

**COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
January 2018**

What is the purpose of the Communities of Interest?

The Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology (AIFST) is the only national, independent voice and network for Australia's food industry professionals. Our purpose is to provide support and underpin our member's contribution to a world-leading food industry.

To ensure AIFST can fulfil its purpose and to deliver relevant information, services and products for its members, AIFST has established a network of Communities of Interest. Communities of Interest (COI) are an evolution of the previous AIFST Branch and Interest Group Structure which recognises the role members can play in supporting other members and contributing to the success of the Institute as a whole.

What is the function of the COI?

Communities of Interest exist to meet the needs of members within similar geographic regions, and those with specific interest areas that bring together groups of likeminded food professionals.

Communities of Interest are driven by a Committee of passionate AIFST members who wish to advance the objectives of the Institute and food professionals more broadly. Communities of Interest Committees are supported by a member of the AIFST Management Team and provide input and guidance to AIFST on the current needs of food industry professionals. This includes determining which mechanisms AIFST should use to deliver information including, but not limited to, events, online updates (i.e. podcasts/webinars) and information briefings (i.e. member updates/fact sheets).

Communities of Interest Committees may also from time to time provide feedback to AIFST on potential new services or offerings that they identify will generate increased value for members.

Communities of Interest underpin the delivery of a national, engaged membership in-line with the 2016 – 2018 Strategic Plan and provide vital industry knowledge and networks to ensure AIFST remains relevant, timely and a valuable resource for Australia's food industry professionals.

What are the types of COI?

There are two types of COI – National Communities and Geographical Communities. National Communities of Interest cover key interest areas amongst members while Geographic Communities of Interest relate to specific states.



AIFST Communities of Interest

1. Queensland COI (geographic)
2. New South Wales COI (geographic)
3. Victoria COI (geographic)
4. Western Australia COI (geographic)
5. South Australia COI (geographic)
6. Tasmania COI (geographic)
7. National Microbiology COI (specialist)
8. National Sensory COI (specialist)
9. National Innovation and New Product Development COI (specialist)
10. National Young Professionals COI (specialist)
11. National Nutrition COI (specialist)
12. National Consultants COI (specialist)

How is the COI Committee Convener appointed?

The Convener will be appointed annually from within the respective COI Committee. The appointment of a Convener is conducted via consensus amongst the Committee members at the first Committee meeting held post the annual appointment process. The Convener appointment is at the complete discretion of the COI Committee members as determined by nomination. A Convener is able to serve in the position for a maximum time of five (5) years subject to their Committee re-appointment and as long as they remain a current financial member of AIFST.

What is the minimum number of people needed to make up a COI?

Five (5) Committee members.

What is the maximum number of people needed to make up a COI?

Ten (10) Committee members.

What is the maximum number of COI in operation in any given year?

AIFST has an annual cap on the number of COI in existence. There are currently twelve (12) in operation; the number is capped at fifteen (15).

What are the roles within the COI?

There will be a maximum of ten (10) and minimum of five (5) members excluding a student/young member position on any COI Committee, comprising:

- **Convener** – AIFST member
- **Secretariat** – Appointed AIFST staff member
- **Committee Members** – Up to Nine (9) AIFST member representatives. If a COI represents a geographic area, representation should ideally cover a cross section of food industry disciplines including but not limited to sensory, microbiology, innovation, new product development, young members/students, engineering, marketing, QA/regulatory. For special interest National COI's all members should represent that relevant discipline at a national level.
- **Young Member/Student Representative** – All COI's have an additional Committee position to appoint a young member or student representative to ensure involvement by the Institute's younger members and develop succession options for Committee members.

An AIFST COI is not required to have any other Committee positions aside from a COI Convener. Tasks may be allocated to specific Committee members however, additional formal and elected Committee positions are not required under the new COI framework.

As a COI Committee undertakes activities on behalf of the Institute, AIFST is required to retain a copy on file of all COI Committee meeting agendas, minutes, decisions/actions and discussion papers.

