/market research techniques to develop ideas in a deliberate way. In 2010, the process will be updated and communicated to all section council members.

**Section Input on Strategic Deliberations-** Sections serve as “invited experts” and “advisors” on strategic deliberations of the Board and the IAC.

- Section Council representatives will be invited to present and provide background in real-time (electronic or in-person) Board discussions for those strategic issues. (Example is Untapped Opportunities of Actuaries in Health).
- The Council of Section Chairs meetings and monthly Section Webcasts, open to all council members frequently ask for input from our key volunteers in a structured way. Section Council representatives may be asked to weigh in on specific questions regarding other strategic or mega issues under consideration by the Board.
- The Board Partner and/or the Staff Partner can also provide its Section with additional context or background on the strategic issue under discussion, as needed, or request input (Example: FEM and the Education & Research Section)

### **Section Involvement in the Implementation of Strategic Initiatives**

- A section structure may be the primary way a strategic initiative is addressed (Untapped Opportunities of Actuaries in Health).
- Section Councils may be asked to provide Subject Matter Experts (SME’s) to strategic teams working on strategic initiatives.

### **Sections Nurturing Key External Professional Relationships**

- **Affiliate Membership** – All Sections may include non-actuary professionals as members to their Section. These may be strictly individuals or people representing other professional organizations, such as the Taxation Section and ABA members who are Tax Attorneys
- **External Organizational Relationships** – Most Sections have informal and some have formal relationships with external professional organizations. Some current external relationships include: DMAA, GARP, NALC, LIMRA, LOMA, Gartner Group. Health E-News includes on a regular basis features from the Academy.

**Governance** Per the Section Bylaws, Affiliate members are allowed in all Sections as non-voting participants. Affiliates may not serve on the Section Council but can serve in any other capacity for the Section.

**Governance** If a particular external relationship evolves into any kind of “joint venture” (such as a partnership on a continuing education event), the SOA requires documentation of the terms of the agreement through a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”). The Staff Partner will be aware of this requirement and can help complete the documentation. This requirement does not apply to joint ventures with sister actuarial organizations (the Academy, CCA, CIA, CAS).

**Governance** MOUs can only be signed by SOA Staff.

**Best Practice** Any external relationship should be mutually beneficial and serve to achieve deliberate goals. They require a significant investment in resources.