

VII.

**POLICY &
ADMISSIONS**

AGENDA

Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions

Sunday, April 18, 2021, 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Monday, April 19, 2021, Noon – 3:15 p.m.

Via videoconference

Chairperson: Kevin F.

Secretary: Jeff W.

Conference Committee Members

Panel 70

Kevin F.

Ray O.

Ron S.

Linda V.

Panel 71

Bob K.

Mary M.

Stacy M.

Caroline N.

Brian T.

+Agenda item forwarded from the 70th G.S.C.

- ◆ Introductions – Kevin F., Conference committee chairperson.
- ◆ Review Conference Committee Composition, Scope and Procedure – Kevin F., Conference committee chairperson.
- ◆ Review history of Conference Committee – Jeff W., secretary
- A. +Review G.S.O. general manager's report regarding General Service Conference site selection.
- B. +Review the floor action process.
- C. +Consider a proposed process for how a Conference committee could review, discuss, and act on proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee.

NOTE: 1989 Conference Advisory Action

Each Conference Committee carefully consider their agenda items and strive to make their recommendations for Advisory Actions to the Conference at the policy level. To be more financially responsible, when a Conference Committee recommendation involves a substantial expenditure of money, an estimate of cost and its impact on the budget be part of that recommendation.

- D. Review dates for the 2025 General Service Conference.
- E. Review the "Report on Translation and Interpretation of General Service Conference Material."
- F. Consider revising the process for polling the General Service Conference between annual meetings to make use of virtual meeting technologies.
- G. Consider a request that a procedure be drafted for appealing a ruling by a General Service Conference chair.
- H. Discuss the revised proposed process for equitable distribution of workload.
- I. Review the report on the Conference Committee Assignment Application implemented for the 2020 Committee Selection process.
- J. Consider requests regarding participation of online groups in the General Service structure.

2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM A: +Review G.S.O. general manager's report regarding General Service Conference site selection.

Background notes: +Agenda Item forwarded from the 70th G.S.C.

2019 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions:

The committee reviewed the report from G.S.O.'s general manager on site selection of the General Service Conference and looks forward to a progress report for review by the 2019 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions.

From the February 1, 2020 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

The committee **agreed to forward** a written report provided by the general manager regarding General Service Conference site selection to the 2020 Conference Policy and Admissions Committee for consideration. The committee requests when exploring venues outside New York City and State (other cities in U.S. and Canada) that future reports include more details on specific sites considered. The committee agreed the report would be more beneficial if it included the work being completed during the site selection process. The committee recommends that research be completed regarding addressing any legal limitations resulting from the Bylaws of the A.A.W.S. and AAGV Boards of hosting the General Service Conference outside the State of New York.

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Current Conference Charter excerpt:

9. The General Service Conference Meetings: The Conference will meet yearly in the City of New York, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

BYLAWS of The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. excerpts:

MEETINGS, NOTICES AND VOTE The second quarterly meeting of the Trustees of the Board shall take place on Saturday, immediately following the close of the General Service Conference.

All meetings of members and trustees shall take place in the City and County of New York, unless at a meeting of the Board, the trustees shall decide to hold a future meeting or meetings outside of the City of New York. The actual place and time of day of each meeting shall be determined by the chair.

BYLAWS of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. excerpt:

ARTICLE II MEMBERS AND MEETINGS OF MEMBERS: Section 3. Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the Members of the Corporation shall be held in the State of New York on the day immediately following the scheduled close of the General Service Conference.

BYLAWS of Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine, Inc. excerpt:

ARTICLE II MEMBERS AND MEETINGS OF MEMBERS: Section 3. Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the Members of the Corporation shall be held in the State of New York on the day immediately following the scheduled close of the General Service Conference.

Background:

1. General manager's report on General Service Conference site selection
2. Advisory Actions regarding General Service Conference site selection

Memorandum

Date: January 29, 2020
To: 2020 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions
Copy: Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference
From: Greg T., General Manager
Re: Site selection for the General Service Conference

Review Dates for Future General Service Conferences

G.S.O. management would like to address the topic of the timing of review dates for future General Service Conference by the Conference Policy and Admissions Committee. During the 2019 Conference Policy and Admissions Committee meeting the General Manager shared with the members that what gave G.S.O. the best negotiating advantage for site selection is to issue requests for information (RFIs) and requests for proposals (RFPs) to hotels for two-year contracts, having some flexibility with dates and starting the process as soon as possible.

Historically, there is a 1985 Advisory Action that states:

The Conference Policy Committee routinely review the dates for the General Service Conference to be held two years hence.

That policy is currently tying the review dates to a specific timeframe. To that end, G.S.O. management believes that it would be more effective to have the Conference Policy and Admissions Committee review dates for future General Service Conferences on a biannual review schedule starting with this year, 2020, as follows:

- 2020 – no review of dates needed
- 2021 – Review dates for 2025 and 2026
 - o RFI/RFP process could begin at end of 2021 and 2022
- 2022 – no review of dates
- 2023 – Review dates for 2027 and 2028
 - o RFI/RFP process could begin at end of 2023 and 2024

To revise the timeframe, currently established by the 1985 Advisory Action, the General Manager recommends that the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference consider a proposed agenda item to be forwarded to the 2020 Conference Policy and Admissions Committee for discussion.

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The proposed agenda item is:

Consider continuing the review of dates for the General Service Conference with timing and year(s) to review as requested by the General Manager.

Correction of Archival Record

On January 2, 2020 the Conference Coordinator provided all Conference members the 70th GSC Preliminary List of Agenda Items. This list included the following Conference Policy and Admissions Committee item:

Review dates for the 2025 General Service Conference

If the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference agrees to forward the proposed agenda item to Conference Policy and Admissions Committee the Conference Coordinator will include a footnote on the 2020 G.S.C. Final List of Agenda Items to explain the removal of the preliminary agenda item to all Conference members.

Site Selection of the General Service Conference

In the first quarter of 2020, the General Manager authorized the Meetings, Events and Travel Services team to engage a consultant, Talley Management, to help in the effort to begin an RFI/RFP process to determine the most cost-effective and appropriate venues to hold the 2023 (73rd) and 2024 (74th) General Service Conference.

A 2019 Conference Policy and Admissions Committee Additional Committee Consideration included three proposed dates, in order of preference, for the 73rd and 74th General Service Conferences that do not conflict with any significant holidays. All Conference members will be notified of the final dates for these Conferences as soon as they are finalized by G.S.O. management.

Following a similar process used in past site selection searches, G.S.O. Management is planning to explore venues outside New York City and State (other cities in U.S. and Canada) for the 2025 General Service Conference. This is a preliminary step to gather information to bring back to the Board and the Conference.

The goals for the current RFP will continue to be:

- 1) A reduction or containment of total Conference total costs
- 2) An improvement in the suitability of sleeping rooms and meeting rooms, including the spaces for our general sessions and committees, with appropriate support resources, such as Wi-Fi and AV
- 3) Better and less expensive transportation connections than we currently have, especially to La Guardia and JFK airports

Conference Advisory Actions Regarding General Service Conference Site Selection

2017 *It was recommended that:*

General Service Office management submit a report on the process, implementation and status on the site selection of the General Service Conference for review by the 2018 Policy/Admissions Committee.

2008 *It was recommended that:*

The responsibility for General Service Conference site selection be delegated to General Service Office management, subject to approval of the General Service Board; and that a report be forwarded to the 2009 General Service Conference.

1991 *It was recommended that:*

The 1992 General Service Conference annual meeting be held in the city of New York. (Floor Action)

1970 *It was recommended that:*

The General Service Office have the right to choose the hotel for the 1971 General Service Conference without conferring further with the delegates to the Conference. (Delegates Only Meeting)

1969 *It was recommended that:*

Inasmuch as G.S.O. is now giving consideration to relocation of the office in New York, consideration might also be given to the relocation of the site of this annual meeting, with a view to returning to single-room accommodations, so that the advantages of private meditation, study, thought and rest might be restored. It was further suggested that the rising costs of the annual meeting might be controlled, or at least reduced, by a study of possible alternative hotel accommodations. (Delegates Only Meeting)

1956 *It was recommended that:*

The proposal that meetings of the General Service Conference be “rotated” from New York City in even years to a different geographical section in odd years be tabled for consideration at some future date.

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2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM B: +Review the Floor Action process.

Background notes: +Agenda Item forwarded from the 70th G.S.C.

From the November 29, 2019 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

The committee reviewed historical experience, actions and sharing on the topic of floor actions and agreed that the process is working and took no further action.

From the February 1, 2020 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2020 Conference Policy and Admissions Committee a proposed agenda item to "Review the Floor Action process to guard against circumvention of the Conference process."

On July 24, 2020 Trustee Emeritus, Terry B., proposed a suggestion for clarification of the Floor Action Procedure. This became a proposed agenda item which the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference forwarded to the Policy and Admissions Committee at its October 2020 meeting to consider with its review of the floor action process.

Background:

1. Submitter letter from Area 29, 12.10.19
2. Additional information from Area 29
3. Archives Department Research of Floor Actions
4. Excerpts on Floor Actions from G.S.C. working agenda
5. How the Conference Operates
6. How the Conference Operates History of Changes
7. Proposal from Terry B., 7.24.20
8. Memo forwarding Terry B. proposal to Policy and Admissions committee

From: Don B
Sent: Tuesday, December 10, 2019 3:41 PM
To: Conference
Cc: Groupservices
Subject: 70th General Service Conference Agenda Item Proposal from Area 29 (#2 of 4)

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 8043
Elkridge, MD 21075

December 10, 2019

Patrick C
Conference Coordinator
General Service Office
475 Riverside Drive, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10115

Dear Patrick,

Attached to this correspondence are two pages of background information from Area 29 in support of a Conference Agenda Item proposal (#2 of 4) for the 70th General Service Conference.

The proposal reads: "Review the Floor Action Process to guard against circumvention of the Conference Process."

This proposal was brought forward from the Area 29 Committee to the Area 29 Assembly held on December 7, 2019. The Motion passed with substantial unanimity (only two dissenting votes) in favor of forwarding it to the Conference Coordinator with additional background information, which is attached.

The proposal had originated in the summer of 2019 during separate meetings of two of Area 29's four geographically-distinct Conference Agenda Review Committees (CARCs 2 and 4). CARC 2 is comprised of members from Districts 1, 6, 22, 23, 27, 35, 36, and 42 in the four southern counties of Area 29. CARC 4 is comprised of members from Districts 7, 9, 17, 20, 40, and 41 in the six western counties of Maryland. It was decided that CARC 4 would conduct further research, discussion, and editing of this

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proposal. This was facilitated through several additional face-to-face meetings, conference calls, and electronic communications. Following final CARC 4 approval, the proposal was forwarded to and approved with substantial unanimity by the Area 29 Committee on November 16, 2019.

Additional Background Information (attached):

- (1) Definition of Conference Agenda Review Committee.
- (2) Origins of this Agenda Item proposal.
- (3) Notes from CARC 4 discussions concerning this proposal.
- (4) Excerpts from CARC 2 minutes concerning this proposal.

In summary, Area 29 proposes that a review of the General Service Conference Floor Action process is necessary to prevent any Conference member from circumventing the normal Conference process, which involves adequate study of background materials, careful discussion, and a fully-informed vote, resulting in a substantial unanimity which reflects the true voice of the A.A. fellowship in the United States and Canada.

Thank you, Patrick, for your devoted service to our Fellowship. Please contact me with any questions that you may have concerning this Conference Agenda Item proposal.

Yours in love and service,

Don B

Don B

Panel 68, Area 29 Delegate

Attachments

as

cc: Jeff W, NE Regional Contact

Area 29 Assembly presents the following Floor Action Agenda, approved at the December 7th, 2019 Area Assembly meeting:

“Review the Floor Action Process to guard against circumvention of the Conference Process”

Background Information:

1) Definition of Acronyms used in Area 29 (provided to assist with understanding of local terminology)-

o CARC: Conference Agenda Review Committee-

“The purposed of the Conference Agenda Review Committees (“CARC(s)”) is to help prepare the Area Delegate and alternate delegate for the General Service Conference and to recommend Agenda Items to the Area for consideration and possible approval no later than the December Area Assembly. The CARC will consist of GSRs and DCMs in the designated districts, as well as Area Committee Leaders, Past Delegates, Area Officers and all interested members of the fellowship. “(p. 20: Maryland General Service Area 29 Assembly Handbook)

o CARC 4 consists of Districts 7, 9, 17, 20, 40, and 41 in Area 29 – Maryland

2) From our CARC 4 Reconvene notes on 7/14/19:

- o Need better guidelines on definition of floor action and when it can be brought and entertained becomes policy if approved; need to be clearer so process isn’t circumvented.
- o Conference chair goes through the sheet of what’s required for voting process; committees hopefully do this before conference is in session.

3) From our CARC 4 Conference Call on 8/25/19:

- o When we met on July 14, 2019- we discussed that there have been floor actions at conference which upon review seem like they could have been agenda items but because they were introduced as floor actions, much of the valuable research and opportunity for input from the AA groups and members throughout the US and Canada is missed.

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- o When the item is presented as a floor action, it does not have the opportunity to be developed by the Conference Agenda Committee, background material collected, sent to the Area for review and discussion (i.e. the CARC process in Area 29) and the Area Delegates are not equipped with the Conscience of their Area when they arrive at Conference.
- o Hopefully, a thorough Review of the Floor Action Process will educate and provide insurance that the Conference Process remains rooted in the Twelve Concepts for World Service.
- o It seems that Concept I- The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship- speaks to the Floor Action process.
- o Upon review of the Floor Action Process, can the Floor Action Process meet the test of Concept I?
- o After some correspondence via email on 8/25/19, it was decided that CARC 4 would continue to develop this agenda item, incorporating the sense of CARC 2 as received in email from the CARC 2 leader and CARC 2 mentor.

4) The following was received via email from CARC 2 Mentor, Linda J. on 8/25/19:

- o A portion of the excerpt from the CARC 2 Minutes on this discussion is as follows:

Floor Actions: *There was a discussion about bringing Floor Actions to the mic at the General Service Conference that had not been properly vetted and gone through the Conference process. It is felt by those present at this meeting that these floor actions circumvent the Conference process. Perhaps there should be no allowance for these Floor Actions, or at the very least, a clear definition of appropriate use.*

General Service Conference: Floor Actions

Part 1: General History

A motion made on the Floor, or “Floor Action” was an integral procedure of the General Service Conference (GSC) from the very beginning. Evidently, “matters” not on the Conference agenda were raised for discussion from the floor that resulted in a motion and vote. This was basically the procedure in the early years of the Conference. Keep in mind that during these early, experimental years of the Conference, the delegates were still configuring the Conference process. There was no set manner of getting agenda items on the Conference agenda, filtering items through the trustees’ committees in the fashion in which it is done today. The agenda at the Conference was much less packed with agenda items and the delegates were thus more able to have informal discussion from the floor. In many cases delegates had to bring up issues on the floor to have them discussed. It was only natural for them to do so.

