

North American Regions Administration and Structure

2011

This document includes information about federal non-profit regulations that impact the Society of Biblical Literature's regions, their structures, and the administration thereof. It documents policies governing the regions and their activities and officers and includes forms that officers will be required to complete and file with the SBL Executive Office.

The logo for the Society of Biblical Literature, featuring the letters 'SBL' in a stylized, cursive script.

Society of Biblical Literature

Overview of the Growth of Regions over the Years

Article VI of the Society of Biblical Literature's (SBL or the Society) Constitution states that "members of the Society, with the consent of Council, may organize themselves into Regions in order to further the mission of the Society."

The early history of North American regions is recounted in pages 73-80 of Ernest W. Saunders' *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880-1980*. Saunders notes that a primary motivation for these regions involved the constraints of travel to the Annual Meeting and a desire to expand opportunities to present research.

Traveling distances, however, made it unlikely that the attendance at the annual meeting would include many from outside the immediate area. Partly for that reason and partly out of the need for opportunity to carry on discussions and to share research results, plans were made for regional consultations that would supplement the general meeting and extend the range of participation.¹

These regional consultations (meetings) grew quickly, not only in size but also in importance to the Society's activities and its members' interests, and the regions' original iterations subdivided by the 1970s. With such growth, the regions grew from appendages to "integral parts of the whole that must be reckoned with in any projections for the future."²

Since the 1980s the regions maintained this course of growth and integration, but they were confronted with the need to change their mode of operation in 2002 with the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. The Act set forth new, more stringent regulations on non-profits and the mandated ways they report their business to the federal government.

While these regulations challenged the decentralization of the Society that the regions favored, the Society's Council and Executive Director committed themselves to maintaining the independence and distinctiveness of the North American regions and to supporting regional ownership and creativity. In this regard, Council appointed a Task Force on Regions in its October 2009 fall council meeting and charged the task force with making recommendations on how to comply with federal mandates while preserving the strengths of the regions.

The work of the Task Force identified that SBL members participated in North America on a regional level in two distinct ways, that is, as *annual regional meetings* or *independent regional organizations*.

Some regions have a distinctive SBL identity and function de facto as annual gatherings of SBL members within a geographically defined area in North America. Such regions have no legal identity separate from the Society; that is, they do not file federal tax returns and do not possess a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) as they fall under the federal tax return and FEIN of the Society. They must adhere to the Society's mission and values but are still able to form their own "identity" under that governance. For the purpose of this document, these regions will be called *annual regional meetings (ARM)*.

¹ Ernest W. Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880-1980* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 74.

² *Ibid.*, 76.



Some regions have formed limited liability corporations (LLC) and often as a consortium of several scholarly associations. Legal structures applying to these regions differ from the ones that apply to regions under the Society's federal tax return and FEIN. LLC's maintain their own bylaws and are directly responsible to federal and state authorities for their compliance to legal and fiduciary regulations. For the purpose of this document, these regions will be called *independent regional organizations (IRO)*.

By defining the relationship among the Society, its annual regional meetings, and independent regional organizations, this regions administration policy accomplishes several goals and objectives:

- to promote SBL's engagement on a regional level in North America in order to foster biblical scholarship;
- to reduce risk and liability issues confronted in the course of such engagement;
- to enable the Society to allocate resource dollars more effectively on regional programs;
- to encourage and promote the independence and distinctiveness of the regions;
- to support regional ownership and creativity; and
- to help scale and replicate regional initiatives and programs in other regions and at the national and international levels.



Policies Governing Society of Biblical Literature Annual Regional Meetings

Regions operating as *annual regional meetings* (ARM) will not have their own bylaws or constitution. They will operate according to the mission of the Society and in compliance with its rules and regulations.

Request for support, either fiduciary or programmatic

1. SBL will annually budget support for ARMs in consultation with the Regional Coordinators and the Chair of the Regional Coordinator's Committee. Requests for regular support as well as additional program sponsorship (such as for awards, travel grants, and special lectures) must be submitted at least 16 months prior to the regional meeting.
2. The formal request must clearly define the support, whether fiduciary or programmatic.

Governance

1. Officers - Each ARM will be responsible for selecting its own Regional Coordinator, governing board (or steering committee), and any other officers as would best serve the region.
 - a. The Regional Coordinator of each ARM will serve as the contact person for the Society's Executive Office.
 - b. The selection process of the Regional Coordinator will be documented and filed with the Executive Office.
 - c. The selection process of a governing board or any other officers will be documented and filed with the Executive Office.
 - d. The Regional Coordinator is required to keep contact information and documentation files current with the Executive Office.
2. Review Board - In the case of Officer negligence, the Executive Office has the responsibility to organize a board of Society members for the express purpose of evaluating the Officer's actions and to make recommendation to the Society's Executive Director on appropriate action and whether the Officer needs replacement.
 - a. The Regional Coordinators Committee, in conjunction with Executive Office staff, will create a document to address the process for the review board to follow and incorporate this document into the *Regional Procedure Manual*.
 - b. Actions leading to the organization of such a board include but are not limited to failure to file required documents with the Executive Office in a timely fashion, misuse of funds, sexual harassment, or any action that violates the mission and policies of the Society.
3. Documentation - Each Regional Coordinator is required to file with the Executive Office in a timely manner (see *Regional Procedure Manual*) the following documents:
 - a. Conflict of interest
 - b. Information Security Policy
 - c. ARM governance policies
 - d. ARM Procedure Manual sign-off sheet
 - e. ARM Officer contact information

