

## ***Forming a New SCA Group or Branch***

The process of applying for official group status in the Kingdom of Meridies is fairly easy and is detailed below this introduction. There are a number of things to consider however before making a formal request.

The stability, growth, and longevity of groups is the primary concern of the Seneschalate of Meridies; therefore, new group formation, while encouraged, should be carefully considered by the forming parties before making themselves known.

Every group considering formation should carefully read [The Law of the Kingdom of Meridies](#). An unofficial copy of this may be obtained for reference from the kingdom seneschal's web page. For the purposes of this document, special attention should be given to Article IX, which covers groups, and Article IV, covering officer duties. In all cases Kingdom Law, the Crown and the Kingdom Seneschal determine what is appropriate for the formation of new groups.

To form a new group there should be at least ten paying sustaining membership SCA members in the new area. Some of these players should have at minimum a year of active participation and experience with an official SCA group. Of course, this may not be possible if the new group is forming in an area where no SCA groups have previously existed. Documentation will be required in the form of a census with mundane names, SCA names, membership numbers and mailing addresses for all parties forming a new group.

Distance is of special consideration in the forming of new groups. New groups should not be considered in areas where there is already an existing group within 40 miles. This is to allow for the natural expansion and growth of existing groups. In exception, a Barony may choose to form and represent a Canton immediately adjacent to or within its borders if distance is less than this, if the overall benefit to the Barony and the participants is deemed acceptable, and if a polling of the Barony agrees that such a Canton should be formed. There may be a special circumstance where a new group might be considered that does not meet this criterion, but it is only done with careful consultation with the surrounding groups and the Kingdom Seneschal.

To obtain lands for the formation of a group, a forming group should consult the kingdom deputy incipient groups' seneschal with a list of US Postal Zip Codes for the proposed group. These zip codes will be checked against the kingdom record to establish that they are not within the lands already granted to other established groups. A group should not attempt to obtain zip codes already known to be within established territories of other SCA groups. The exception of this rule is for the formation of Cantons and Colleges; Cantons and Colleges may negotiate for zip codes with the sponsoring Barony or Shire, however the sponsoring Barony or Shire may refuse to release zip codes assigned to them. Cities and counties may not be claimed wholesale. The US Postal Service does not recognize city and county boundaries in drawing postal zip codes. The SCA

Incorporated and the kingdoms recognize that postal zip codes are a well-established method of determining residency and use this method to determine the lands of a SCA group. You should consult your local post office and you proposed group members to determine what zip codes are covered by geographical locations.

New groups that are the result of a conflict or faction split within an existing group will not be considered. However, participants in a conflict situation should expect and receive assistance from the Kingdom Seneschal in resolving their local issues.

There are several types of group formations to be considered:

**Barony:** This type of SCA group is formed where there is a very large density of population and more than twenty-five experienced sustaining members of the SCA wishing to be recognized as a Barony. A barony is seldom formed as a new group but is more often an elevation from an already existing shire. Baronies are considered the most stable type of groups because of their large membership participation, diverse SCA experience, and contributions of the players to their Kingdom at large. Baronies are required to bid on hosting one Kingdom level event annually.

**Canton:** This is a sponsored group under the guidance and assistance of a fully recognized Barony of the kingdom. Cantons are required to report on the same schedule as full SCA groups, but also report to their Barony. The Barony acts as an emissary to the kingdom and mediator in all problems within a Canton.

**College:** These groups are formed at educational institutions where membership fluctuates due to changes in student enrollment. The reporting requirements for this type of group are the same as full Incipient Shires; however, during normal periods of inactivity like summer break, reporting is suspended with no negative impact on the group. A college may choose to work with a fully recognized group of the SCA if there is one nearby. This relationship is a formal one called sponsorship, and the local group acts as a reporting layer between the college and the kingdom.

**Shire:** The most common type of SCA group in the Kingdom, these groups are comprised of individuals who live in a geographic area where population density can support normal group membership turnover over a long period of time. Historically membership turnover in the SCA averages about three years. This is not a rule, only a historical average. Shires should sponsor one local event annually.

**Stronghold:** These are generally formed on or near a military base where a large portion of the members may be military members, dependants of military members, or live on or near a military base as civilian employees. These groups experience changes in membership caused by military deployments and exercises and changes in the economy directly related to military activities. These groups are allowed to file for 'dormancy' in periods of inactivity due to such fluctuations in military membership participation with no negative impact on the group. Historically, there have been no Stronghold type groups in Meridies; however, this should not deter one from forming if appropriate. It is

acceptable for a Shire to be formed in these areas if the forming group feels that membership will not be drastically effected by military activities.

Per Kingdom Law, these are the number of paid sustaining SCA memberships that are required for each group type:

Barony :	25 members
Canton:	10 members
College:	5 members
Shire:	10 members
Stronghold/Port:	10 members

There are people who can help you in the forming of a new group:

#### Kingdom or Principality Seneschal

General contact for information about local rules and policies.