Some early examples of “Floor Actions” listed in the compilation “Advisory Actions” booklet include:

(Trustees) 1952 It was recommended that:

The non-alcoholic trustees continue to serve us without restrictions. (Floor Action)

The trustees appoint a committee of five Conference delegates to study the problem of Congressional incorporation. (Floor Action)

(Grapevine) 1952 It was recommended that:

The Conference, in a special resolution, affirmed its support of the traditional “Grapevine” policy of carrying news of non-A.A. happenings when they relate to the interests of A.A. readers, directly or indirectly. (Floor Action)

(Policy/Admissions) 1952 It was recommended that:

No action be taken that would alter present provisions of two-year terms for Conference delegates. (Floor Action)

The principle of rotation at all levels of A.A. affairs should be preserved and strengthened. (Floor Action)

(Policy/Admissions) 1952 It was recommended that:

No policy should be declared or action taken on matters liable to gravely affect A.A. as a whole unless by consent of at least three-quarters of the members present. A mere majority should not authorize action. (Floor Action)

(Agenda) 1954 It was recommended that:

The Conference would adjourn its final session with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. (Floor Action)

NOTE: The corresponding Final Conference Reports did not list the examples cited above as “Floor Actions.”

It may be argued that the concept of a floor action soon evolved into something that was seen as the privilege of any delegate. The delegates would give discretion to the Board and the trustees' committees to decide what would go on the Conference agenda - - but each delegate retained the right, always, of proposing an idea – even one not accepted as an agenda item by the trustees – as a floor action.

For example, in the Board minutes from October 1955, the trustees were trying to determine how to “filter proposals” through the General Service Board and the trustees' committees – they didn't know if the Conference would give them the discretion and authority to decide which items would reach the Conference agenda or not. They were not exercising any filtering authority at that time yet. The minutes read, in part:

“Mr. G. asked for guidance in the case of a Delegate who submits a proposal which he asks be sent to all Delegates. Mr. Smith [Bernard Smith] said that until this filtering concept is clarified before the Conference, the proposal should be sent out. However, if a proposal is utterly ridiculous, then an attempt should be made to persuade the Delegate to present it on the Conference floor.”

This concept of “filtering” proposals – that is, the discretion given to trustees' committees to decide which items would become Conference agenda items – was fleshed out in 1957. In the Conference Report the Policy Committee report notes:

“[The Chair] said the Committee was anxious to have the sense of the Conference on the problem of handling proposals submitted by Delegates during the year. While great care is taken by the Committee not to act as a censor, occasionally the Committee has felt that it would be in the interest of the movement as a Fellowship to determine, after careful review, whether or not a proposal should be circulated.

He offered for Conference consideration the following possible solution to the problem:

- 1. If Policy Committee feels a Proposal should not be circulated, it should be referred to Conference Agenda Committee.*
- 2. If the Agenda Committee concurs in this feeling, the Proposal should be returned to the Delegate involved, and he should be advised of his privilege to present the Proposal, at an appropriate time, from the floor of Conference itself."*

Part II: Committees' History and Actions on Development of Procedures

1968, Advisory Action, Policy and Admissions

When questions of importance for the Conference cannot be sent to the areas in advance, consideration be given to an oral presentation early in the Conference session, with discussion and voting to be taken at a later date during the Conference.

July 1985, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee discussed the suggestion that any floor action taken at the Friday afternoon Sharing Session be limited to referral action to the next Conference. Since this involves parliamentary procedure, the general manager and incoming Conference coordinator will develop a parliamentary proposal to address this issue for review at the next meeting of the trustees' Conference Committee.

1986, Advisory Action, Policy and Admissions

With regard to proposing Floor Actions in the final hours of the Conference, the 1968 recommendation, which was as follows, be reaffirmed:

"When questions of importance for the Conference cannot be sent to the areas in advance, consideration be given to an oral presentation early in the Conference session, with discussion and voting to be taken at a later date during the Conference."

The background material from 1986 was limited to only a letter from a delegate who proposed the agenda item, which was, "Consider the matter of proposing Floor actions in the final hours of the Conference."

In the 1990s through 2000s, procedures for handling floor actions began to be discussed, formulated and amended throughout the years.

1995 – 1996 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference

In 1995, a subcommittee of the trustees Committee on the General Service Conference named, "Agenda Planning Subcommittee" was formed to review the mechanics and proceedings of the annual GSC. The subcommittee recommended the following procedure regarding Floor Motions, which was accepted by the full committee in January 1996:

It was also recommended that all floor motions be introduced at any time during the Conference except at the Wednesday sharing session, and that they shall be submitted in writing by the maker. Whether the motion will be considered, and any discussion on the motion, will take place in the appropriate order of business when floor actions are considered.

It was further recommended that this recommendation stand as the order of business for this year's Conference and that it will be explained with the mechanics of the Conference at the beginning of the week.

Finally, it was proposed that the recommendation be forwarded to the Policy/Admissions Committee for discussion in connection with future Conferences.

1995 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions

The 1995 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions considered a proposed agenda item that "All Floor Actions be considered at the end of Conference week." The committee's recommendation did not pass, but resulted as a "strong suggestion" as reported in the history and actions:

Strong suggestion of the Conference (recommendation where the vote was less than 2/3, but more than 1/2 in favor):

The Conference reaffirm the 1986 recommendations regarding floor actions:

With regard to proposing Floor Actions in the final hours of the Conference the 1968 recommendation, which was as follows, be reaffirmed:

"That when questions of importance for the Conference could not be sent to the areas in advance, consideration be given to an oral presentation early in the Conference sessions, with discussions and voting to be taken at a later date during the Conference."

And that the 1986 recommendation, as follows, be reaffirmed:

"That when matters of great significance having a long-term effect on the Fellowship or of substantial expense are presented to the floor in the waning hour of the Conference, such matters be referred to the appropriate committee at the next Conference in order for the group conscience to be as informed as possible."

The discussion also yielded a committee consideration as follows:

The committee requests that the trustees' Committee on the Conference include the 1995 recommendation regarding floor actions in the Conference Kit which goes to all Conference members each January. (Archives note: The recommendation referenced in the committee consideration did not result in an advisory action, but a "strong suggestion").

1996 Committee Consideration, Policy and Admissions

The conference Committee on P&A "discussed the order of Conference business regarding Floor Actions," which resulted in the Committee Consideration:

The committee discussed the issue of floor actions and suggested that the committees responsible continue to establish the Conference agenda's order of business.

January 2000, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee considered a proposal to consider amend conference procedures regarding Floor Actions but took no action. See below:

The committee agreed with the previous committee action taken at the October 30th meeting declining to delete the sentence, "All floor actions will be heard unless there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider a proposed floor action, which is not debatable and will require a 2/3 vote to carry" in the handout "Summary of Conference Procedures." The chair wrote and informed the member of the committees' decision and thanked the member for a second letter. As a formality, any changes or amendments to the "Summary of Conference Procedures" would be addressed at the opening of the Conference, when mechanics of the Conference are reviewed and discussed. If any Conference member wished to change a procedure, including one about floor actions, it may be addressed and voted upon at the time the procedure was stated.

August 2008, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee discussed the practice and philosophy of using the parliamentary procedure of voting to "commit or refer to committee" when considering, General Service Conference Floor Actions. The chair appointed a subcommittee to review the processing of Floor Actions at the General Service Conference.

November 2008, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes.

The committee presented the following report and recommendation to the General Service Board for approval but note that the recommendation was referred back to the committee for further consideration. **(See image below)**

Review Processing of General Service Conference Floor Actions: The committee received the *Subcommittee on Review of the Processing of General Service Conference Floor Actions* report on the processing of Floor Actions at the General Service Conference and recommended to the General Service Board that the section in "How the General Service Conference Operates/Summary of Conference Procedures" on the procedure for Floor Actions be clarified by the addition of the sentence, "**Prior to consideration of the floor action, the chair of the session shall ask if there is a motion to decline to consider the floor action,**" so the procedure reads as follows:

Floor Actions

Floor actions may be introduced at any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions, and:

- *Must be made without comment.*
- *Must be submitted in writing by the maker to the Conference secretary.*
- *Will come up for deliberation after all Committee reports have been heard.*
- *Requires a two-thirds majority.*
- *All floor actions will be heard unless there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider a floor action. **Prior to consideration of the floor action, the chair of the session shall ask if there is a motion to decline to consider the floor action.** A motion to decline to hear a floor action:*
 - *Must be made without comment.*
 - *Is not debatable.*
 - *Requires a two-thirds majority*

The committee agreed with the recommendations of the *Subcommittee on Review of the Processing of General Service Conference Floor Actions* that the parliamentary procedures "to commit to or refer to committee" and "to recommit to committee" not be used at future Conferences nor incorporated in the procedures of "How the General Service Conference Operates/Summary of Conference Procedures" since this procedure has not been historically a part of the procedures of the General Service Conference and is not in the spirit of concluding the business of each General Service Conference at that Conference.

Note: The section of the report above, Review Processing of General Service Conference Floor Actions, including the recommendation to the General Service Board was Tabled and referred back to the trustees' Committee on the Conference for further consideration.

General Service Board, November 2008

January 2009, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

Processing of Floor Actions

The committee reviewed the trustees' Committee on the Conference's November 1, 2008 recommendation referred back to the committee by the General Service Board for further consideration regarding the processing of Floor Actions at the General Service Conference and agreed to table this item for the 2009 Summer Quarterly Meeting to reconsider this item following the 59th General Service Conference.

August 2009, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The item was again tabled until the committee's next meeting in October.

October 2009, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The item was yet again tabled until the January 30, 2010 meeting.

January 2010, Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee discussed a revision to the current version in the section "Floor Actions" in the document "How the General Service Conference Operates/Summary of Conference Procedures" and agreed that by placing the discretion to consider a floor action or to decline a floor action directly with the Conference body the following recommendation would address the perceived problem. The committee recommended to the General Service Board that the following statement in the section on the procedure for Floor Actions in the document "How the Conference Operates," which reads:

All floor actions will be heard unless there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider a floor action. A motion to decline to hear a floor action:

- *Must be made without comment*
- *Is not debatable*
- *Requires a two-thirds majority*

be replaced with the following statement:

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When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action. A motion to decline to hear a floor action:

- *Must be made without comment*
- *Is not debatable*
- *Requires a two-thirds majority*

The committee reviewed the section of the report on "Recommit to Committee" and took no action on the recommendation that the parliamentary procedure "to commit or refer to committee" and to "recommit to committee" not be used at future Conferences nor incorporated in the procedures of "How the General Service Conference Operates/Summary of Conference Procedures."

The committee reaffirmed the 1986 Conference Advisory Action: "When matters of great significance having a long-term effect on Fellowship or of substantial expense are presented to the floor in the waning hours of the Conference, such matters be referred to the appropriate committee at the next Conference in order for the group conscience to be as informed as possible."

The committee noted that there have been instances where following floor discussion, the Conference has requested a trustees' committee to further review and provide additional background on an agenda item for the following Conference to consider.

July 2010 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee discussed adding the procedure "Requires a second" regarding Floor Actions, which was approved by the General Service Board (See Image below)

Editorial Change to "Summary of Conference Procedures": The committee recommended to the General Service Board that the phrase "Requires a second" be added to the procedure for Floor Actions in the document "How the General Service Conference Operates/Summary of Conference Procedures" so that it reads:

When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action. A motion to decline to hear a floor action:

- Must be made without comment.
- Requires a second.
- Is not debatable.
- Requires a two-thirds majority.

January 2011 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee discussed a request "to specifically bar and prohibit the use of the decline to consider procedure" related to Floor Actions and took no action. The committee noted that as the revised Floor Action procedure was only instituted at the 60th General Service Conference, it would like to see the procedure utilized by the Conference for a few more years to determine its effectiveness.

July 2011 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee reviewed suggestions regarding Floor Actions at Conferences. The committee noted that the Floor Action procedure was revised in 2010 and that the number of Floor Actions decreased significantly at the 61st Conference in 2011.

July 2016 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee reviewed a revised "How the General Service Conference Operates," with the title "Summary of Conference Procedures" and the chair appointed a subcommittee a) to develop language for the action of remanding an item to committee and b) to clearly define and note practices surrounding floor actions. The observation was made that we seem to have strayed from understanding that floor actions are meant to be on emergent issues.

January 2017 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

Subcommittee on "How the Conference Operates": *The committee accepted the report of the Subcommittee on "How the Conference Operates." The committee agreed to revise language regarding floor actions, and agreed to add the "motion to recommit" to the procedures. The committee noted that the motion to recommit would send an item to the appropriate trustees' committee.*

Note: For more information on the work of the subcommittee, refer to the "Final Report of the Subcommittee on 'How the Conference Operates'," dated January 2017.

July 2017 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

Correspondence from past delegate: *The committee reviewed correspondence from a past delegate. The committee noted that the request for transparency in posting proposed Conference agenda items has been addressed... The committee agreed that the process for Floor Actions needed clarification, and agreed to add this discussion to their October meeting. The committee tabled discussion of the last three items regarding Conference background, the Conference schedule and the role of committee secretaries to their October meeting.*

October 2017 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, minutes

The committee discussed the process for floor actions at the Conference, and had the service piece "How the Conference Operates" updated to clarify when floor actions may be introduced, and to stress the value of submitting items by the Conference deadline so that they may be considered through the committee process.

