

SPECIAL INTEREST MONTHS (SIM) & OBSERVANCES DESIGNATION PROCESS

Definition and Value of Special Interest Months

In the United States, “Special Interest Months” (SIM) and Observances are periods within the year that are designated to celebrate and acknowledge various ethnic and marginalized groups or focus on particular causes and efforts. For this document, Heritage Months, Awareness Months, and other Observances are all considered types of SIMs.

Examples of each include:

- Heritage Month: Native American Heritage Month (November)
- Awareness Month: Disability Awareness Month (October)
- Observance: International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 31st)

Designation may be done at the Federal level via Congressional or Presidential action or at the state level via Gubernatorial and Legislative action. Local governments may also designate accordingly, in addition to following federal and state designations.

While SIMs, in general, help to raise awareness of special causes and/or demographics, Heritage Months are specifically intended to acknowledge marginalized groups and provide opportunities to not only celebrate ethnic cultural diversity, but also provide educational opportunities to elevate their respective histories and contributions to American society. In addition to the value of recognition for external partners and communities, a SIMs Calendar supports District Divisions with decision-making prioritization and resource allocation, such as deciding what programming to prioritize and how to allocate budget for resourcing.

Roles, Process, and Examples for Adopting New SIMs

This framework identifies and defines the roles and responsibilities of four primary groups that will be involved with the designation and implementation of SIM(s): the Board of Directors, the Park Advisory Committee, the General Manager, and the District’s Divisions.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors (Board) serve as the sole and primary means of official designations by the District. Like any other Board Resolution, a vote by the Board is required for a SIM to be recognized District-wide. It is recommended that all proposed and recurring SIMs for an upcoming calendar year get presented to the Board at the end of the previous year and voted on as one item. Exceptions for special circumstances can be made at the discretion of the Board.

Suggestions and contributions for currently observed and potential SIMs to be added to the District’s SIM calendar can come from staff and Board members based on programmatic needs and opportunities, along with any other considerations aligned to the mission and vision of the District. Requests that require Board review and action will follow current procedures for bringing business to the Board.

As part of the designation process, Board members are encouraged to recognize individuals from their respective Wards or district-wide that they deem worthy to highlight.

Park Advisory Committee

Prior to the proposed SIM calendar being presented to the Board for approval, the item should first be presented to the Park Advisory Committee (PAC) for review and feedback.

General Manager

The General Manager does not have authority to designate any SIMs, but they are entrusted with the implementation and resourcing of Board-designated SIMs. The General Manager, working within their capacity as a public official and as permitted by law, can also affirm and recognize the SIMs designated by state and federal officials.

District Divisions

Divisions do not have the authority to designate any SIMs. That said, some Divisions may benefit from the ability to participate in non-Board designated observances that have a clear Division programmatic or operational benefit. Participation in these observances by Divisions must be aligned with the District's Mission and Vision and are subject to General Manager's approval.

An example of this potential scenario is if a Division is working in a city that celebrates a special observance unique to them and requests District participation via a Division/Department presence. If the Division deems participation to be crucial to their operational role and capacity, the Division, subject to General Manager approval, could participate without the observance having official District designation.