Banking / financial

1. Each ARM must do its banking through SBL.
2. Each ARM will have its own, separate accounting line on SBL's financials.
3. Each ARM will be permitted to carry forward any net gain in a given year.
4. Each ARM will be permitted to draw upon any excess in its accounting line to cover expenses.
5. No ARM will be permitted to carry a deficit.
6. Each ARM will benefit only from the revenues it generates and will be responsible only for its own individual expenses.



7. No funds from any ARM may be used to support or cover the expenses of another region or another operation of SBL.
8. The Regional Coordinator of each ARM will be responsible for maintaining itemized documentation showing its incoming and outgoing expenses. If these duties are assigned by the region to a Regional Treasurer or similar officer, that individual will be responsible for maintaining itemized documentation and filing it with the Executive Office. The Regional Coordinator will be responsible for communicating the name and all contact information of the officer to the Executive Office and to keep that information current at all times.

Insurance

1. The Executive Office will carry an insurance rider for general liability for each of its regional meetings for which the expense will be incurred by the ARM being insured on its accounting line on SBL's financials.

Registration

1. Each Regional Coordinator must sign an Information Security Policy and adhere to the rules governing the handling of sensitive customer information that is obtained during the registration process as stated therein. If any question arises about compliance, the Regional Coordinator should contact the Executive Office.
2. Each Regional Coordinator must maintain itemized documentation on all registrants (see *Regional Procedure Manual*).

Reporting

1. Each ARM will file documentation immediately following the meeting (within 5 weeks) with the Executive Office that includes the following information:
 - a. Call for papers
 - b. Final meeting program
 - c. One-page program report (for possible use in SBL member updates)
 - d. Registration list (including registrants' full name, institution, organizational membership, and registration type (e.g., student))
 - e. Registration statistics (e.g., total number of registrants, percentage of student registrants)
 - f. Itemized documentation showing incoming and outgoing expenses
2. Each region will receive from the Society's Executive Office a statement of financial activity and account balance on a monthly basis but only in months in which there is activity in the account.

Federal and state taxes

1. All federal and state tax filing for each ARM will be completed by the Executive Office.



Policies Governing Affiliation with Independent Regional Organizations

The Society may affiliate with *independent regional organizations* (IRO) that have a mission that does not conflict with the Society's mission but furthers professional collaboration among members of the affiliated organizations. The following are policies governing this affiliation.

Request for support, either fiduciary or programmatic

1. SBL will annually budget support for IROs in consultation with the Regional Coordinators and the Chair of the Regional Coordinator's Committee. Requests for regular support as well as additional program sponsorship (such as for awards, travel grants, and special lectures) must be submitted at least 16 months prior to the regional meeting.
2. The formal request must clearly define the support, whether fiduciary or programmatic.

Governance

1. Bylaws - Each IRO will keep an up-to-date copy of its bylaws on file with the Society's Executive Office.
2. Officers - The bylaws of each IRO must specify that a regionally elected/appointed SBL member serve as SBL Regional Coordinator and be a member of the organization's governing board.
 - a. This person will serve on SBL's Regional Coordinators Committee as the contact person for the Society's Executive Office and is required to keep contact information and documentation files for the regional organization current with the Executive Office.
 - b. The IRO selection process for elected/appointed Regional Coordinator will be documented and filed with the Executive Office.
3. Documentation - Each Regional Coordinator is required to file with the Executive Office in a timely manner (see *Regional Procedure Manual*) the following documents:
 - a. Regional organization's governance policies
 - b. Regional organization's Procedure Manual sign-off sheet
 - c. Regional Coordinator selection process
 - d. Officer contact information

Reporting

1. Each IRO will file documentation immediately following the meeting (within 5 weeks) with the Executive Office including the following information:
 - a. Call for papers
 - b. Final meeting program
 - c. One-page program report (for possible use in SBL member updates)
 - d. Registration list (including registrants' full name, institution, organizational membership, and registration type (e.g., student))
 - e. Registration statistics (e.g., total number of registrants, percentage of student registrants)

Federal and state taxes

1. Each IRO must show that it is filing Federal Taxes.
2. Each IRO must show that it is filing State Taxes in states that require non-profits to file state taxes.