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'G.S.C. Leader Working Agenda Script Excerpts on Floor Actions

OPENING SESSION

GREG:	<u>Floor Actions</u> It is possible for a Conference action to come from the floor, but any matter which falls within the scope of a Conference committee ought first go through that Conference committee, so that the topic may receive due consideration. <u>Floor Actions</u> may be introduced by any Conference member at any time during the Conference except at the three scheduled Sharing Sessions (Monday evening, Wednesday evening and Thursday evening). Also, please wait until debate has concluded on an issue before trying to introduce a floor action pertaining to that issue. Any floor action regarding a piece of committee business that has not yet been concluded will be considered out of order. It would be most helpful if you would bring a floor action as the first piece of business at the start of a general session. Please be at the microphone at the beginning of a session and ask the chair to recognize you. Then simply read the proposed motion to the Conference without elaboration. At that time, the motion must be seconded to go forward. As a reminder, a proposed Floor Action must be submitted in writing by the maker to the Conference secretary. Please include your name and area number on the written submission.
GREG:	All floor actions will be heard unless there is a specific motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action. Discussion on floor actions will be deferred until all committee reports have been completed. At that time the maker has 2 minutes to state the rationale behind the action.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

	Then the chair will ask if there is a motion that the Conference declines to consider the floor action. The motion to decline a floor action must be made without comment, is not debatable and requires a 2/3 majority. A “yes” vote means that the Conference will <i>not</i> hear the Floor action. A “no” Vote means that the Conference will <i>hear</i> the Floor action. <i>Motion passes: Floor Action is not heard.</i> <i>Motion fails: Conference will hear the Floor Action.</i>
GREG:	<u>Summary of Conference Procedures</u> On the back of this sheet, you will see a summary of Conference Procedures. This handy chart indicates the types of motions that the Conference uses, and how they work. We will review voting procedures again on Wednesday before consideration of committee reports.
	May I have a show of hands to signify your agreement that we will conduct our Conference business according to “How the Conference Operates”? (Show of hands)

FRIDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

3:45 – 5:45 p.m.	COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION OR FLOOR ACTIONS
GREG / MICHELE:	Decide if and how you want to take turns here depending on how long it’s running.

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	If there are Floor Actions refer to the How The Conference Operates to share with the Conference members how the Floor Action process works. (See Conference Manual Rosters and General Data Tab page 7.)
GREG / MICHELE:	<u>FLOOR ACTIONS</u>
GREG / MICHELE:	All floor actions will be heard unless there is a specific motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action. We will begin the discussion on floor actions now that all committee reports have been completed! Each maker will have 2 minutes to state the rationale behind the action. Then the chair will ask if there is a motion that the Conference declines to consider the floor action. The motion to decline a floor action must be made without comment, is not debatable and requires a 2/3 majority. A “yes” vote means that the Conference will <i>not</i> hear the Floor action. A “no” Vote means that the Conference will <i>hear</i> the Floor action. <i>Motion passes: Floor Action is not heard.</i> <i>Motion fails: Conference will hear the Floor Action.</i>

How the Conference Operates

Generally speaking, the General Service Conference follows *Robert's Rules of Order*, and proceeds on as informal a basis as possible consistent with the rights of all concerned. It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Conference to conduct its business; rules exist to allow the Conference to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Fellowship by reaching an informed group conscience. Over the years the Conference has adopted some exceptions to *Robert's Rules*, which help it to proceed more closely in accord with the spirit of A.A. Tradition.

Conference Quorum

A Conference quorum — two-thirds of all registered members — is required to conduct Conference business.

Committee System

To the extent possible, important matters to come before the Conference will be handled via the "Committee system." This assures that a large number of questions can be dealt with during Conference week. Members are encouraged to trust the process. Each Committee has considered carefully the items before it and presents its recommendations to the Conference as a whole for acceptance or rejection. Recommendations of Conference committees are automatically motions that have been made and seconded. Members are asked to refrain from spontaneously amending the work of the Committee; there are no "friendly" amendments under *Robert's Rules*.

Substantial Unanimity

All matters of policy (Conference Advisory Actions) require substantial unanimity, that is, a *two-thirds majority*. Any actions, including amendments, that affect an Advisory Action, or motions that might result in such an action, also require a *two-thirds majority*. Because the number of members present in the hall during the week of Conference varies from time to time, the phrase "two-thirds majority" is taken to mean two-thirds vote of the Conference members voting, as long as the total vote constitutes a Conference quorum.

Minority Opinion

After each vote on a matter of policy, the side which did not prevail will always be given an opportunity to speak to their position. If the motion passes with two-thirds vote, the minority may speak. If the motion receives a majority vote, but fails to pass for lack of a two-thirds vote, the majority may speak.

Remember that saving "minority opinions" for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is a time-waster, for it can force the Conference body to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around if it had been thoroughly examined from all sides.

General Rules of Debate and Voting

(Agreed to at the beginning of each Conference)

- People who wish to speak line up at the microphones and address their comments to the chair.
- Each person may speak for two (2) minutes.
- No one may speak for a second time on a topic until all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
- Full discussion of a recommendation should take place before each vote.
- Everyone is entitled to express his or her opinion. However, if your perspective has already been stated by someone else, it is not necessary to go to the mike and say it again.
- Our experience is that premature actions such as amend-

ing motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question can divert attention from the subject at hand, confusing and/or delaying Conference business.

Motions Made During Conference

When making a motion, come to the microphone and address the chair. There are various types of motions we use to help reach an informed group conscience. The specific rules governing each are on the next page.

Tabling a Motion

Tabling a motion postpones discussion to a later time during the same Conference.

Motion to Recommit

The motion to recommit returns a motion or proposal to the respective trustees' committee or appropriate corporate board for further consideration. A motion to recommit must be seconded, is debatable and can be amended.

Calling the Question

Calling the question brings debate to a halt while Conference members decide whether to proceed directly to a vote (the question) or go on with the debate.

Reconsideration

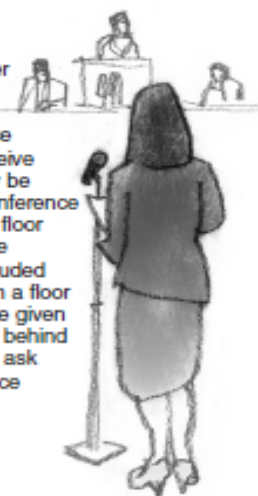
A motion to reconsider a vote may be made only by a member who voted with the prevailing side, but it can be seconded by anyone. If the majority votes to reconsider, full debate, pro and cons, is resumed.

Floor Actions

It is possible for a Conference action to come from the floor, but any matter which falls within the scope of a Conference committee ought first go through that Conference committee, so that the topic may receive due consideration. Floor actions may be introduced at any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions. Any floor action regarding a piece of committee business that has not yet been concluded will be considered out of order. When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action.

Declining to Consider a Floor Action

A motion to decline to consider a floor action is made without comment.



Rev. 11-2019

Summary of Conference Procedures

Remember:

- Motions must be made in order at the microphone.
- Address motions to the chair.

MOTION		Requires a "Second"?	Is Debatable?	Vote Required for Approval	Minority Voice Heard?
Committee Recommendation	Presented in the committee report.	Automatically seconded	YES	Two-thirds	YES
Amending a Motion	A motion on the floor is owned by the entire Conference body, no longer by the Committee which recommended it. The committee is not asked to vote on the motion to amend; any motion to amend a main motion depends on the approval of the Conference.	YES	YES	Two-thirds	YES
Tabling a Motion	Made without comment.	YES	NO	Simple Majority	NO
Moving to Recommit	Made without comment.	YES	YES	Two-thirds	NO
Calling the Question	Made without comment.	YES	NO	Two-thirds	NO
Reconsidering a Vote	May only be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side. No action may be reconsidered twice.	YES May be seconded by either side.	NO	Simple Majority	NO
Making a Floor Action	Made without comment. Introduced any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions. Is submitted in writing by the maker to the Conference secretary.	YES	YES	Two-thirds	YES
Declining to Consider a Floor Action	Made without comment. May be made after the maker of a floor action is provided time to state the rationale for it.	YES	NO	Two-thirds	NO

History of Revisions to: "How The Conference Operates"

Summary

This research paper is based on current information available.

In general, revisions to the service piece "How The Conference Operates" were reviewed and approved by the Trustees' General Service Conference Committee (TGSC) with one exception. In February 2010, a proposed change to the procedures regarding Floor Actions was forwarded to the General Service Board as a recommendation from the TGSC.

The earliest record of the service piece "How the Conference Operates" is noted in meeting minutes from a GSO Staff meeting in 1988.

May 1988 GSO Staff meeting minutes:

It was the sense of the meeting that the item "How the Conference Operates" prepared by John B. and included in the Conference Manuals, will become a permanent feature of the Manual, as well as a separate service piece.

February 1992, TGSC minutes:

A subcommittee will continue to review the service piece "How the Conference Operates" with an eye to clarifying Conference procedure and obtain committee consensus prior to Conference.

October 1993, TGSC minutes:

The committee reviewed the shortened version of "How the Conference Operates" and suggested it be included in the Conference Manual with minor revisions

January 2006, TGSC minutes:***Report from subcommittee on ways of improving communications on the Conference committee process:***

The subcommittee on ways of improving communications on the Conference committee process presented its final report. The subcommittee felt that additional information about the Conference committee process ought to be made available, and offered the following suggestions:

- Develop a service piece that talks about the intended design of the Conference and committee processes, including sharing about Concept III and the "right of decision," trust, and a listing of other resources available on these topics.*
- Expand the service piece "How the Conference Operates," especially the section that discusses how the committees work.*
- That the Conference be given an opportunity for sharing on how the committee system is operating.*
- Include articles in Box 4 -5 -9 and the Grapevine that emphasize the committee process.*

The committee expressed gratitude for the work of the subcommittee and considered implementation of the subcommittee suggestions. They asked the staff secretary to begin work on the suggested service piece. The committee noted that the service piece "How the Conference Operates" has been updated to include a line that reads "Resist the temptation to edit recommendations on the floor."

February 2010 TGSC minutes:

The committee discussed a revision to the current version in the section "Floor Actions" in the document "How the General Service Conference Operates /Summary of Conference Procedures" and agreed that by placing the discretion to consider a floor action or to decline a floor action directly with the Conference body the following recommendation would address the perceived problem. The committee recommended to the General Service Board that the following statement in the section on the procedure for Floor Actions in the document "How the Conference Operates," which reads: All floor actions will be heard unless there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider a floor action. A motion to decline to hear a floor action:

*Must be made without comment
Is not debatable
Requires a two- thirds majority*

be replaced with the following statement:

When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion to decline:

A motion to decline to hear a floor action:

- *Must be made without comment*
- *Is not debatable*
- *Requires a two- thirds majority*

Following a motion and second, the GSB voted in favor of the committee's Recommendation to amend the procedures.

October 2016, TGSC minutes:

"How the Conference Operates": The committee reviewed a revised "How the General Service Conference Operates," with the title "Summary of Conference Procedures" and the chair appointed a short-term subcommittee of Carole B., chair, Homer M. and Bob W. a) to develop language for the action of remanding an item to committee and b) to clearly define and note practices surrounding floor actions. The observation was made that we seem to have strayed from understanding that floor actions are meant to be on emergent issues.

January 2017, TGSC minutes:

Subcommittee on "How the Conference Operates": The committee accepted the report of the Subcommittee on "How the Conference Operates." The committee agreed to revised language regarding floor actions and agreed to add the "motion to recommit" to the procedures. The committee noted that the motion to recommit would send an item to the appropriate trustees' committee.

Note: A copy of the subcommittee's report is appended to this paper.

October 2017, TGSC minutes:

Floor action process: The committee discussed the process for floor actions at the Conference, and asked the staff secretary to update "How the Conference Operates" to clarify when floor actions may be introduced, and to stress the value of submitting items by the Conference deadline so that they may be considered through the committee process.

July 2018, TGSC minutes:

"How the Conference Operates": The committee agreed to remove the mention of voting by show of hands from "How the Conference Operates," since voting is now being done electronically.

November 2019, TGSC minutes:

"How the Conference Operates": The committee approved the motion to update the section on "motion to recommit" language in "How the Conference Operates." The secretary will make the revision and have the document updated in all three languages.

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GSO Archives/September 2020

July 24, 2020

To: Cathy B.
Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference
Re: Suggestion for Clarification of Floor Action Procedure at the General Service Conference

Dear Cathy,

In the "Summary of Conference Procedures," the Floor Actions section states: "When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference *decline* to consider the floor action."

Our parliamentary procedure generally follows Roberts Rules of Order. Roberts Section 10, The Framing of Main Motions, states: "A motion should not be offered if its only effect is to propose that the assembly refrain from doing something..." Roberts goes on to state: "It is preferable to avoid a motion containing a negative statement even in cases where it would have a meaning since members may become confused as to the effect of voting for or against such a motion."

It has been my impression during several Conferences that the negative motion ("...decline to consider a floor action.") has created the potential of Conference members being confused as to the effect of voting for or against the motion.

Roberts Rules is not the reason to raise this issue; the reason is clarity and transparency. We should aspire that all members of the conference, especially those new to the process, be well informed about the impact of motions and their potential outcome. As leaders, it seems important to help clarify procedures for the Conference. It seems important that we avoid procedures where members may become confused as to the effect of their vote, since the purpose of Conference debate is to reach an informed group conscience.

The current procedure reads as follows:

"When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference *decline* to consider the floor action. A motion to decline to hear a floor action:

Must be made without comment.

Requires a second.

Is not debatable.

Requires a two-thirds majority."

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

A proposed revised procedure might read as follows:

“When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference *consider* the floor action. A motion to hear a floor action:

- Must be made without comment.

- Requires a second.

- Is not debatable.

- Requires a simple majority.”

From Terry B., Trustee Emeritus

MEMORANDUM

November 24, 2020

To: Jeff W., secretary
2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

From: Patrick C., secretary
2020 trustees' General Service Conference Committee

Re: 2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions agenda item to *Review the Floor Action process*.

Note: There was an agenda item to review the floor action process forwarded by the 70th G.S.C. CPAC. This is a new item.

This memorandum is to inform you that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee forwarded the following 2021 agenda item:

Update to the Floor Action Process: The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2021 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions for consideration a proposed agenda item to update the Floor Action Process.

The current procedure reads as follows:

"When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action. A motion to decline to hear a floor action: Must be made without comment. Requires a second. Is not debatable. Requires a two-thirds majority."

A proposed revised procedure might read as follows:

"When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference consider the floor action. A motion to hear a floor action: Must be made without comment. Requires a second. Is not debatable. Requires a simple majority."

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Note: The committee is requesting that the Conference committee consider any potential impact to the process of allowing a floor action to be heard based on the proposed change in the vote required for approval to make a floor action.

If you have any questions regarding this, please let me know.

cc: Cathy B., chair trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference
Sandra W., Director of Staff Services
Patrick C., committee secretary and conference coordinator

2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM C: +Consider a proposed process for how a Conference committee could review, discuss and act on proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee.

Background notes: +Agenda Item forwarded from the 70th G.S.C.

In 2016 the Conference recommended that “The General Service Board develop a new policy and a plan that enhances the General Service Conference agenda review and selection process, providing the area delegate members of the Conference a role in the vetting and selection of proposed agenda items through the Conference process, to be brought to the 2017 General Service Conference.”

During the 2017 General Service Conference the Conference Agenda Committee discussed a report from the trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference on the Conference Agenda Process. Committee members expressed appreciation for the additional communication and larger role for area delegate members of the Conference in the selection of Agenda Items. The committee requested that information on the implementation and effectiveness of the plan be gathered from the 2018 Conference committee chairs and included in a report for the 2018 Conference Agenda Committee.

