

ISTF Chapter development guidelines

9 August 2020

Greetings!

The Central Board of the International Society of Tropical Foresters is delighted that you are interested in forming an ISTF chapter. Below is a suggested outline for creating your chapter. We look forward to receiving your chapter proposal. Please consult these documents available on the ISTF Google Drive ([LINK TO: Central ISTF bylaws, ISTF guidelines for forming chapters, ISTF Chapter proposal form, Form for converting ISTF chapter proposal to bylaws, Template for suggested ISTF Chapter bylaws.](#)).

OUTLINE

1. Indicate your interest in forming a chapter on the google form at the “Survey of Interest” Google form.
2. Study ISTF organizing documents.
3. Use the “Chapter Proposal Form” to guide the next steps (4-7.9).
4. Define the geographic area of your chapter (Academic institution, region, country?).
5. Find 10+ people to join your chapter (ISTF is working to be inclusive, so strive for diversity and gender balance).
6. Send a notice of your intent to form a chapter to the ISTF Board.
7. Carry out the next steps (7.1-7.9) in consultation with prospective chapter members.
 - 7.1 What is the purpose (objectives) of your chapter?
 - 7.2 What will your chapter do?
 - 7.3 How will the chapter be governed? (officers, committees, etc.)
 - 7.4 How will elections be held?
 - 7.5 How will the chapter be funded?
 - 7.6 How will funds be managed?
 - 7.7 How will meetings be held?
 - 7.8 How will reporting be done?
 - 7.9 How will bylaws be amended?
8. Draft the chapter proposal using the “Chapter Proposal Form”.
9. Send chapter proposal to the ISTF Board for review.
10. Convert the chapter proposal to chapter bylaws (governing document, roadmap).
11. Send draft bylaws to ISTF Board for review and incorporate the Board’s suggestions. (This may be a few iterations.)
12. Obtain approval of late-draft bylaws by prospective membership.
13. Send bylaws to ISTF Board for approval.
14. Prospective members officially adopt the bylaws and the chapter is formed.
15. Elect officers as per the bylaws.
16. Elected officers sign the approved and adopted bylaws.

DETAILED STEPS

1. Fill out the “Survey of Interest” Google form at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1tT3_hYFfklekOaGi2M0U7aXjtnZa5tovIu_h-_sVTew

2. Study documents for forming an ISTF Chapter. (*Central ISTF Bylaws*, the *ISTF Guidelines for forming Chapters*, *ISTF Chapter Proposal Form*, and the *ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template*.)

3. Use the *Chapter Proposal Form* to guide steps 4-7.9.

4. Define the geographic area of your chapter. This area could be a region including several countries, one country, a geographic area with common interests, or an academic institution, etc. There may be multiple people in a given area who want to form one or more chapters and you can work together to do this. The ISTF Board will send you the list of people who might have an interest in forming a chapter in the same area. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles IX [points 1, 2].*)

5. Find at least 10 people to join your chapter. ISTF is working to be as inclusive as possible, therefore chapters must strive for inclusivity of identity, heritage, and viewpoint. Keep this in mind as you think about who you are seeking as members for your chapter. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles III, IX [points 2, 4, 5]; ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article III.*)

6. Send a notice of your intent to form a chapter to the ISTF Board (tropicalforesters@gmail.com) (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Article IX [point 2].*)

7. Carry out the next steps (7.1-7.9) in consultation with prospective chapter members.

7.1 Decide on the purpose (objectives) for your chapter. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Article II, ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article II for example objectives.*)

NOTE: Statement of projected objectives/activities is adequate, but the chapter may want to state more specific mission, vision, goals, objectives, activities. Chapters organized at the supranational or national level shall assume a fostering, coordinating role serving the whole of the region or nation, and in the process can promote subregional or subnational chapters. Local chapters can be formed independently of a national chapter (for example, at an academic institution), but the Central ISTF encourages collaboration and coordination among chapters. The Central ISTF encourages the formation of local chapters at a scale in which members can meet in person to share information, including on local ecosystems and issues, and possibly engage in other activities.

7.2 Decide on the activities that the chapter will carry out. The objectives and activities should be agreement with the overall ISTF Mission, Vision, Goals and Activities. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, SHOULD A CHAPTER SPONSOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.** (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles I, II, IX [points 6 and 7]; ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article II.*)

Some suggestions for activities are:

- Contribute articles to the ISTF newsletter
- Provide information on tropical forests and forestry activities to chapter members and other audiences
- Encourage improved tropical forestry practices

- Carry out extension activities, such as visiting demonstration areas and discussions of results with members of the public
- Recruit new members
- Provide general education programs
- Interact with the Central ISTF and other chapters/ groups
- Co-sponsor or collaborate on studies and projects relating to tropical forestry problems and forestry practices

7.3 Decide on how the chapter will be governed (officers, committees, etc.). The ISTF Board strongly recommends that the chapter be headed by a President (or Chair) and Vice-President (or Vice-Chair) or 2 Co- Presidents or Co-Chairs, and a Secretary, and a Treasurer. One of the members of the Chapter Executive Committee must be designated as the Liaison to the ISTF Central Board. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Article IX [point 4] ; ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Articles IV and V.*)

7.4 Decide on how the elections will be held. The election outcome should be based on either a vote by a majority of members (if online or by mail), or by a majority of those present at a regular meeting of the chapter (with a quorum of at least half plus one of the members in attendance). The first chapter election will be held after bylaws have received final approval and the chapter has been authorized by the Central ISTF President. If the election is held at a meeting, all chapter members must be notified about this meeting with sufficient lead time (2 weeks are suggested). (*See ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article VI.*)

