Each proposed section of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) must go through the chartering process to become a recognized section. Inactive sections must also go through this process to be reinstated. The start-up phase may seem lengthy, but it is designed to set up sections for future success. The time guidelines in this document are approximate.

Abbreviations used in this document are defined as follows:

BOD – Board of Directors of the Society of Women Engineers

EIN – Employer Identification Number (an IRS tax identification number used for organizations and businesses)

IRS – Internal Revenue Service

LCC – Leadership Coaching Committee

MAL – member at large (SWE members assigned to a region but not to a section)

SWE (or Society) – Society of Women Engineers

ZIP codes – zone improvement plan codes (issued by the United States Postal Service)

**REQUIREMENTS ALL SWE SECTIONS MUST FULFILL**

* Must have at least ten paid members.
* Must elect officers in accordance with section bylaws and report these annually to SWE headquarters as directed or whenever section officers change.
* Must have current approved bylaws.
* Must submit year-end financial report to SWE headquarters annually by July 30.
* All SWE Subordinate Organizations must file with the IRS annually by November 15. Generally this is the e-Postcard (Form 990-N), unless average gross receipts exceed the level specified by the IRS, requiring Form 990 or 990-EZ instead. This includes all professional sections as well as collegiate sections that are not covered by their university.
* Professional sections must be represented at region council meetings.
* Collegiate sections must elect a SWE Counselor who is a professional SWE member.
* Semi-annual dues rebates may be withheld for failure to comply with the above requirements.

**STEP 1: AN INDIVIDUAL INTERESTED IN FORMING A NEW SECTION COMPLETES A WEBFORM/SURVEY.**

**Duration: less than 2 weeks.**

*Tasks for SWE Headquarters Staff:*

* Determine if a section or another proposed section already exists and review options with the individual.
  + Collegiate sections are defined and named by campus. Only one collegiate section may exist on a single campus. A university system with multiple campuses may have a section at each campus.
  + Professional sections are defined by ZIP code. New professional sections form either by “spinning off” from an existing larger geographic section or in an area with no existing section (from the Members at Large).
* If appropriate, provide a New Section Formation Packet (consisting of the New Section Formation Procedure, Charter Petition Package Forms and Instructions, and Standard Bylaws).
* Assist the individual with joining SWE as necessary.
* For proposed professional sections, work with the contact on preliminary name and ZIP codes.
  + The name needs to be geographically identifiable, unambiguous, and non-offensive even when abbreviated. Do not use a name that might be confused with a current or future collegiate section. Always use “proposed” before the name until the charter is approved.
  + Three-digit ZIP code areas should be used unless there are compelling reasons for five-digit detailing. The area should be small enough so there is a reasonable expectation of being able to attend events (one-way travel times of ~45 minutes). Only one metropolitan area should be included unless another is within close proximity (within 20-25 miles) and the proposed section meets in all locations. Any member using a preferred mailing address outside the proposed section’s ZIP codes may still become a member of the proposed section by signing the charter petition.
* Provide a list of existing members that would be part of the proposed section (contact must be a member).
* Notify the Chair of the Leadership Coaching Committee, Region Governor, and the originating group contact (section president(s) and/or MAL membership coordinator).

**STEP 2: PROPOSED SECTION’S CONTACT PERSON DETERMINES FEASABILITY.**

**Duration 1-2 months.**

*Tasks for Proposed Section Contact:*

* Review all materials in the New Section Formation Package.
* Contact the SWE Leadership Coaching Committee at leadershipcoaching-chair@swe.org and request a coach who will provide support through and beyond the section formation process.
* Contact SWE members and potential members and ascertain interest in forming a new section. It may take some time to build enough interest to move on to the next step.
* Hold a meeting with a few key people to outline initial plans. Ask your leadership coach for assistance in the agenda for this meeting.
  + Determine preliminary goals.
  + Brainstorm ideas for possible programs and activities.
  + Determine how to find and approach potential new members.
  + Discuss how any funds and expenses will be handled.
* If the proposed section is forming from existing SWE section(s), discuss plans with those section president(s) and determine how they can assist.
* Hold a general meeting (or several meetings) to test the area to see if people will participate and support a local section. The first few meetings will likely be informal for everyone to get to know each other, to share information about SWE, to present ideas for the proposed section. Consider surveying people about the types of activities, preferred meeting days/times, locations, etc.
* Identify the core leadership team for the start-up phase. Diversity of employers (professionals)/majors (collegiates) recommended.
* Encourage prospective members to join SWE at www.swe.org. Until the proposed section is chartered they will be assigned to an existing SWE group (MAL or section) based on ZIP code.
* Update your leadership coach, region governor, SWE headquarters contact, and originating group contact(s) on progress, and whether or not you intend to move forward in the process.

*Tasks for SWE Leadership Coaching Committee:*

* Identify a specific coach to serve as proposed section’s primary contact. Inform SWE headquarters contact, proposed section and region leadership.