How does a member join a COI Committee?

AIFST will manage a call for 'Expressions of Interest' (EOI) from AIFST members to nominate to join a COI Committee on an annual basis. All COI Committee members are required to be current financial members of the Institute to be eligible to nominate and be appointed.

The EOI process will include:

- AIFST and the COI Committee will determine the number of vacant positions on each respective COI Committee that are due for appointment in any given year.
- AIFST will prepare an EOI form to be distributed to members via any channels deemed appropriate including, but not limited to direct email, e-newsletters, *food australia*, website and social media. The EOI will advise how many vacant positions there are per COI Committee based on the respective COI rotations*.
- Nominations do not require the endorsement by other AIFST members and all AIFST members are eligible to nominate for a COI except in the instance of a geographic COI where they are required to reside (including temporarily) in that area.
- The EOI process will run for a minimum of two (2) weeks.
- AIFST will collate the list of nominations for each COI Committee and determine if the number of nominations exceeds the number of vacant positions.
- Should the number of nominations not exceed the number of vacant positions; a member will be appointed to the relevant COI Committee without the need for a voting process.
- Should the number of nominations exceed the number of vacant positions the AIFST Secretariat will coordinate with the relevant COI Committee the hosting of a forum to allow respective COI members to vote and discuss nominating members of objectives with the wider AIFST membership. As such all COI Committees should plan towards the hosting of a networking event during the second to fourth week of October.

The AIFST Secretariat will coordinate the nomination process for the appointment of COI Committee members. All COI Committee appointments will be officially made by the AIFST Secretariat and COI Committee Convener where such a position is already in place.

All COI Committee members are required to remain financial member of the Institute during their term of appointment. Should they cease to remain a financial member, their COI Committee member appointment will cease effective immediately.

What are the criteria to nominate as a COI Committee member?

To be eligible to nominate for a COI Committee all nominees must be current financial members of AIFST. Should the nomination be for a geographic COI, the member is required to reside in that location.

What is the term of an appointment as a COI Committee member?

Each member is appointed for a maximum period of two (2) years, provided representatives remain financial members of AIFST. Upon completion of this period, a member may nominate for re-appointment for a further term and serve a maximum of three (3) terms (6 years) in total.

An extension to the number of terms may be reviewed and granted by AIFST on a case-by-case basis as determined by the relevant discipline and the availability of new members to that respective COI Committee.

What is the process if a member resigns or retires creating a casual vacancy on the Committee?

A COI Committee member may retire from the Committee upon giving seven (7) days' notice in writing (postal or electronic) to the AIFST Secretariat. Any notice of retirement will take immediate effect or at the date specified in the retirement notice.

In the event of a vacant position(s) on a COI Committee the AIFST Secretariat, in consultation with the relevant COI Committee Convener and Committee/s, will determine the need to call for additional members outside the annual Expressions of Interest process. However, at all times Committees should maintain a minimum of five (5) members to be considered active unless prior arrangements have been made with the AIFST Secretariat.

What contribution is expected as a COI Committee member?

There is the understanding that a member seeks to join a COI Committee to add value to AIFST members and what the Institute offers. In line with this, the expected minimum contribution a COI Committee member would make is:

- Participation at quarterly Committee meetings (via teleconference or face to face)
- Actively provide input throughout the year to the Committee
- Advise the AIFST on key issues/challenges for food industry professionals that AIFST could respond to or provide support
- Provide input around opportunities you believe AIFST could harness to add value to members

Committee members may also nominate to lead the organisation of a particular COI activity or event. In this instance it would require more involvement by the Committee member to work closely with the AIFST Secretariat to deliver the desired outcomes.

What does the AIFST Secretariat provide?