7.5 Decide on how the chapter will be funded. Decide if your chapter will have dues, and what the dues structure will be (i.e., one cost for all members or perhaps different costs for different categories of members). (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles IX [point 8]; ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article VI.*)

7.6 Decide on how the chapter finances will be managed. (*See ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article VIII.*)

7.7 Decide on how and how often meetings of the chapter members will be held. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles IX [point 9]; ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article VII.*)

7.8 Decide on how reporting will be done. Each chapter will need to make an annual report to the ISTF Central Board on activities, finances, membership, and officers. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles IX [point 10]; ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article IX.*)

7.9 Decide on how bylaws will be amended. (*See ISTF Chapter Bylaws Template Article X.*)

8. With the information from Steps 4-7.9, draft the chapter proposal using the “Chapter Proposal Form”.

9. When completed, send the chapter proposal to the ISTF Central Board at (tropicalforesters@gmail.com) for initial review.

10. Convert the chapter proposal to chapter bylaws (governing document, roadmap). Use the *Form for converting chapter proposal to bylaws*, and finalize them against the *Template for suggested ISTF Chapter bylaws*. Bylaws can be in English, Spanish, or French.

11. Send the draft bylaws to the ISTF Board (tropicalforesters@gmail.com) so that the Board can review your proposal and indicate any modifications, and incorporate their suggestions. (This may be a few iterations.) Prospective chapter members (those who respond) and ISTF Central Governance Committee reach agreement on the draft bylaws.

12. The finalized bylaws need to be approved by the majority of the chapter members, probably by email. (*See Central ISTF Bylaws Articles IX [point 3].*)

13. Send bylaws to Central ISTF Board for approval. The Board votes on approving or not approving the bylaws (approval should succeed if bylaws are prepared carefully and with Board advice). "After submission of the finalized constitution or bylaws as approved by the local group, the ISTF President shall, under guidance from the Central Board, authorize the establishment of the chapter".

14. Prospective members officially adopt the bylaws and the chapter is formed (can do this email).

15. Elect officers as per the Chapter bylaws. Here we give a suggested manner of proceeding for the first chapter election:

a) Form a provisional Nomination and Election Committee (for this election only because it is taking place before you have established an Executive Committee). Those on this committee must be people who are NOT going to be candidates for positions, to ensure impartiality.

b) Make a call to the membership for nominations (of self or others) for each position. Each nominee should agree to be a nominee, and provide a CV for the Committee to review. The Committee may want to send a short survey to each prospective nominee with questions about why they want to run for the positions, what would be their plans/vision for the chapter, what are their major qualifications for the position of interest. Nominees should run for one position only. The chapter bylaws should have something on how nominations will be made, and how elections will be run, including the first election.

[One EXAMPLE (Based on the template for chapter bylaws): The bylaws MAY say "Nominations shall be made to the Secretary by the Membership up to three (3) months before elections". But bylaws MAY ALSO indicate that the FIRST election is to be held within 2 months of formal approval and adoption of the bylaws. There is no person designated yet to receive the nominations, so it would be this provisional Nomination and Election Committee which will receive the nominations. So give people 2 weeks to respond to the call for nominations.]

c) Selection of candidates. From the chapter bylaws template: "Nominated individuals must consent to the nomination for inclusion as Candidates. The Nomination and Election Committee

will review nominations and select a maximum of three candidates for each position. In keeping with ISTF's commitment to gender, ethnic and geographic diversity, striving for no more than 50% of nominations for board positions will be of members of one ethnicity or another group, and no more than 70% of one gender. The Membership will be notified of Candidates for positions and their qualifications at least one month before elections."

The provisional Nominations and Elections Committee should act within ~ 10 days to select the candidates, and then get the ballot and qualifications out to the chapter members.

d) Conduct the election. Give people 2-3 weeks to vote. Be sure to send reminders to members. Voting may need to be done electronically, since chapter members may be spread out over a large area, like a whole country. The provisional Nominations and Elections Committee could make up a ballot as an electronic document and email it to members. Members can send back their votes, and the committee tallies the votes. One drawback is that anonymity is not possible with this method, but I do not see how to make electronic balloting anonymous, without using an online electronic voting service for which you must pay money. But at least the Committee should be impartial since none of them are running for office. And ethically, they should not discuss the voting with anyone outside the committee.

e) The committee determines which candidates are elected. From the chapter bylaws template, those forming the chapter need to decide whether candidates for each position receiving a [majority] OR [plurality or relative majority] of the ballots received shall be declared elected." The prospective chapter needs to decide if elections will be determined by a majority or plurality/relative majority. If majority is selected, you need to decide what to do if there is a plurality (relative majority). Majority means one person receives more than half of the votes. A plurality or relative majority is the number of votes received by the person with the most votes, which may be less than 50% of the total votes.

f) The committee announces the elected officers.

16. Elected officers assume their positions, and sign the approved and adopted bylaws.

17. The elected officers begin chapter operations.

The Central ISTF will make these documents available to those forming chapters:

1. Central ISTF bylaws
2. ISTF guidelines for forming chapters
3. ISTF Chapter proposal form
4. Form for converting chapter proposal to bylaws
5. Template for suggested ISTF Chapter bylaws
6. The updated list of ISTF members in your area