**STEP 3: PROPOSED SECTION BEGINS CHARTERING PROCESS**

**Duration: 6-12 months.**

*Tasks for proposed new section:*

* Core leadership team should review this procedure, the appropriate standard bylaws, and the charter application form. **It is strongly recommended that proposed sections use the standard section bylaws.** For additional reference, Society and region bylaws are also available on the SWE resources site. If more flexibility is desired and/or a university has language that must be included, contact [bylaws-chair@swe.org](mailto:bylaws-chair@swe.org).
* Hold regular leadership and general meetings and keep records (agendas, notes/minutes including attendance). Photographs are encouraged; document the occasion and subjects for future reference. (Get releases signed by parent/guardian before using photos of minors.)
  + Remember to keep members and potential members informed. The more everyone knows about what it takes to become a section, the more everyone can get involved. At the start of every general meeting present a brief update with a review of the guidelines, timeline, progress to date, and what needs to be done – ask for volunteers and feedback.
* Keep copies of communications sent to general membership.
* Continue to expand your list of potential members and encourage them to join SWE.
  + Make use of distribution lists or use bcc to protect email privacy.
  + **Do not include e-mail addresses of prospective members on your proposed section’s distribution list unless the individuals have stated they want to be on the distribution**.
  + You may include members on your e-mail distribution unless they opted out of e-mail from SWE
  + If any ask to be removed from your distribution, do so promptly.
* Maintain regular contact with your SWE leadership coach, region governor, and the originating group(s) (MAL and/or section(s)) from which the proposed section is forming.
* Become familiar with the SWE website, including the online membership directory and SWE resources.
* Use the online member directory to monitor progress recruitment and determine if members have relocated to your area. Contact your leadership coach and/or membership@swe.org for assistance.
* Proposed professional sections:
  + Finalize the name of the proposed section with SWE Staff – make sure “proposed” is still in the title and used in all your communications.
  + Finalize ZIP codes with SWE staff.
  + See notes in Step 1 above.
* Contact your leadership coach for assistance/clarification when needed.
* Network with other SWE leaders. Attend the SWE conferences and leadership training opportunities (virtual and in person) as possible.
* Establish regular communication protocols (newsletter, email digest to promote proposed section activities.
* Request a SWE website and populate it with your contacts and events. http://societyofwomenengineers.swe.org/weebly-signup

*Tasks for SWE Headquarters Staff:*

* Assist proposed section with obtaining membership information on a regular basis.
* Once activities are underway, assist proposed section with website creation request.

*Tasks for Leadership Coaching Committee:*

* Respond promptly to questions, provide encouragement and suggestions, and recommend resources, including leadership coaching training sessions, as needed.
* Maintain contact at least quarterly with proposed section organizers.
* Keep abreast of changes to section bylaws templates; communicate changes to organizers.
* Mediate if needed when a proposed professional section is spinning off from an existing professional section.
* Assist proposed collegiate sections in identifying potential SWE Counselors.

*Tasks for Bylaws Committee:*

* Respond to inquiries regarding use of the bylaws template rather than the standard bylaws.

**STEP 4: PROPOSED SECTION PREPARES CHARTERING PAPERWORK**

**Duration: 1-3 months, items in this section may be done in parallel with STEP 3.**

*Tasks for Proposed Section:*

* Review the Charter Petition Checklist for the items required.
* Proposed professional sections: secure approval from the originating group about the ZIP codes for the proposed section and negotiate an agreement about funding that the originating group may provide once the charter is approved. Obtain written confirmation of the ZIP code release and treasury division agreement, signed by either the president or secretary of the originating group, and include with the Charter Petition Package.
* Collect signatures and member information on the Petition to Charter form. Contact all members who have not signed the Petition to Charter form and determine if they wish to retain their current section/MAL affiliation once the new section is chartered. (All other members will be transferred.)
* Approve bylaws.
  + Complete all instructions in the standard bylaws (recommended) or bylaws template (including obtaining pre-approval from [bylaws-chair@swe.org](mailto:bylaws-chair@swe.org))
  + Transmit to all members of the proposed section (first-class mail must be used for any members without a valid e-mail address), and inform members that they will be asked to adopt the standard bylaws at the general meeting to be held on xyz date (must be at least thirty days after the notice is sent) or by mail/electronic ballot (allow at least thirty days for members to vote).
  + Complete the vote to adopt the proposed section bylaws. At least 30% of the proposed section’s members must cast ballots for this vote to be valid, and at least two-thirds of those voting must be in favor of the bylaws for the motion to pass.
  + Update the footer in the bylaws with the date they were adopted by the members of the proposed section and transmit to the bylaws committee chair <bylaws-chair@swe.org> and Society secretary <secretary@swe.org>. Cc your leadership coach.
* Hold charter officer elections. Although the section bylaws will not go into effect until the charter date, you are encouraged to follow the bylaws with respect to nominating and electing the charter officers.
* Complete the Charter Petition Package, scan and email to membership@swe.org and cc your leadership coach. Keep a complete copy for the section’s files.

*Tasks for SWE Headquarters Staff:*

* Assist proposed section with obtaining membership information on a regular basis.

*Tasks for Leadership Coaching Committee:*

* Review the activities of the proposed section for evidence of sustained viability, and provide a letter of support for the charter package documenting such.