AIFST will provide Secretariat support for all activities of the COI Committees. The AIFST Secretariat will ensure meeting minutes and COI activities are recorded and maintained on AIFST files. The AIFST Secretariat will act as the point of contact for all event and membership enquiries. The AIFST Secretariat is also responsible for approving all expenses, reimbursements or bookings on behalf of the COI Committee. The AIFST Secretariat will be responsible for ensuring communication and promotion of any COI activities.

Who is the AIFST Secretariat?

The AIFST COI Secretariat is:

General Manager – Membership Services

Email: aifst@aifst.com.au

What is the process for hosting a COI event?

For an event to move from the event scoping phase into the registration stage the following needs to be prepared and finalised in conjunction with the AIFST Secretariat at least six weeks prior to the proposed event date:

- Overview of the proposed event (proposed session, speakers, venue, catering and minimum attendance numbers) including nominated COI Committee liaison with AIFST Secretariat. The event overview will be used to update the AIFST website including registration and used to inform all communications.
- Event budget drafted which covers the following costs (where relevant): speaker costs, venue, catering (per head), expected minimum attendance numbers, speaker gifts, proposed sponsorship and event costs (member, non-member, and student).
- AIFST events should be budgeted to break even or produce a small surplus.

The AIFST Secretariat has the ability to delay or cancel an event in liaison with the COI Committee where registrations or budget targets are not being met.

The specific event budget is used to determine the event registration cost and provide a baseline to report against the overall financial outcome of each event. This process will also assist the COI Committee and AIFST to improve the budgeting process for events on a continuous basis. The budget is required to determine a minimum number of attendees for the event to run. All COI events are required to be self-funded and not run at a loss and therefore an overheads' allowance should be factored into all event budgets.

How many events must a COI hold each year to remain “active”?

Each COI Committee should target the delivery of a minimum of three (3) events per calendar year and explore further opportunities to deliver forums via online channels i.e. webinars, *food Australia* articles or blog posts.

Can a COI Committee organise events with other stakeholders?

AIFST has implemented a stakeholder engagement strategy to underpin the 2016 – 2018 Strategic Plan. To ensure this strategy filters through to all member activities, any events proposed to be held in collaboration with external stakeholders require checking with and sign-off by the AIFST Secretariat **before** an approach or discussion is undertaken with that stakeholder.

Can COIs secure sponsorship for events?

COI Committees are encouraged to attract sponsorship for their events. In addition, AIFST may at its discretion, offer sponsorship or corporate promotional opportunities related to COI events and activities. Where relevant this will be done in consultation with the relevant COI Committee to ensure ongoing alignment to the stakeholder engagement strategy.

After an event, what is the reporting back to the COI in terms of outcomes?

The AIFST Secretariat is the liaison point between AIFST and the COI Committee and is responsible for providing reports to the COI Committees. The quarterly COI Committee report will contain:

- Update on any activities underway including confirmations, bookings, registration tracking, communications, and sponsorship and other as required/relevant.
- Update on any enquiries or collaboration opportunities relevant to that specific COI for consideration and review around incorporating into planning and activities.
- Any updates from the wider AIFST organisation that may relate to that specific COI for example strategic plan, systems upgrades i.e. website, staff changes, and office closure time periods.

The following information is not provided to COI Committees or contained in quarterly reports:

- Membership listings including member details.
- Company financials outside of the organised COI event P&L as outlined above.

What is the procedure for signing contracts for events?

All contracts, agreements, MoUs, letters of agreement and other such documents are legally binding documents and as such any documentation between the Institute and another party are to be signed by the AIFST CEO or delegated authority. COI Committee members are not authorised to sign any documentation on behalf of AIFST and all bookings related to that event (i.e. venue, catering, and speakers) require confirmation by the AIFST Secretariat.

Which privacy laws do AIFST and COI Committees need to abide by?

AIFST is required to adhere to the Privacy ACT 1998 (Privacy Act) which details how the Institute is legally required to handle and manage the personal information provided to us by members, non-members and stakeholders. As a result of this, AIFST is unable to distribute personal member or non-member event registration information to the COI without written permission from the attendees.