The 2018 Conference Agenda Committee requested the trustees’ committee create a process for area delegate review of proposed agenda items that were not forwarded to a Conference committee and bring a report to the 2019 Conference Committee on Agenda.

2019 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions:

The committee considered a process for how a Conference committee could review, discuss, and act on proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee and appreciates the trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference’s work on developing a process thus far. The committee noted the inclusion of a rationale on items not forwarded that are listed on the grid of proposed agenda items. The committee requested that the trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference continue developing the process outlined in their report and provide a report to the 2020 General Service Conference that includes more information regarding the distribution of background and the January conference call between the trustee committee chair and the corresponding Conference committee.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

From the February 1, 2020 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

*The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2020 Conference Policy and Admissions Committee for consideration two separate proposed processes for how a Conference committee could review, discuss and act on proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee and the process for approving observers to the U.S./Canada General Service Conference.*

Background:

1. 2018 Final Subcommittee Report on Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process and Proposed Process
2. 2020 Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process
3. Workflow of Proposed Agenda Item Not Forwarded Process
4. 2020 Suggestions for January Conference Call
5. 2019 January Conference Call Survey Results
6. Historical Information Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded
7. Frequently Asked Questions on Group Conscience Consideration for Proposed Conference Agenda Items Revised 11/2019

2019 Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference

February 1, 2020

Report on updating the Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process and Approving Observers

- Subcommittee:** David N., chair; Jimmy D., Mark E., and Patrick C. secretary
- Scope item A:** To continue developing the process of how a Conference committee could review, discuss, and act on proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee. In addition, provide a report that includes more information regarding the distribution of background and the January conference call between the trustee committee chair and the corresponding Conference committee.
- Scope Item B:** To consider updates to the process for approving qualified representatives from other A.A. service structures to observe the U.S. and Canada G.S.C that allows for a recommendation to admit observers to be presented for G.S.C. consideration prior to the Conference week.
-

The subcommittee was appointed in July 2019 and met two times to review and discuss the updates needed to finalize a process.

At the November 2, 2019 trustees' Committee on the GSC meeting the subcommittee chair on agenda items not forwarded presented a progress report. The committee discussed the report and provided feedback and looked forward to reviewing a final subcommittee report with recommendations at the February 2020 meeting.

Subcommittee actions:

1. The subcommittee finalized the "Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process and Workflow" and updated the "Suggestions for January Conference Call" that are being submitted to the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference for review and discussion to forward to the 2020 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions.
2. The subcommittee created a process document regarding "Approving Observers" that is being submitted to the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference for review and discussion to forward to the 2020 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions.

Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process:

The subcommittee discussed the topic of clarifying final updates to the process of “Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded to a Conference Committee” and determined that the following updates are needed to address the requests from the 2019 Conference Policy/Admissions Committee.

Overview of the updates to the proposed process document:

1. Clarified the process step regarding a review for accuracy of proposed agenda item submissions.
2. Added a process step regarding the inclusion of background and how it would be distributed for the proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee.
3. Clarified that the Conference committee’s action on these items would be captured in the committee’s report.
4. Included timing and procedural steps related to implementation of the process, if approved by the Conference.

Suggestions for January Conference Call document:

The subcommittee provided updates to Conference assignment “Suggestions for January Conference Call” document. The updates included a new section describing the background provided for the call and enhancements to the talking points section.

The document is planned to be provided to the Conference Committee on Policy and Admission in response to the request for more information about this trustee committee chair and corresponding Conference committee’s communication.

Proposed Approving Observers to the General Service Conference Process:

The subcommittee considered how observers’ requests could be recommended and approved to be presented for G.S.C. consideration prior to the Conference week.

As the subcommittee discussed an update to the process several items were considered including:

- Timing of the observer requests
- Recommendation, discussion and approval steps
- The use of the polling between Conference process to accommodate presenting for G.S.C. consideration prior to Conference week.

We trust that the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions will find the reports and background useful for discussion, and we thank you for this opportunity to be of service by reflecting our considerations back to you.

Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process

February 1, 2020

Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference

Development of this process was prompted by the following historical actions:

- 2018 Conference Agenda Committee request for the trustees' committee to create a process for area delegate review of proposed agenda items that were not forwarded to a Conference committee and bring a report to the 2019 Conference Committee on Agenda.
- 2016 Conference Advisory Action that "The General Service Board develop a new policy and a plan that enhances the General Service Conference agenda review and selection process, providing the area delegate members of the Conference a role in the vetting and selection of proposed agenda items through the Conference process, to be brought to the 2017 General Service Conference."

The General Service Board has recognized the desire by the Conference for greater delegate participation in the agenda process. The following are actions that have already been or will be put in place to increase communication concerning agenda items:

- For over 20 years, the General Service Board has welcomed the chairpersons of Conference committees and the delegate chairperson at the quarterly Board Weekend prior to the General Service Conference.
- All Conference committee chairs are given a complete set of background for their corresponding Trustee Committee meeting at the January Board Weekend (with confidential information removed, i.e. Nominating resumes or works in progress). This background is sent to them prior to the Board Weekend when background is available for trustee committee members.
- Starting in 2016, trustees' committee chairs have spoken via conference call to Conference committee chairs both before and after board weekend, giving the chairs an opportunity to voice their views regarding potential agenda Items.

Starting in January 2019 the following action was requested by the 2018 Conference Committee on Agenda to increase delegate communication concerning agenda items:

- Before the January board weekend, the entire Conference committee will have a conference call with the corresponding Trustees' committee chair and staff secretary to review items submitted as agenda items and to talk about items still being considered by the trustees' committee.

The Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process Steps

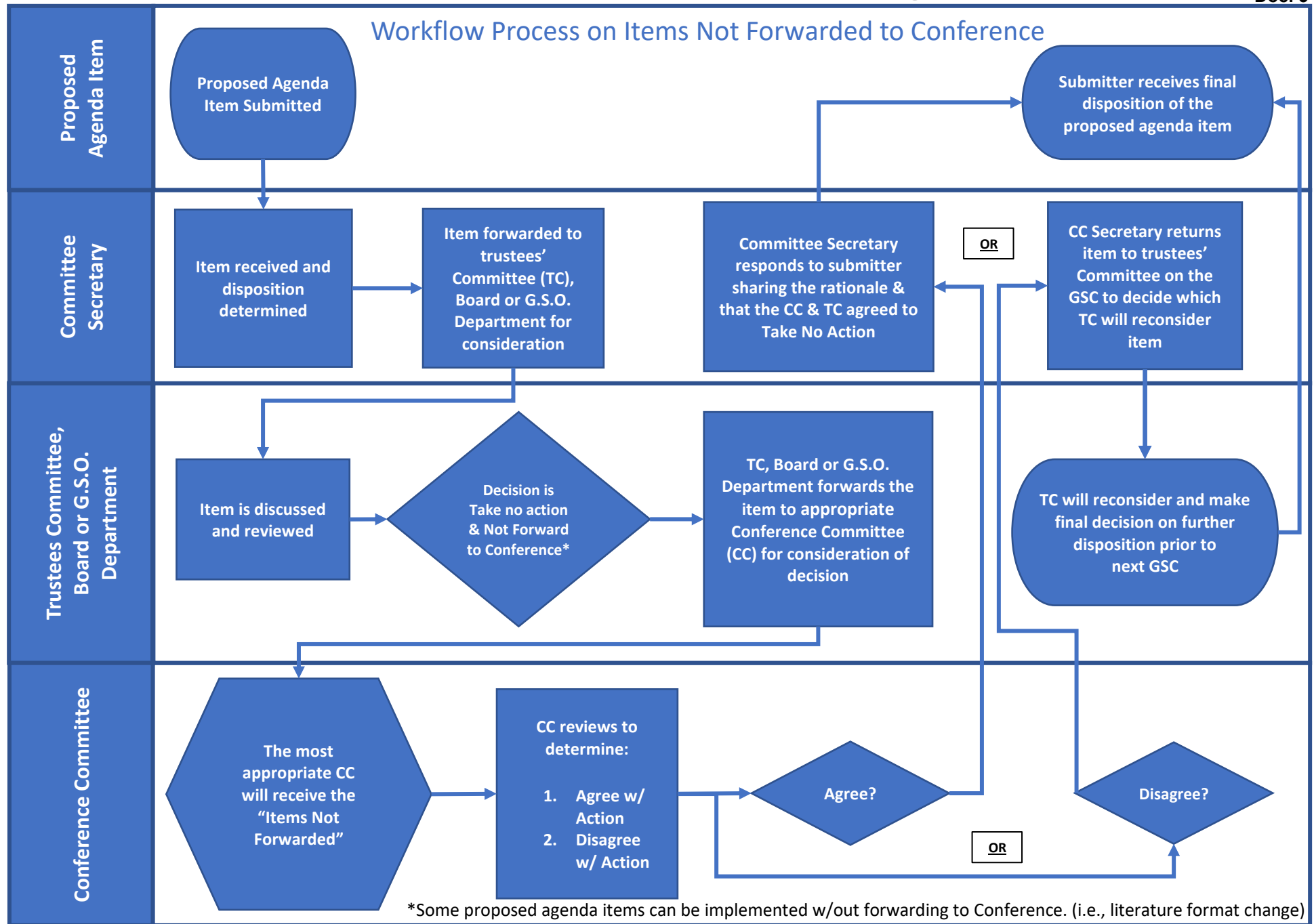
To continue to involve Delegates in the selection of agenda items, the following is the process regarding proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee. This process is meant to include the Delegates' voice in what is important to the Fellowship as well as provide the Fellowship with an opportunity to give feedback for consideration:

1. Any proposed agenda items that a trustee committee does not forward will be sent to the corresponding (or appropriate) Conference committee for review. A standing agenda item would be added to each Conference committee "to review those grid items that were not forwarded".
2. The original proposed agenda item submission sent in will be reviewed by the trustees' committee or boards' secretary for accuracy and, if deemed helpful for the trustees' or boards' discussion, appropriate additional background information can be included.
3. All proposed agenda items that are 'do not forward items', being sent to an appropriate Conference Committee, will have the background that the trustees or board members reviewed to discuss and make their decision (exclusive of any material deemed confidential i.e. Trustee or director candidate resumes). The background will be included in the full Conference background that is translated and posted annually for all Conference members.
4. The Conference committee is not being asked to act on the proposed agenda item, the committee is tasked with determining whether to agree with the trustee committee's decision to take no action or determine if the agenda item should be sent back for further work and consideration by the trustee committee. The disposition of these items after review would follow a process:
 - i. If the Conference committee agrees that no action will be taken; the secretary of the committee will respond to the group or individual that submitted the item that the Conference committee agreed with the trustee committee's decision to take no action with the rationale.
 - ii. If the Conference committee decides more discussion or research is indicated; the item will be returned to the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference (TCGSC) for reconsideration. The Conference committee will include their reasoning for sending the proposed agenda item back for further consideration. The trustees' Conference committee will use the Conference committee discussion to determine which trustees' committee will reconsider and make the final decision as to disposition of the item prior to the next Conference.
5. The Conference committee's actions regarding the review of the "proposed agenda items not forwarded" to a Conference committee will be captured in the committee reports.

Actions Needed to Implement the Proposed Process

1. At the February 2020 meeting the proposed process will be considered by the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference with a decision to be made if the committee would like to forward it for consideration by the 2020 Conference Committee on Policy & Admissions and, if recommended, then by the full 2020 Conference.
2. If approved by the 2020 Conference, process implementation would begin with the 2021 Conference. The implementation will be overseen by the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference.
3. Further, if the Conference approves the process in 2020, then the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference would need to perform a procedural step to send a proposed agenda item to each Conference Committee to consider an update to the committees' Composition Scope and Procedure (CSP). The proposal would include information detailing what a committee is to do with proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee. This would be a procedural action to bring the CSPs in line with the new process.
4. To evaluate the process, the trustee's Conference committee would be provided with the following information:
 - i. A list of Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded grouped by assigned committee
 - ii. The history of:
 - (a) # of Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded
 - (b) Average Agenda Items per Committee
 - (c) Average Time Needed by Committees
 - iii. A survey would be developed to obtain responses from delegates (Survey to be developed by the trustees' Conference Committee to poll delegates on how beneficial the process is, how much work it added to the committee process, etc.) if the draft process is approved by the 2020 Conference.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background



**Suggestions for January Conference Call with
Members of Conference Committees**

Here are suggestions for trustees' Committee Chairs and Conference Committee secretaries regarding inviting members of the Conference Committee to and facilitating the Board-requested January conference call to obtain feedback on proposed Agenda items.

Also included is a template for documenting sharing from members of the Conference committees that will be brought to the January trustees' committee meeting as background for the discussion on each item.

Conference Committee Chair and Member Welcome Letters: The "welcome letter" templates have been updated to include a section informing each Conference Committee member about the January Conference Call. Committee secretaries agreed to copy the trustees' Committee chair or chair of a board on the welcome letter distributed to the Conference committee chair.

Invitation to the Call: Committee secretaries will share the following information about the purpose for the conference call in the invitation to the participants.

To give area delegates a further voice in the Agenda item selection process, the General Service Board has agreed on the following action. Before the January board weekend, the trustees' committee chair and staff secretary will arrange a conference call with the Conference committee to review items submitted as Agenda items and to talk about items still being considered by the trustees' committee. This way, Conference committee members would get a verbal report on the disposition of items submitted to the trustees' committee, and could share regarding those items. This will allow all Conference committee members to offer feedback on proposed Agenda items related to their committee. On the call, we will go through a list of proposed Agenda Items. Some of these have already been forwarded to the Conference committee, some the trustees' committee agreed not to forward to the Conference committee, and some are still under consideration.

The trustees' committee is interested in the thoughts of the Conference committee members as to whether these proposed *Agenda Items not forwarded or still under consideration* should be forwarded to the Conference committee.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

In keeping with the Concept III, the final responsibility for selection of Conference Agenda Items appropriately lies with the trustees of the General Service Board. The Conference Committee's feedback will be brought to the trustees' committee meeting as background for the discussion on each item.

The conference calls should be set up to take place no later than Tuesday, January 21, 2020. Committee chairs and secretaries will want to decide on the length of the call based on the number of agenda items that will be reviewed.

Preparation for the Call: The Conference Coordinator will provide each Conference Committee secretary a reporting of the Preliminary or Proposed Agenda items pertinent to the Conference committee.