#### Incipient Groups Deputy

This is a specific person who reports directly to the Kingdom Seneschal and who advises and assists new groups in preparing for advancement.

#### Baronial Seneschal

If your group is in land claimed by a Barony, this officer will be your local Seneschal's immediate superior in the chain of command.

#### Sponsoring Seneschal

This is the Seneschal of a full-status local group, or of a Barony, who serves as an advisor and mentor to your local Seneschal. For new groups that will be cantons of a Barony, the Sponsoring Seneschal and Baronial Seneschal may very well be the same person, but this is not always true.

You should not announce yourself as a proposed group until after you have contacted one or more of the above parties and gained their assistance in determining if your proposed group meets the above requirements and is in the best interest of all parties. It is totally acceptable, however, to recruit new SCA members from areas not already claimed by other groups, hold planning meetings to discuss activities and membership, participate in public demonstrations of SCA activities, and become involved in positive community activities to make the public aware of the SCA and your new potential group. Nevertheless, your activities are not considered official, and you may not hold official SCA events covered under SCA insurance.

A new group does not acquire fully recognized status until the Kingdom Seneschal or the Crown reads in court at a Kingdom Level event that the incipient group is

recognized. No other communication prior to that time qualifies the group at incipient status.

These are acceptable activities for a forming group not yet recognized by the kingdom:

- Hold business meetings, arts and sciences classes, etc.
- Hold fighter practices **with a warranted marshal present.**
- Hold archery practices **with a warranted archery marshal present.**
- Hold fencing or equestrian practices **with a warranted fencing or equestrian marshal present.**
- Publish a newsletter (unofficial) with appropriate disclaimer.
- Publicize your new group in the community and invite members of other groups to participate at your activities.
- Participate fully at other groups' activities and events
- Rely on your kingdom officers to perform their duties for you, just as they would for any group
- Choose a group name and design an heraldic device
- Hold events **with sponsorship of a full status SCA Shire or Barony.**

Basically your activities are considered to be like those of a household, an unofficial group within the SCA, until your group is formally recognized as a SCA Incipient Group.

### ***Making the Official Application***

When you are prepared to officially file for status as an Incipient Group, you will be required to submit a letter to the Deputy Kingdom Incipient Group Seneschal. This letter should include a complete census of all members of the proposed group. The census should include the membership type and status of all proposed group members, and their addresses and phone numbers.

There should be submitted a slate of officers and optionally résumés for each officer; résumés should include both SCA experience and mundane experience that may qualify them for the office they will be appointed to. Résumés are not required. It is also helpful to include associative relationships of officers to any peers. For example, if the proposed group A&S officer is an apprentice to a Laurel within the SCA, this relationship should be noted on the officer's resume. There are three required officers: Seneschal, Reeve, and either Herald, Arts &

Sciences Officer, or Knights Marshal. All group officers are required to be sustaining members of the SCA, and proof of current membership is required with the submission documents. For legal reasons, the Seneschal and the Reeve may not be related by blood or marriage, or reside in the same residence because when a SCA group's bank account is established, the account requires two signatures of two unrelated parties who do not reside at the same residence. For official SCA groups, this is the Seneschal and the Reeve. Once the group is recognized, the Society Exchequer and the Kingdom Exchequer must also sign the bank account signature card.

The letter of intent should contain the US Postal Zip Codes that the forming group would like to claim. These zip codes should be verified in advance that they are not currently possessed by any recognized group of the SCA. In the event that any zip code submitted is in the possession of a recognized SCA group, a letter of release for the zip codes in question must be submitted with the application. The officers of the group releasing the zip codes to the forming group must sign this letter of release. Zip code lists should include the zip code, city, county, and state for each zip code number. All zip codes must be contiguous, meaning they are adjoining each other, and zip code may not attempt to divide, surround another group to prevent growth or appear to gerrymander the geography.

The new group should submit a petition with the signature of each member and with each member's mundane name clearly printed below his or her signature. The text of the petition should declare that the signatories approve of the formation of the group, approve of the proposed name of the group, and approve of the slate of officers noted in the petition.

There should be four copies of this entire package of documentation. One copy becomes the permanent record of the forming group. Three copies should be mailed to the Deputy Kingdom Seneschal for Incipient Groups. These three copies will be distributed as follows: One becomes the permanent record of the Deputy; two are mailed to the Kingdom Seneschal. The Kingdom Seneschal will mail one copy to the Crown. The forming group should not submit their package directly to the Kingdom Seneschal or the Crown. The Deputy Kingdom Seneschal will send a letter of confirmation of receipt to the filing group.

Following the procedure for group filing is very important. It indicates that the filing group is familiar with protocol and policy and is willing to work within the rules and practices of the kingdom and the SCA. Once a submission package is acknowledged, the petitioning group will be kept informed of its progress throughout the review period. New group applications take between three and six months to be fully processed. In some cases, where the information detailed above is not complete, this process can take much longer. Please follow the procedure completely to assure a quick and beneficial response to your group's application.