*Tasks for Bylaws Committee:*

* Review non-standard bylaws as required.

**STEP 5: REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF CHARTER**

**Duration: 6-8 weeks**

*Tasks for SWE staff:*

* Review the charter package for completeness.
* Contact the proposed section with questions or concerns.
* Confirm that the leadership coach supports the chartering.
* Confirm that the Executive Director will make the motion and that the BOD contact for the Leadership Coaching Committee will second the motion; copy the leadership coaching committee chair, leadership coach, and region governor on this correspondence.
* Prepare motion to charter (include any other changes which need to be made to professional section ZIP codes as a result of chartering the new section) and submit to the Executive Director, with copies to the BOD contact for the leadership coaching committee, leadership coaching committee chair, region governor, proposed section president, and originating group.

*Tasks for proposed section:*

* Reply promptly to any questions or concerns raised by staff or your leadership coach.
* Review and become familiar with the SWE Finance Manual (available on SWE Resources).
* Although you cannot open an account until after the section is chartered and has received an EIN from the IRS, begin researching financial institutions (fees, account types, specific requirements) to decide where to open the account.

*Tasks for Board of Directors:*

* Executive Director & second to bring motion for vote if appropriate.

**STEP 4: AFTER BOD APPROVES THE SECTION’S CHARTER**

*Tasks for SWE headquarters staff:*

* Receive notification from the Executive Director.
* Set up the section code and update auto-assignment protocols.
* Transfer members to the new section and notify members, as applicable.
* Ensure section president, treasurer, section representative, and data officer have appropriate access levels to the online membership reports.
* Mail the congratulatory letter, SWE section charter, seed money check if a professional section, and any other materials to the section president.

*Tasks for new SWE section:*

* Remove the word “proposed” from before the name of the section.
* Collegiate sections should consult with their college/university on whether they will be a subordinate of the institution or of SWE for tax filing purposes. If a subordinate of their university, email [finance-chair@swe.org](mailto:finance-chair@swe.org) with confirmation and skip the next two steps.
* Complete and submit the IRS SS-4 form to the Internal Revenue Service to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN). The form may be filed online from the IRS website. Refer to the SWE Finance Manual for information about completing the form. After receiving the EIN from the IRS, download, complete and submit the Request of Addition to the Group Tax Exemption Form to SWE headquarters.
* Set up account(s) with financial institution or college/university.
* Write a press release announcing the new section and submit to the area/campus newspapers/publications
* Continue using SWE’s leadership coaching program to train new members, officers, and committee chairs.
* Contact LCC if any questions arise.
* Finalize plans for a charter banquet or event. (Location, date, menu, price, etc.)
* Determine who from SWE will formally present the charter at the event.
* Consider asking area companies for support and sponsorship of the event.
* Consider inviting your state’s legislators, area company CEOs, SWE BOD/other leaders, neighboring professional and collegiate sections.

Tasks for Leadership Coaching Committee

* Continue to mentor the new section and assist with questions that may arise.

This procedure shall be reviewed annually by the Leadership Coaching Committee.

**APPENDIX A. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

*How to get to “SWE Resources” at* [*www.swe.org*](http://www.swe.org)

* You must be a member of SWE to access this area.
* You must login to the website by entering your username and password at the top of the page.
* After logging in, “SWE Resources” will appear as a sub-menu item under the “Membership” tab. You can also find the membership directory here.
* If you have difficulty logging in, contact [membership@swe.org](mailto:membership@swe.org)

*Ideas for Section Activities*

Meeting times, locations, programs, and costs vary widely throughout the country.

* Location ideas: campus classroom or meeting room, members’ homes, public facilities (e.g., conference room at a local library or private dining room of a restaurant) or corporate facilities, provided non-employees are permitted onsite.
* Speakers/topics: your own members, local professionals, SWE webinars or webinar replays followed by group discussions
* Social events (like a summer barbecue or holiday party).
* Community connection (walk-a-thon for breast cancer awareness or Habitat for Humanity home build).
* Technical or “behind the scenes” tours appeal to some members.
* Outreach activities to encourage pre-college students in STEM
* Contact your leadership coach for more!

*Financial Considerations*

* SWE does not provide start-up funds for proposed sections, but some funding may be available from the originating section.
* You cannot open an account at a financial institution in the name of the proposed section until after the section is officially chartered and has received an EIN) from the IRS. (Like an individual has a social security number, an organization has an EIN, even if it doesn’t have employees.)
* There are many activities that can be done for free, or you can implement pay-as-you go for members to participate.
* Organizers may incur minor expenses, and most are not concerned about the outlay for getting the group up and running. Proposed collegiate sections could consider contacting campus resources for support including Engineering Dean’s office, student government, or a student organizations office.
* Proposed sections sometimes ask for each participant to donate a small amount of money (like $5 or $10) and operate on a cash basis, replenishing the funds as needed with additional donations from participants. A member should be assigned the responsibility of collecting, disbursing, safekeeping, and accounting for these funds, and that member should report on the funds received, disbursed, and current balance at each meeting of the leadership team.