Background: The January Conference call stands alone as a discussion with no background except a list that includes:

- Preliminary Agenda Items already forwarded to a Conference committee

and a report that includes:

- Proposed Agenda items that a trustees' committee or board took no action
- Proposed Agenda items still under consideration at the winter board weekend

Conference Call Talking Points: The trustees' Committee Chair can explain to the participants that the purpose of this call is to share whether an agenda item should move forward to the Conference Committee or not. Members are not gathered to vote on or debate the merits of each agenda item. Conference committee secretaries are available and willing to provide points of information, as needed, during the calls.

The trustees' Committee chair will verbally review the following:

- Agenda items already forwarded to the Conference committee
- Proposed Agenda items that the trustees' Committee took no action
- Proposed Agenda items on the January/February trustees' Committee agenda

The January call meeting's primary focus is to obtain sharing on the proposed agenda items still under consideration by the trustees' Committee or appropriate Board at the winter board weekend.

Note: If the Final - Proposed Agenda Items Not Forwarded Process is approved the following language could be incorporated into the Conference Call Talking Points section of these suggestions for the 2021 January Conference calls. "That the proposed agenda items that a trustees' committee or appropriate board took no action will receive a full review and discussion during the second-look process completed by an assigned Conference committee."

Document and Share Feedback with Trustees' Committee: Each secretary will capture the sharing on each item to be brought to the February trustees' committee meeting to inform the discussion. Sharing should be documented but, not attributed to any person.

Under the trustees' Committee Agenda section "Chair Remarks" for February, request the trustees' Committee Chair inform the committee that the sharing from the recent Conference call is being distributed to support the discussion of each Proposed Agenda item.

- **Committee secretary action** – Provide copies of the sharing notes from the conference call to each trustees' Committee member and the Conference Committee Delegate Chair who is participating in the meeting.

Note: A copy does not need to be provided to all the visiting observers.

Sharing Notes Template:

**Sharing from Members of the 2020 Conference Committee on _____
Regarding Proposed Agenda Items
Conference Call
January XX, 2020**

Attendees:

Proposed Agenda Item 1

- Thought Number 1
- Thought Number 2

Proposed Agenda Item 2

- Thought Number 1
- Thought Number 2

Revised 1/2020

2019 January Conference Call Survey Questions

Q1 Did you participate in the January Conference Call?

Q2 Did you find the materials provided for this call allowed for an informed discussion?

Q3 Were you able to share about potential Conference agenda items during the call?

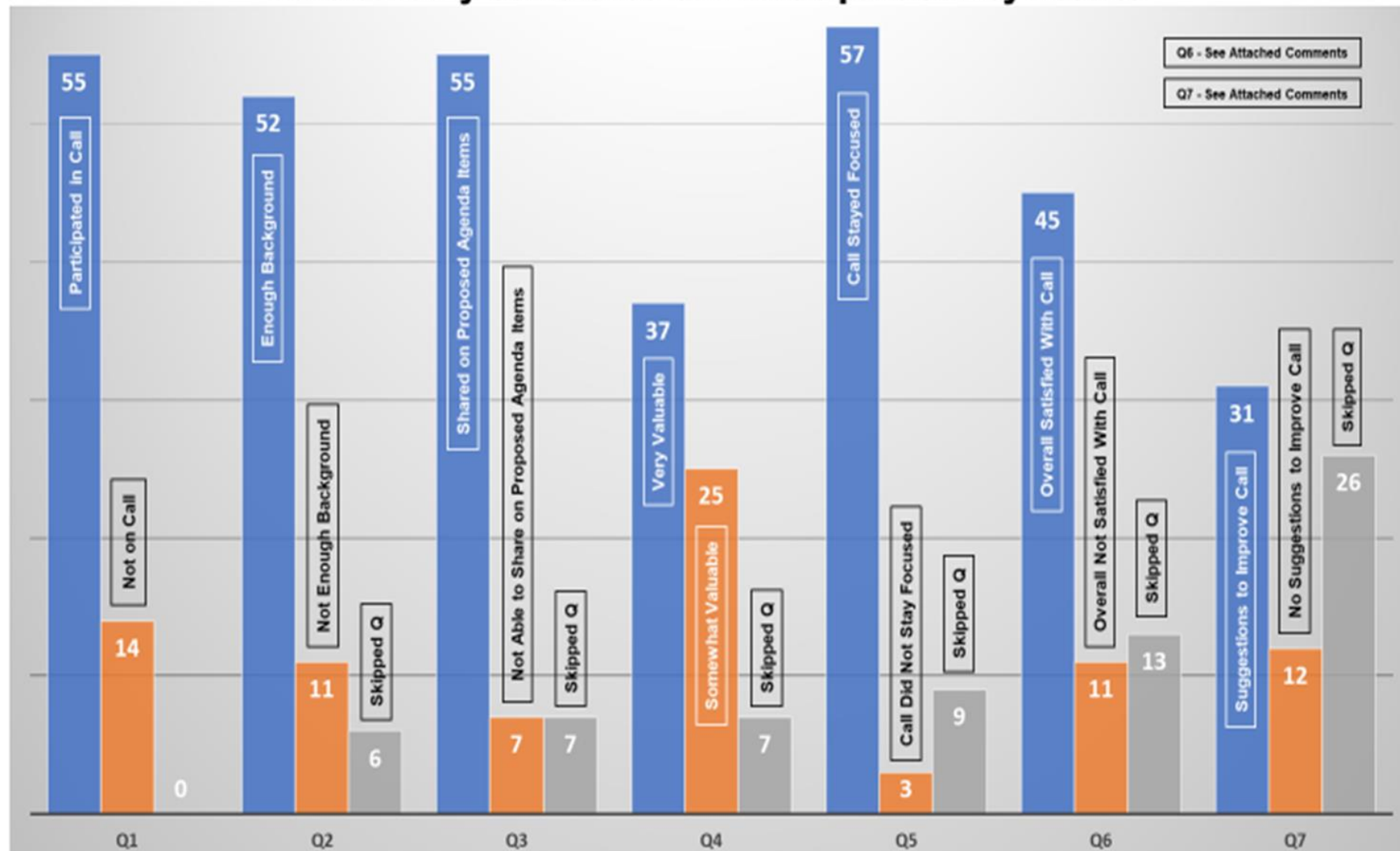
Q4 How valuable did you find this call between the Trustee Chair and Conference Committee?

Q5 Did your conference call stay focused on the proposed agenda items and agenda items still being discussed by the trustees?

Q6 Overall, how satisfied are you with this process for providing input into the Conference Agenda process?

Q7 What suggestions for improvement to this process do you have?

2019 January Conference Call Participant Survey Results



2019 January Conference Call Survey Participant Results - Q6 Comments

Q6	Answered	Satisfied- I listened mostly since others were making the same points I would have. Got some clarity on a couple points.
Q6	Answered	Moderately
Q6	Answered	Somewhat- as with all new things, maybe it starts out a bit clunky and gets better as we move ahead (future conferences). It was nice to feel included in the process!
Q6	Answered	satisfied but would like more background on the motive for the agenda item?
Q6	Answered	I found the conference call to be very informative and I was also able to connect with my other committee colleagues
Q6	Answered	I was brand new but gave me insight on things to come
Q6	Answered	I believe the process was very helpful
Q6	Answered	Moderately satisfied. I gave a little input on an item I'd submitted, but there wasn't a lot of delegate input overall.
Q6	Answered	I think it is important that the delegate's have input into the agenda process. This seems like a good start.
Q6	Answered	I thought it was worthwhile
Q6	Answered	Like I said, I didn't feel like our voice was heard. We voted unanimously in favor of every item on our grid, yet none made the agenda.
Q6	Answered	Very satisfied with the process. I believe it is a step toward becoming more informed.
Q6	Answered	As a committee chair, I was very satisfied. Communication with the chair of the trustees' committee after each board meeting was informative and I passed that information on to the members of my committee. As a committee member, I was extremely disappointed in the process. The committee chair has not communicate with the committee even once since the Conference. He has acted as a committee of one.
Q6	Answered	I think it was a step in the right direction. It helped the committee members get to know each other and that will be helpful when we meet in person. It was good to get an update and hear from trustees. It was empowering in some ways, however the information did not seem
Q6	Answered	Great step in the right direction!
Q6	Answered	Excellent idea. Please continue.
Q6	Answered	Very satisfied. I think it provided a good arena for discussion at a time when items were new and still pending. It gave me as a delegate, especially a first year delegate, a voice and an opportunity to learn more about what was in front of us prior to the release of the final list of
Q6	Answered	Very satisfied and we are moving in the right direction to get more Delegate input on setting the agenda.

2019 January Conference Call Survey Participant Results - Q6 Comments

Q6	Answered	It is a great start. I hope it will become a more integral part of the agenda selection process.
Q6	Answered	Not only did this call help to inform the delegate and the trustee, it was a great forum to begin the conference process. Everyone had the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas.
Q6	Answered	Very satisfied. But more can be done; such as having the Conference Committee Chair attend the corresponding Trustees meeting when all the agenda items are sorted out.
Q6	Answered	Yes, well worth the effort
Q6	Answered	I was very satisfied. I had time to ask questions and receive feedback from the Trustee of the committee and from the other Delegates on the panel. Very nice.
Q6	Answered	Impression was that we were all informed and prepared.
Q6	Answered	Somewhat
Q6	Answered	It served it's purpose.
Q6	Answered	I think the process is satisfactory without needing a January phone call.
Q6	Answered	I was very satisfied that we had input into the process. I was disappointed that none of the items that the majority of the Conference committee wanted to see included made it to the Final Conference agenda.
Q6	Answered	I went into it blind. I wasn't real satisfied.
Q6	Answered	It's a very good add.
Q6	Answered	I liked it --- as a Trustee I was introduced to the new delegates and believe this will be beneficial in May—
Q6	Answered	Very satisfied. I trust and hope this process will continue and improve the delegate participation of agenda item selection.
Q6	Answered	This is not a good use of our time.
Q6	Answered	Definitely a good idea, but the background should be shared.

2019 January Conference Call Survey Participant Results - Q6 Comments

Q6	Answered	Very satisfied. As a first year delegate, it helped me feel more comfortable with the agenda items and questions that might arise about them.
Q6	Answered	I was satisfied but have nothing to compare it to. Still, it was good.
Q6	Answered	I was satisfied, trustees chair stayed over the 1 hour because we were not finished. We covered and discussed everything and you know literature is always long.
Q6	Answered	I hope the exercise will prove to be valuable.
Q6	Answered	next time I will ask if I can hear the others persons.
Q6	Answered	I felt that there was discussion in the trustees committee about agenda items that we were not made aware of that could have helped us.
Q6	Answered	I'll let you know next year when I would be better prepared.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Proposed Conference Agenda Items – Not Forwarded
October 27, 2018

1

ANALYZING THE INFORMATION

Some of the reasons items were not forwarded :

- Recent consideration of same idea (within 2 years)
- Took no action, but continue to explore
- No widely expressed need
- Project already in development stage or authorized
- Concern had previously been researched and addressed
- Forwarded internally for future consideration or to be acted upon
- Proposal in conflict with principles of trust and participation reflected in our Concepts and the Conference Charter

2

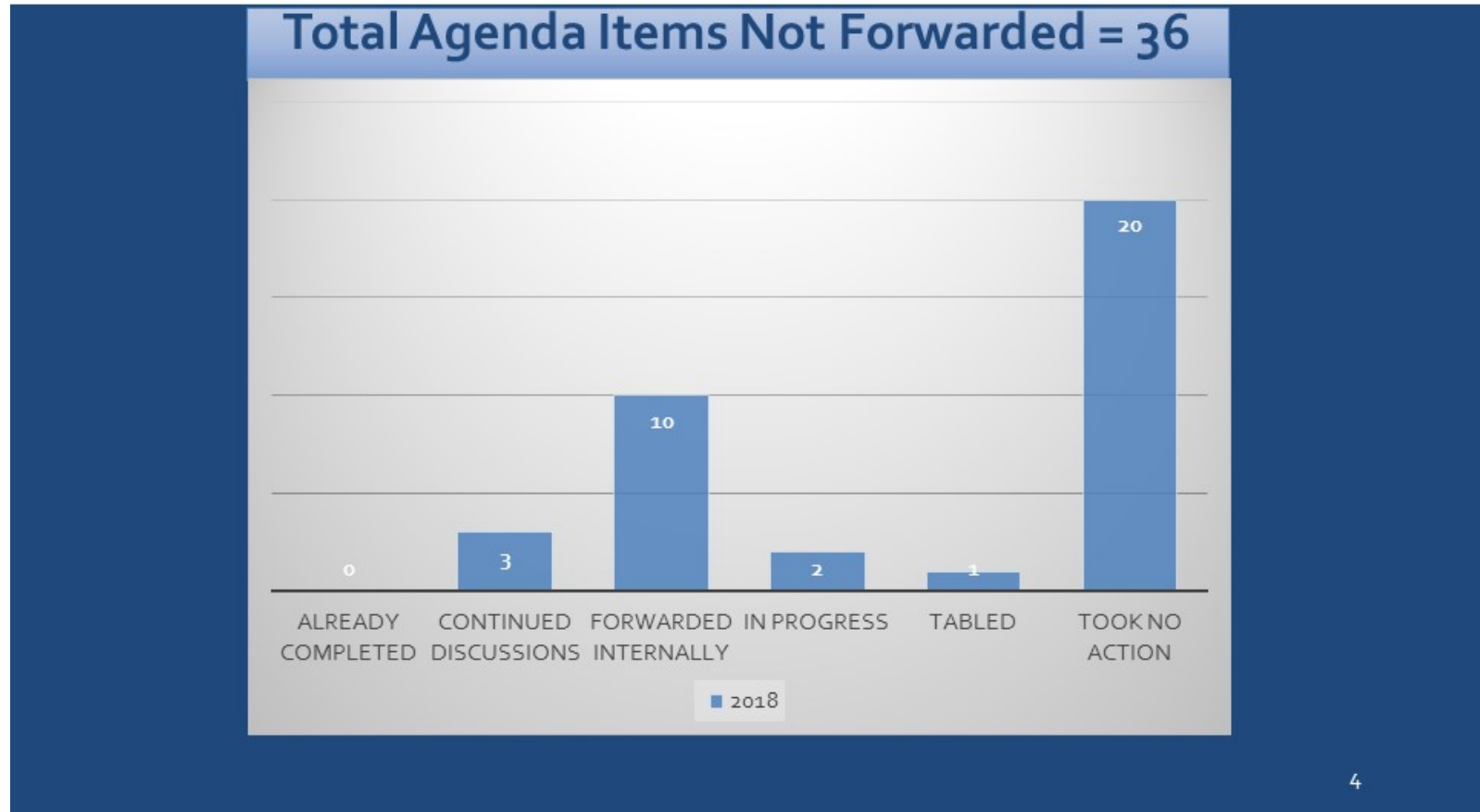
ANALYZING THE INFORMATION

Things to consider regarding a Conference committee's review:

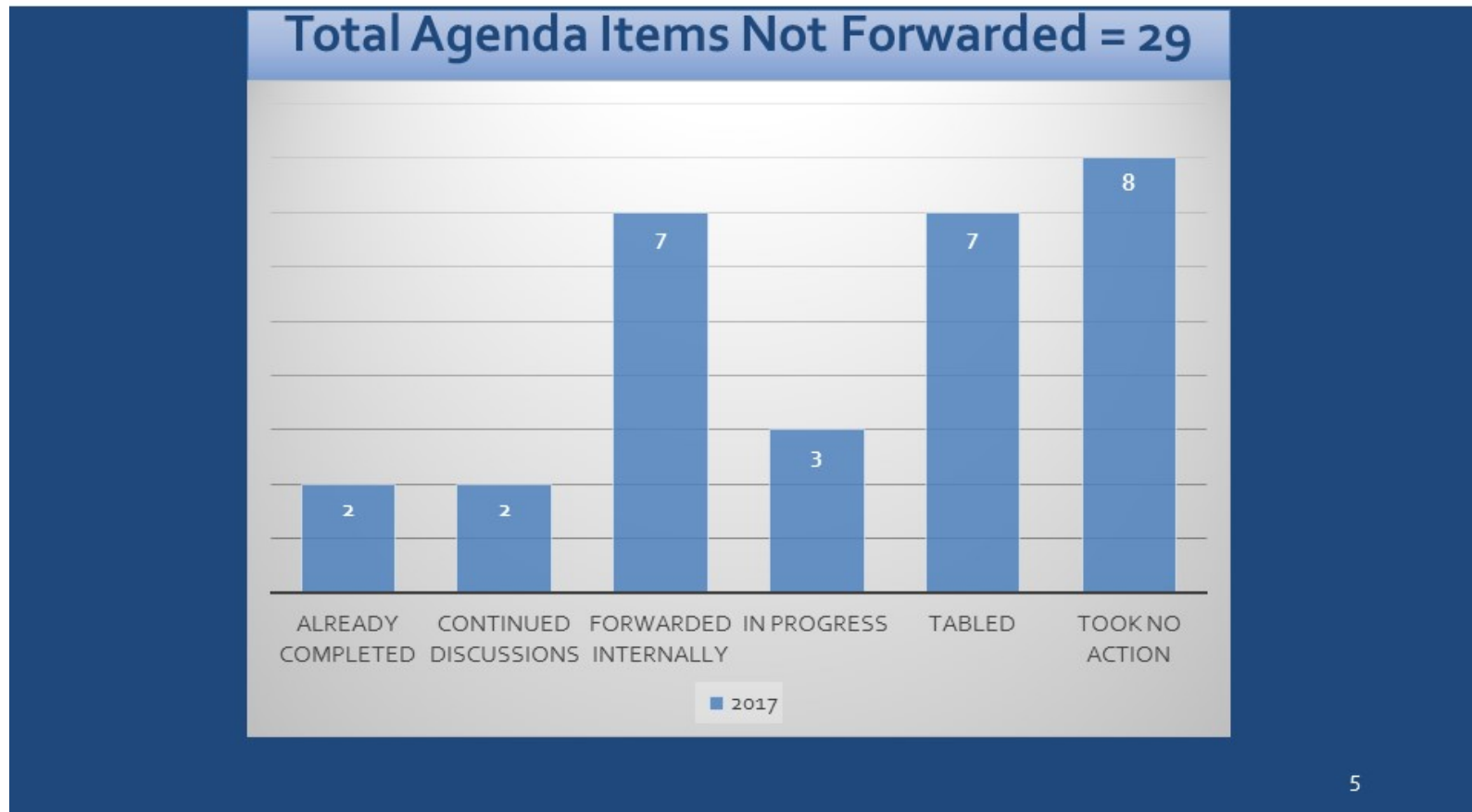
- Time needed by staff and Publishing to get the items ready for conference
 - ❖ Timing is a major concern for the committee and for staff in having to determine and provide appropriate background and Publishing to have to translate it all.
- Additional workload and time spent in committee
 - ❖ Four year average per year is 29 proposed conference agenda items – not forwarded for one committee to review and discuss and decide on next action.
- Potential for less of a full group conscience and giving one conference committee a wide-ranging authority.
- In the end, items not forwarded don't die, they can be resubmitted.

3

PROPOSED CONFERENCE AGENDA ITEMS – NOT FORWARDED (2018)

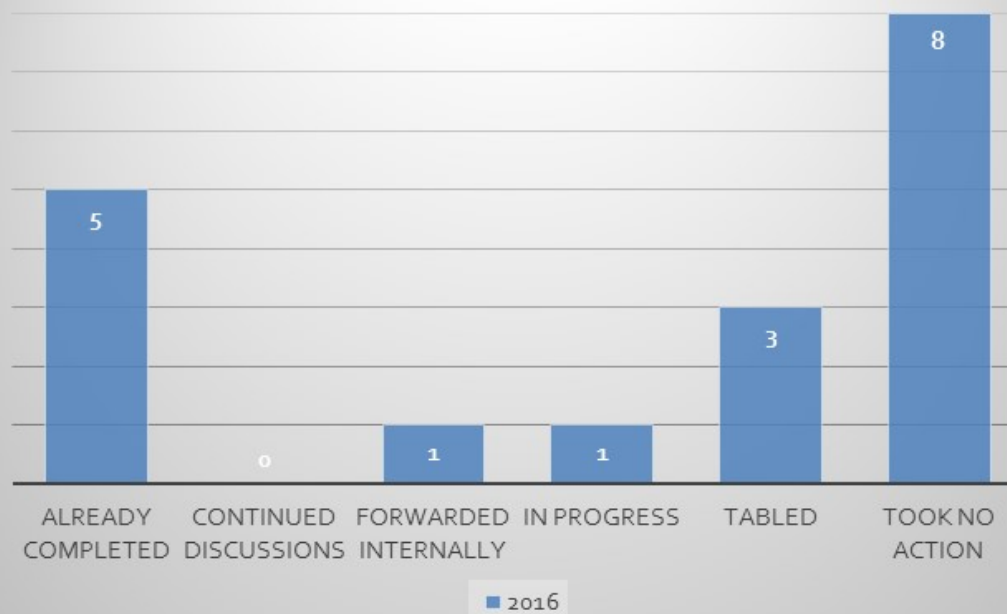


PROPOSED CONFERENCE AGENDA ITEMS – NOT FORWARDED (2017)



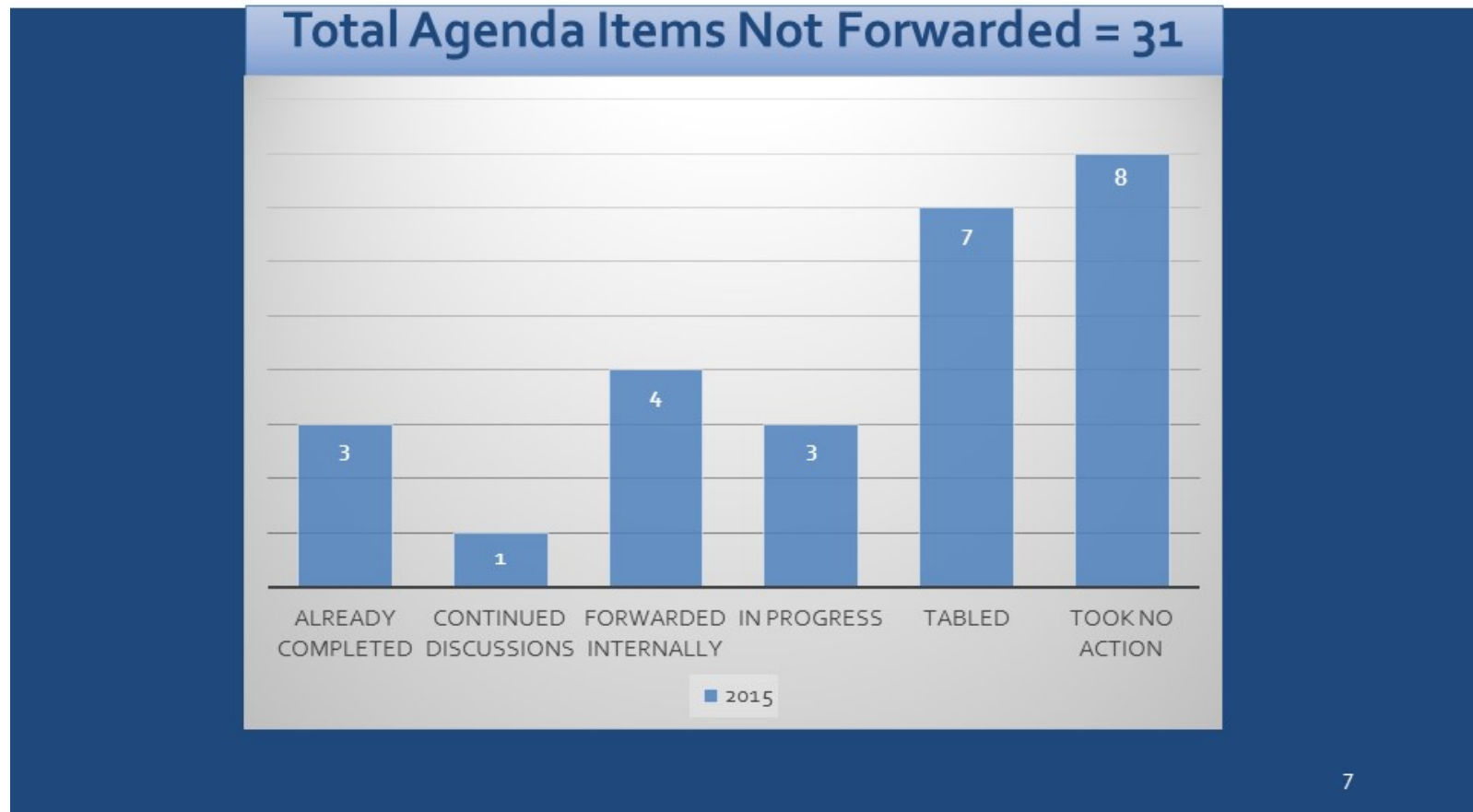
PROPOSED CONFERENCE AGENDA ITEMS – NOT FORWARDED (2016)

Total Agenda Items Not Forwarded = 19



6

PROPOSED CONFERENCE AGENDA ITEMS – NOT FORWARDED (2015)



Frequently Asked Questions on Group Conscience Consideration for Proposed Conference Agenda Items

This overview is general and includes many but not necessarily all of the possible routes a proposed agenda item follows in the trustee, G.S.O. and Grapevine review process. There is no “one size fits all” procedure and, on a case by case basis over time, there may occasionally be inconsistencies. The trustees, corporate directors and staff bring together years of experience in A.A. service in making decisions about the appropriate process or disposition of proposed Conference agenda items.

Sources of agenda items are described in *The A.A. Service Manual* on page S53 of the current edition as “...individual A.A. members, groups, delegates, trustees, area assemblies, area committee members, and directors and staff members of A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine.”

Routing of proposals

Q. Are all proposed Conference agenda items sent to the Conference Coordinator?

A. No. Items are often sent to other G.S.O staff members who are secretaries to trustees’ committees or directly to the Grapevine. Also, there may be on-going projects in trustees’ committees that are not forwarded through the Conference Coordinator.

Q. Does G.S.O. keep a master list of all proposed items submitted for possible Conference consideration?

A. In keeping with a 2016 Advisory Action, a list of agenda items proposed submitted to G.S.O. has been posted on the Dashboard for Conference member reference.

Q. What happens when a proposed Conference agenda item arrives at the Conference Coordinator’s desk?

A. The Conference Coordinator acknowledges receipt of the proposed agenda item and lets the sender know which of the following options is most appropriate and, if necessary, an explanation of why and how the proposed agenda item is being directed

1. **Forwarding to a Trustees’ Committee via a G.S.O. Staff Member or Department Head:**

- If the subject of the proposal is related to a staff committee assignment, e.g. CPC, Literature, etc., or Department, i.e. Archives, Finance, etc., the item will usually be forwarded to the appropriate trustees’ committee and the sender will also be notified of any actions taken.

2. Forwarding to G.S.O.'s Publications Director or Group Services Staff person:

- If the suggestion is related to service material, the Literature Catalog, Publications Department procedures, etc. it is usually forwarded to G.S.O.'s Publication Director or Group Services staff person for gathering of experience or background material prior to consideration/review by A.A. World Services, Inc.

3. Forwarding to A.A. World Services, Inc.:*

The following topics are the responsibility of the A.A. W.S., Inc. Board:

- Suggestions related to the general oversight of the G.S.O.
- Suggestions for format changes to A.A. literature, literature pricing policies, matters concerning the literature catalog, shipping and invoicing practices.
- Any matters related to the G.S.O. A.A. Website

4. Forwarding to Chair of the General Service Board;

- Matters related to Board Decisions/Procedures or to the general oversight of G.S.O and the A.A. Grapevine are forwarded to the Chair of the General Service Board; the chair may answer directly or route the matter to a trustees' committee, another board, the full board, or they might be forwarded to the G.S.O. General Manager – a decision on where an item of this nature goes depends on the particular issue addressed.

5. Forwarding to the A.A. Grapevine Corporate Board/AA Grapevine Publisher:*

- Matters relating in any way to the Grapevine or La Viña are forwarded to the AA Grapevine Publisher for disposition and an explanation of how the proposed agenda item will be handled.

***Note:** The A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards can forward proposed items directly to a Conference Committee if they wish Conference guidance, advice or direction.

Q. What happens when it is unclear what committee should address a proposed item or where an item should be routed?

A. When it is unclear where a proposed item belongs, it is most frequently forwarded to the trustees' Committee on the Conference for direction.

