

WORKING EFFECTIVELY FOR GROUPS AND NETWORKS



It's often helpful for Committees/Steering groups to have a focus for the year. Groups might want to look at their [terms of reference](#) and think about the stated aims of the group and adapt if necessary.

Having a focus should mean it's easier to see results and therefore make those volunteers on Committees feel more of a sense of achievement. It could be a small thing or a really big thing. It might cross over into other specialisms or contribute to the wider work of the SoA via its policy department.

These aims can be broken down into areas and the steering group can make decisions on how best to address these. Often Committees will decide they want to put on events for members that will be of practical help or professional interest, with speakers drawn from their membership or from the publishing / agenting / broadcasting world, or even one aimed at early career writers. Most members will know about the events that the groups run, three of which will be supported by the Events team at the SoA usually as part of the SoA@Home events series. You can find more information about these events in the [Annual Timeline document](#). You'll see that more informal online meetings are also possible if Committees want to run them in addition to the staff supported meetings. These would use the Community Zoom account. Meetings need to be scheduled directly into the Zoom account to ensure no diary clashes. See [here](#) for more information about doing this.

In addition to the events, the committee might like to decide on a focus for the next twelve months – or a couple of areas of development. This could be a focus on **increasing membership in their area/specialism**, it could be around a particular difficulty that is an issue for that area/specialism – such as **AI for translators and illustrators** or **working with funding bodies**. You might decide to improve the profile of the group by contributing articles to relevant journals, or the press. You might want to create a **checklist for writers** who go into schools, or think about safeguarding implications for your members. You might decide you need to recruit younger writers as members and research university courses that teach relevant subjects and try and make links with the tutors and through them, the students (the SoA Outreach team could support with a visit, with enough notice). Any aims could be championed by one steering group member who could feed back any progress to the steering group at the next meeting – helping to keep everyone's focus on that area.

Once the focus is decided upon, the committee could split up the jobs among its committee members. Each committee can have a representative in attendance at **Management Committee** meetings. This is a non-voting post, but representatives can contribute to the discussion. Having a seat at the table can be really beneficial for your genre, especially if it is not otherwise represented by an elected member. The representative is often the chair of the group but could be another member on the committee/steering group if the Chair is unavailable. In addition, we will host **regular meetings for Special Interest Group representatives** to share best practice and tips. This is an informal meeting and would be ideal for someone with little time for extra research or another role. Information shared at this meeting could be fed back to the Committee at the next meeting. A quick **skills audit** of your committee should help make everyone feel they have something to offer, and between them share out the responsibility. At each subsequent meeting, the committee members could update everyone on their progress. Other suggested roles include: **recruiting** from within the other existing networks, **attending** local group meetings, **lobbying** relevant MPs, but please read our policy on [who speaks for the SoA](#) first and seek advice.