Q. When might a staff member assume direct responsibility for responding to a proposal?

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

A. The staff member is responsible for following up on items not being forwarded for consideration. The following are examples of instances when items have not been forwarded for consideration:

1. When the matter proposed is not suitable for Conference consideration or is clearly an outside issue; for example, a proposed item from a number of years ago asked that for environmental reasons the Conference discuss banning Styrofoam cups from A.A. meetings.
2. When there has not been a widely expressed need emanating from the Fellowship regarding a proposal, a staff member may respond after consultation with the chair of the appropriate trustees' committee and with other G.S.O. staff with the suggestion that wider, local sharing take place prior to the proposed item moving forward. Such a response is not a rejection of the item – it is encouragement for further discussion. The sender may choose to follow this suggestion or not, and is free to resubmit the item. Example: a district proposed that the word “disease” be removed from A.A. pamphlets. There was an area assembly taking place prior to the deadline for agenda items to come to G.S.O. and the staff member suggested that the matter be discussed at this assembly; this occurred and the issue failed to achieve substantial unanimity and the district declined to have the item moved forward for further consideration.
3. When Advisory Actions related to the proposed item already exist, the staff person may respond to the sender with this information – again, this is not a rejection, but a clarification that the matter proposed has been addressed by at least one previous Conference. The sender is free to resubmit the item. Example: an individual member requested that a 4th Step workbook be developed. A staff member forwarded research as to how this matter was addressed by previous Conferences.
4. When a proposal comes in that is so singular in nature or peculiar that it is not appropriate to pass it along to a trustees' committee, the staff member will let the sender know that their letter will be kept on file for future reference – this does not happen often. Example: an individual member wanted a pamphlet developed to explain the difference between “friendship” and “fellowship.” This is a singular proposal and the sender was asked to seek wider discussion on the matter and notified that their letter would be kept on file for future reference if further interest in the development of such a pamphlet was expressed.

Q. Can the G.S.O. staff pass along agenda items directly to a Conference committee?

A. Before being placed on the agenda of a Conference committee, each item is reviewed by a trustees' committee. Items for Conference committees without a corresponding trustees' committee are frequently reviewed by either the trustees' Literature Committee or the trustees' Committee on the Conference. There are times when the service committees, Cooperation With the Professional Community, Corrections, Public Information and Treatment and Accessibilities, have very light agendas for an

upcoming Conference. Occasionally, in the past, Conference committee secretaries have added one or two discussion agenda items to flesh out the agendas – this has often proven beneficial because the topics get discussed at many pre-Conference events. The policy now is that one or two discussion topics may be added only if, after consultation with the trustees' and Conference chairs of the particular committee, they deem the discussion topics appropriate and useful.

Trustees' Committees

Q. Prior to the trustees' committee meeting, do the committee members receive background related to the item so they can make an informed decision?

A. Yes. Members of the trustees' committees receive extensive background material and subcommittee reports several weeks before their quarterly meetings. If background was not provided with the original agenda submission, the staff secretary may write to the sender and ask that pertinent background be supplied. In addition, the staff secretary will gather pertinent background from G.S.O. resources.

Q. Do the trustees thoroughly discuss each proposed item?

A. Yes, they do. Occasionally, they have studied the background and thought about the issue in advance of their quarterly meeting, and they will find themselves in general agreement to either move the item forward to a Conference Committee or not or to send the item in another direction in which case there may not be a lengthy discussion.

Q. What options does a trustees' committee have in disposing of a proposed Conference agenda item it is considering?

A. Here are some options:

- The committee can agree to forward the item to a Conference committee for consideration.
- The committee can approve implementation of the suggestion, and, when appropriate, choose not to seek Conference ratification of this decision. Example: three areas requested that a trustees' committee be assigned or formed to oversee the annual revision of The A.A. Service Manual. The committee agreed this was a good idea but one that needed to be addressed by the Chair of the General Service Board. It was forwarded to the Chair and after further consultation, it was decided to place oversight of this document with the trustees' Literature Committee.
- The committee can take no action on the item which means that, for any number of reasons, they do not feel Conference or further trustees' consideration is warranted at this time. The committee secretary is often asked to explain to the sender the reasons the committee made this decision. Often suggestions like the suggestion to publish the Fourth Edition of the Big Book are considered over many years before the concept is accepted by the trustees, and, eventually, the Conference.

- The committee can forward the item to another committee, to A.A.W.S. or the Grapevine Board, to G.S.O. or to the General Service Board if it believes more information is needed before making a decision, or if it believes that the item would be more appropriately handled by another conscience.
- The committee can form a subcommittee to examine the matter more fully before making a decision.
- The committee can table the matter until its next committee meeting.

Q. Do the trustees' committees give more weight to an area's agenda submission than to other's submissions?

A. There is no absolute "yes" or "no" to this question. Every effort is made to act fairly and on principle on all items submitted. The trustees' most important consideration is the subject matter. The procedures outlined above have been in place for many years, over all have been accepted by the Fellowship and are consistent with the Conference Charter and Concepts. The committee members must determine if their informed group conscience feels the proposed agenda submission should be placed on the Conference agenda. Having said that, the trustees recognize that a proposal that has been put forward by an area assembly has been widely discussed, has received substantial unanimity at an area assembly and, therefore, has the overall support of groups who attended and voted at the area assembly.

Q. Shouldn't an area's submission take precedence over everyone else's proposals?

A. Based on the guidance in the Concepts, the Conference Charter and the A.A. Service Manual, the trustees' committees and the General Service Board are charged with taking each proposal primarily on its merits not its source. Nowhere is it stated that, in terms of proposing Conference agenda items, an area is more important than an individual A.A. member, group, district or anyone else eligible to submit items for consideration. As human beings, though, the trustees' committee members cannot but note, for example, that an item is coming from an area assembly, a past delegate or a trustee and, possibly, have some tendency to consider an item from these sources a bit differently. The procedure is not an exact science but, again, every effort is made to act fairly and on principle, to seek God's will for us and have the courage to carry it out in order to safeguard, support and serve the Conference process.

Revised July 2019

2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM D: Review dates for the 2025 General Service Conference.

Background notes:

From a 2019 committee consideration:

- In order to provide additional flexibility to the General Service Office management in contracting the most cost-effective and appropriate venues for the General Service Conference, the committee agreed to select three proposed dates for the 73rd and 74th General Service Conferences. The committee selected the following dates in order of preference for the 73rd General Service Conference: April 23-29, 2023; April 30-May 6, 2023 and April 16-22, 2023. The committee selected the following dates in order of preference for the 74th General Service Conference: April 14-20, 2024; April 28-May 4, 2024 and May 5-11, 2024. The committee noted that these proposed Conference dates do not conflict with any significant holidays. The committee asks that all Conference members be notified of the final dates for the 73rd and 74th General Service Conferences as soon as they are finalized by G.S.O. management.
- The committee reviewed the report from G.S.O.'s general manager on site selection of the General Service Conference and looks forward to a progress report for review by the 2020 General Service Conference.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2020, the Conference Coordinator met with Management regarding agenda items for the 71st General Service Conference. It was agreed that the General Manager would ask the Policy and Admissions Committee to review possible dates for the 2025 General Service Conference.

Experience has taught us that having several options for dates can help in site selection negotiations, and that it is important to avoid conflicting with significant holidays whenever possible.

Background:

1. List of past GSC dates
2. 2025 calendar with holidays & observances

List of Conference Dates from 1993 to 2021

April 18 – 24, 1993

April 17 – 23, 1994

April 30 – May 6, 1995

April 21 – 27, 1996

April 13 – 19, 1997

April 19 – 25, 1998

April 18 – 24, 1999

April 30 – May 6, 2000

April 22 – 28, 2001

April 21 – 27, 2002

April 27 – May 3, 2003

April 18 – 24, 2004

April 17 – 23, 2005

April 23 – 29, 2006

April 22 – 28, 2007

April 27 – May 3, 2008

April 26 – May 2, 2009

April 18 – 24, 2010

May 1 – 7, 2011

April 22 – 28, 2012

April 21 – 27, 2013

April 27 – May 3, 2014

April 19 – 25, 2015

April 17 – 23, 2016

April 23 – 29, 2017

April 22 – 28, 2018

May 19 – 25, 2019

May 16 – 19, 2020

April 18 – 24, 2021

Calendar for Year 2025 (United States)

January							February							March						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4							1							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30	31					

April							May							June						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					

July							August							September						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5						1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
							31													

October							November							December						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4							1	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31			
							30													

Holidays and Observances:

Jan 1	New Year's Day	Jun 15	Father's Day
Jan 2	Last Day of Chanukah	Jun 19	Juneteenth
Jan 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Jun 27	Muharram
Jan 20	Inauguration Day (DC, MD*, VA*)	Jul 4	Independence Day
Jan 27	Isra and Mi'raj	Sep 1	Labor Day
Feb 14	Valentine's Day	Sep 5	The Prophet's Birthday
Feb 17	Presidents' Day (Most regions)	Sep 23	Rosh Hashana
Mar 1	First Day of Ramadan	Oct 2	Yom Kippur
Mar 17	St. Patrick's Day	Oct 13	Last Day of Sukkot
Mar 26	Lailat al-Qadr	Oct 13	Columbus Day
Mar 31	Eid al-Fitr	Oct 31	Halloween
Apr 13	Passover (first day)	Nov 4	Election Day
Apr 15	Tax Day	Nov 11	Veterans Day
Apr 20	Last Day of Passover	Nov 27	Thanksgiving Day
Apr 20	Easter Sunday	Nov 28	Black Friday
Apr 21	Easter Monday	Dec 15	Chanukah/Hanukkah (first day)
May 5	Cinco de Mayo	Dec 22	Last Day of Chanukah
May 11	Mother's Day	Dec 24	Christmas Eve
May 26	Memorial Day	Dec 25	Christmas Day
Jun 7	Eid al-Adha	Dec 31	New Year's Eve

2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM E: Review the “Report on Translation and Interpretation of General Service Conference material.

Background notes:

As stated at the beginning, the report is meant to allow for a pause to review the actions taken based on the direction provided by a floor action of the 67th General Service Conference which stated: “In the spirit of unity and inclusiveness, the General Service Office strive to provide Conference background materials in English by February 15 and Spanish and French by the first week in March, beginning with the 68th General Service Conference.”

The report looks at three services related to translation for the Conference: Simultaneous Interpretation Services, Conference Translation, and Conference Background Material Translation. The processes used in each of the three years along with takeaways and lessons learned is reviewed. In the Finance section, the budget and actual cost of each of those services is documented. At the end of the report several important questions are posed, beginning with, “Is this service needed to be performed in the way we are providing it to the General Service Conference and the Fellowship?”

Background:

1. Report on Translation of General Service Conference Material

Report on Translation and Interpretation of General Service Conference Material

July 14, 2020

The Purpose:

To provide an overview of the processes that have been developed and implemented to complete the translation of most, not all, Conference Materials into French, and Spanish.

To report on some details of the simultaneous interpretation services provided during each Conference to support delegates whose primary spoken language is either French or Spanish and how this service is meant to support the “translation” of Conference Materials.

Introduction:

There are many materials that get sent to our Publishing Department for translation in preparation for each General Service Conference (G.S.C.) and we capture the expenses of them in two different categories in the trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference (TCGSC) annual budget. These categories are:

1. Conference Translation Category

- a. Ongoing translation of Pre-conference and Conference materials in partnership with the Publishing Department’s executive editor.
- b. French and Spanish translations of these materials are provided within an average lag time of a 3 – 5 business days from the distribution of English materials.
- c. Presently, all delegates are not provided the same amount of time to review these materials.

2. Background Translation Category

- a. English is due to be distributed each February 15 and,
- b. French and Spanish are due to be distributed by the first week in March.
- c. There is a built-in lag time of, at minimum, 15 business days from the distribution of English materials.
- d. Presently, all delegates are not provided the same amount of time to review these materials.

We are including some information on the interpretation services provided at each GSC. We are also including some information on the process for completing the translation of Conference materials detailed below. The main process that is detailed in this report is an overview of the “Background Translation” process.

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Note: At this time, there is no “real time” translation of the following materials provided during the Conference Week to Conference members such as, Conference Committee Reports, works in progress such as, literature drafts, or the Floor Action list used for debate and discussion. The members must rely on the interpretation services to participate in these Conference sessions.

Simultaneous Interpretation Service:

At each GSC we provide interpretation service to all delegates whose primary language is not English. Historically, this is captured under the TCGSC budget category of “Simultaneous Interpretation”.

Each year we determine the number of delegates who will need interpretation services and what languages are required, French or Spanish or both. The average number of delegates at each Conference over the last four years has been two to three. The primary language requested is French.

We offer simultaneous interpretation throughout the Conference week. We have interpretation headsets, and a team of interpreters available during all sessions, including breakouts, such as the committee meetings and, if applicable, the workshop.

Note: The interpretation service expenses are detailed later in this report under the Finance section.

Conference Translation Process:

The Conference Coordinator and Conference Staff Assistant work closely with the Executive Editor to complete the Conference Translation of the materials that fall under this process.

The Conference Coordinator’s Monthly Schedule outlines the timing of when these translations are to be completed. As each document is developed and finalized, it is distributed to the English-speaking delegates. At the same time the document is sent to the executive editor with a target deadline for each translation request.

The executive editor uses internal or external resources to complete the translation request and returns the finished product to the Conference Assignment for distribution.

The following details some of the types of materials completed under the “Conference Translation” budget of materials for a GSC.

1. All Conference communication emails or letters
2. Welcome correspondence to new panel delegates
 - a. Letter Memo to a Delegate from a Delegate, The Role of the Delegate
3. Communications kit and forms
4. Committee material:
 - a. Composition, Scope and Procedures for 13 committees
 - b. History and Actions of 13 committees
5. Pre-Conference documents
 - a. Proposed Agenda item reports
 - b. Preliminary list of Agenda items
6. Conference Manual

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- a. Board reports (G.S.B., A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine)
- b. Trustee committee reports

Note: The Conference Translation expenses are detailed later in the report under the Finance section.

Background Translation Process:

The Conference Coordinator and Conference Committee Secretaries work closely with the Editor/Translation Manager (TM) on an ongoing basis to complete the Conference Background Material Translation of the items that fall under this process.

The information translated for the Conference Background Material includes:

1. Eleven primary conference committees' background materials
2. Two secondary conference committees' background material

Note: The Conference Background Materials Translation expenses are detailed later in the report under the Finance section.

Process Participants:

The following GSO staff members and service providers are included in the Background Translation process:

1. All conference committee secretaries and staff assistants
2. Conference coordinator and staff assistant
3. GSO and AA Grapevine management
4. Translation manager - editor
5. External translation teams hired to complete the translation annually
 - a. French team
 - b. Spanish team

Background Translation Process Overview: (see attached Workflow)

The overall process includes a significant review. The review is completed to support consistent presentation of materials from a format perspective. Another key to the review process is to understand if there are materials that may be able to be reduced to essential information only. Also, it is important to identify if any archival materials have any accessibility concerns due to the older nature of an image versus a readable PDF, for example. These conversations include both staff, trustees' committees, Conference committee chairs and any other parties that are involved in each scenario.

Once the background is finalized in English, the Conference Coordinator sends a confirmation email to each committee secretary informing them that the background material is ready to be forwarded for translation. The volume of background material over the last three years is as follows:

- 2018 – 650 pages
- 2019 – 644 pages

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- 2020 – 1,072 pages

The Translation manager (TM) is sent the materials by each committee secretary or staff assistant. The TM keeps track of each conference committee's agenda items during the process. The TM is responsible for acquiring and contracting the appropriate translation teams needed to complete the project each year. A collaborative process has developed between the TM and the Conference Coordinator (CC). The goal is to confirm the documents are translated, reviewed, and consolidated into bookmarked, PDF, documents ready for distribution to all Conference members, striving to meet the annual deadlines.

Since the inception of the process we have learned some key lessons and implemented changes necessary to make the process more effective.

The following section is a reporting by the Translation Manager about the process and “lessons learned” year-by-year.

68th GSC - First-year process:

Three separate translation agencies were identified as sound candidates to complete background translation through their previous experience with A.A.W.S. In November of 2017, they were contacted and asked to “reserve” translators for the project to take place in the latter half of February; all three agreed. In January, each agency was sent a zip file containing style sheets and glossaries for A.A. terminology so they could acquaint themselves with our jargon and remain consistent with accepted translations of our terms rather than coming up with new ones. Similarly, they were also provided with literature from Alcoholics Anonymous (i.e., *Big Book*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Tradition*, *the A.A. Service Manual*, *Historical Advisory Actions*) in both English and French/Spanish so that they could be sure to use pre-existing translations for critical texts, such as quotations from the *Big Book* and past *Advisory Actions*.

By January, a naming convention for committees was decided upon and a process put in place for secretaries to send documents to the TM. Committee secretaries began sending background documents in early February, but the vast majority were sent in mid-February, at the time of the posting of the background in English.

The TM then sent background documents in logical groupings to each agency, with consideration by the TM to distribute volume and complexity equally. The TM was available to field queries and supply any additional literature that was needed.

Two additional translator/A.A. members (one French, one Spanish, both with G.S.O. experience) were also hired to take on portions of the project.

Overall, two of the agencies were timely and responsive. Problems with translations provided by the agencies included the following:

- inconsistent compliance with the style sheet,
- irregular style consistency among translators, even within same agency,
- feedback from the Fellowship, received later, indicated that translations, especially in French, were not accurate and did not conform to A.A. style.

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Meanwhile, work submitted by the two independent translators was consistently timely and superior in quality to that submitted by the agencies. They were also more communicative and easier to work with.

First-year lessons and takeaways:

Significant learning about the process within the office (pre-translation) was made the first year, and so certain procedures were put in place for 2018:

1. We learned to review the planned background from each committee secretary, with our Publishing partners, at the November Conference planning meeting, to obtain any needed suggestions regarding volume, timing, and any other concerns.
2. We developed a rated list of background document formats in ascending order of challenge to translate:
 - a. Microsoft Word docs,
 - b. “Clean” PDFs (PDFs made by export from another program, i.e., Word),
 - c. Excel spreadsheets with text,
 - d. PowerPoint presentations,
 - e. Recent PDF scans of letters and printed reports,
 - f. Years-old PDF scans of letters and printed reports.
3. We created a standard email template and conference committee naming convention to support the tracking process of documents through the process.

69th GSC - Second-year process:

With the benefit of one year’s experience, the TM was more prepared for technical issues, such as difficult PDFs, and other issues that could arise, such as ensuring that pre-existing translations were used by the translators. Staff were asked to provide documents in more usable formats (see above/below) and complied to the best of their abilities.

With respect to translators, for the Spanish translation the TM followed the 2018 process — i.e., three agencies and the same independent translator. This time, the TM found greater conscientiousness with one agency (the one that supplies interpretation service during the Conference). The independent Spanish translator was given the most A.A.-specific — and the most voluminous— committee background, Literature, which this time was over 140 pages with many old pdfs and other cumbersome formats. Ultimately, this background was turned in later, and was therefore posted a full week after the rest of the translated background.

Meanwhile, a new process was undertaken for the French translation. Thanks to outreach from the in-house French editor (hired in 2018), we learned from the independent French translator and his colleague —a former Quebecois delegate and a professional translator herself — that the 2018 background translation was substandard and did not at all conform to A.A. style. They also informed us that they would be happy to undertake the entire background translation themselves, as they already had several years’ experience translating Conference background for French-speaking Canadian members. The TM then hired these two to lead a team of translators at their discretion. These two recruited six other professional translators, almost all of whom were A.A. members and some of whom had also translated Conference background in the past. The in-house French editor assisted greatly with ensuring our own French style sheets were accurate

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and up to date, adding documentation as she saw fit to help the French translation team. Work was turned in on-time and under budget, with far greater conformity with A.A. terminology.

Translations still had to be monitored heavily for style and format consistency, but overall, the work product was superior to and far less expensive than that of the agencies. In addition, less time was required on the part of the TM with respect to A.A.-specific questions: importantly, the TM could trust that the translators would know when to check for pre-existing translations and when to translate anew. The TM still had to respond to technical issues and ensure format consistency checks.

Meanwhile, the Spanish team was constructed as before. However, this time, the independent translator was assigned Literature, the most complex/largest of the document sets. This committee's background was posted later than the rest of the Spanish-language background.

Second-year lessons and takeaways:

1. We learned that as we strive to meet the deadlines that is important to post what we have completed by March 15 with effective communication to all Conference members detailing what is still in process.
2. We learned that the following committees, in alphabetical order, generally have a greater volume of background documents and have therefore required additional time to complete the full translation into French and Spanish:
 - a. Conference Literature Committee
 - b. Conference Policy/Admissions Committee
 - c. Conference Public Information Committee
 - d. Conference Report and Charter Committee
3. In addition, in some cases committee secretaries realized new background was needed after translation had begun, adding both volume and complexity to the process.

70th GSC – Third-year process:

Because of the positive experience with the French team, in mid-2019 the TM asked the independent Spanish translator to put together a team along the same lines as the French. He met with the TM on several occasions, and while by January he was not able to locate as many translators as either he or the TM had hoped, he did feel confident in the team's capabilities.

In late January, TM learned that there would be a significant increase in agenda items, and in early-to-mid February, the TM was informed that there would be a 65% increase in volume of Conference background documents. While sending out some translation to agencies was discussed, it was determined that doing so would add great expense as well as complexity to the project; in addition, agencies generally are unable to undertake large volumes of work on such short notice. The translators would not have the A.A. member knowledge so critical both to high-quality translation and to an expeditious process.

In the meantime, thanks to two years' experience, the process within G.S.O. proceeded smoothly; in addition, TM was able to provide robust direction as well as more focused documents to the

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translators, resulting in a simpler process. For example, translators were provided with History & Actions documents specific to the committee background they were working on, rather than a book of Advisory Actions to search. In addition, the translators' knowledge of A.A. meant the TM spent less time educating the translators, freeing time up to be of greater assistance to the translator teams with technical issues and miscellaneous research in the Archives. The teams were also able to collaborate with each other through the TM, thus leveraging solutions to document format challenges and more.

While the French team was able to complete the translation task on time, the Spanish team encountered greater challenges, among them the following:

- not enough translators,
- communication lapses attributable to new working relationships,
- inconsistent use of A.A. terminology, due to the translators' various locations,
- poor performance on the part of one translator,
- extremely high standards on the part of the Spanish team leader, which added time to the process.

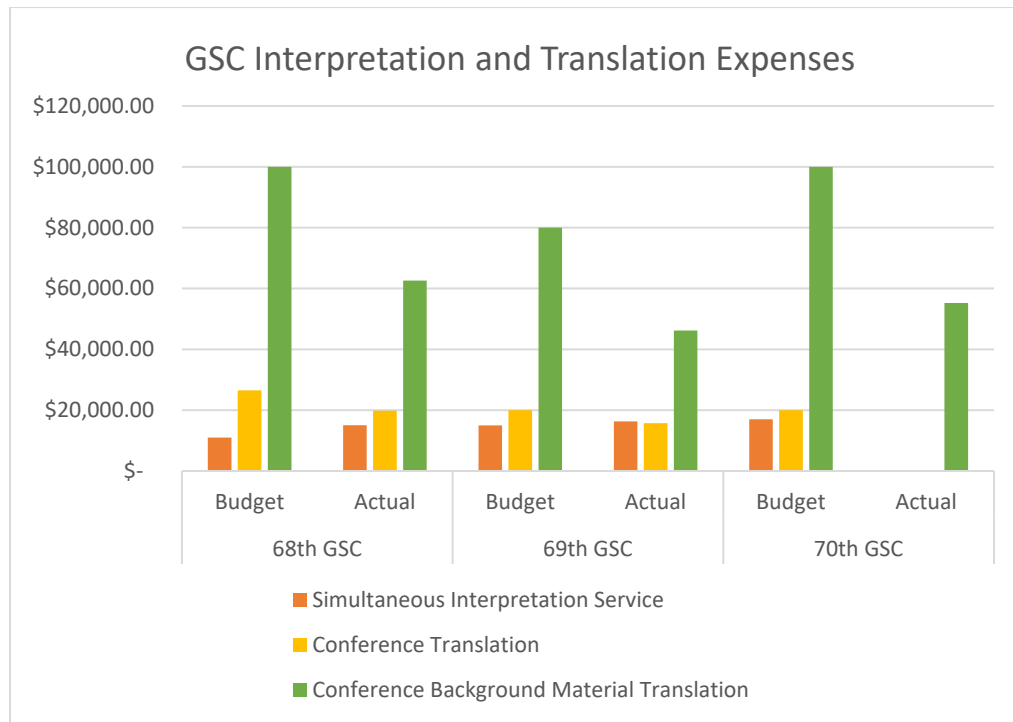
As a result, translation of the background for Grapevine and Treatment & Accessibilities were posted three days after the end of the first week of March, and background for three of the committees — Literature, Policy & Admissions and Public Information — were posted a week after that.

Third-year takeaways and lessons:

1. We have learned the optimal translation team structure needed is:
 - a. Two leaders and team of eight member/translators. Critical that team leaders, as well as most translators, be members with some time in A.A.; especially helpful if they have been in service.
2. We have learned that that the Spanish translation process has more built-in challenges than the French. French translation is geared to one defined region, with members who share common terminology and A.A. culture. The Spanish-speaking audience is comprised largely of diasporas from many different countries; it is also spread out geographically through the U.S. and Canada. This means that A.A. terminology can vary, as can the Spanish-speaking style itself. The Spanish team leader[s] must attend to inconsistencies within the translations — avoiding words that are too local or too associated with a certain nationality, as well as “Spanglish” — and strive to create a unified voice such that all Spanish-speaking readers will understand.
3. To that end, subsequent conversations with the Spanish team leader reveal that he has already begun the process of outreach to potential member/translators for 2021. Meanwhile, TM will be more “hands on” with respect to early planning stages with Spanish team leader to ensure timelier completion.

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Finances:



Conference Background Material Translation

- o Actual cost in 2020 was \$55,208, coming in 44.8% less than the total budgeted cost of \$100,000.
- o Actual cost in 2019 was \$46,184, coming in 42.3% less than the total budgeted cost of \$80,000.
- o Actual cost in 2018 was \$62,589, coming in 37.4% less than the total budgeted cost of \$100,000.

Conclusions:

This report is meant to allow for a pause to review the actions we have taken based on the General Service Conferences direction “in the spirit of unity and inclusiveness, the General Service Office strive to provide Conference background materials in English by February 15 and Spanish and French by the first week in March, beginning with the 68th General Service Conference.”

In the A.A. Service Manual on page S2 it details the following under the header “Vital to A.A.s Growth” about performing services. Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: “Is this service really needed?” If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A.

Given the complexity of the Conference Background Material Translation process, we estimate that it would be impossible to complete the translation of this volume of documents in less time with the current Conference deadlines in place.

Questions:

1. Should we work to translate the Conference Week documents that are currently not included in the Background Translation process, such as Conference Committee Reports, works-in-progress or the Floor Action list used for debate and discussion? Presently, the

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members rely on the interpretation services we provide to participate in these important group conscience sessions.

2. Should we have all English background material flow through a single editorial resource person who is charged with condensing and trimming the material, working with each staff member to ensure that nothing "critical" is lost, but focused primarily on developing some consistency of sourcing and referencing across all committees, for example, how far back is it really necessary to go when detailing the background of a particular item, especially when much of the surrounding material may be repetitive?
3. Can we steer our information model of background development more towards simplicity and clarity rather than volume?

Maybe we can seek shared experience from the Fellowship on the following types of questions:

1. Is this service needed to be performed in the way we are providing it to the General Service Conference and the Fellowship?
2. Do the documents that are produced get used by the Fellowship to be able to provide input to the local area delegates?
3. Does the timing or the distribution of these documents allow for their use in an impactful way?
4. Is it helpful in the way it is now produced? Would a streamlined version be more helpful?
5. Who, exactly, is the background material for -- staff? trustees? delegates? GSRs? individual members?

2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM F: Consider revising the process for polling the General Service Conference between annual meetings to make use of virtual meeting technologies.

Background notes:

The most recent Advisory Action impacting the “Process for Polling the General Service Conference between Annual Meetings” was in 2019. It added more time within the polling process for discussion of recommendations. Since 2019 we have experienced a worldwide pandemic which has led to widespread use of virtual technologies by A.A. groups, districts, areas, and by the 70th General Service Conference. Many trusted servants are now experienced with using virtual platforms for presentations, discussions, sharing sessions and votes. Could revising the process to make use of virtual technologies improve the speed and efficiency of voting and the quality of deliberations?

At their October meeting, the trustees Committee on the General Service Conference forwarded this proposed agenda item to the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions for discussion. The trustees’ Committee also suggested that, as part of this discussion, the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions could consider the delegated authority of the Conference Committee as it relates to managing the admissions process. The question was raised if, in light of a revised process, the Policy and Admissions Committee might handle the more routine admissions requests on its own.

Background:

1. Process for Polling the General Service Conference Between Annual Meetings

Process for Polling the General Service Conference between Annual Meetings*

Introduction

This process was developed to provide clear and consistent guidance for polling the members of the General Service Conference between Annual Conference Meetings.

It describes the circumstances under which such a poll might be taken, and lays out the procedures for conducting the poll. The process strives as much as possible to conform to the principles and procedures laid out in "How the Conference Operates."¹

The process was developed to accord with both the General Service Conference Charter, A Resolution, and the Bylaws of the General Service Board.² The development of this process takes into account the experience from two previous polls of Conference members, one undertaken by the General Service Board and one by the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

Circumstances for Polling

Here are the situations where this process may be used:

Aid of the General Service Board or its Related Services

The Conference may render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services. (Article 9 of the Current General Service Conference Charter)

Great Emergency

In a great emergency, the General Service Board or one of its related services would first consult the Conference before taking any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole. (Current General Service Conference Charter, Article 10)

Action Involving a Matter of Principle or Basic Policy

Whenever in the judgment of one-third of the member trustees present at a meeting a decision to take any action involves a matter of principle or basic policy and in the judgment of at least one-third of the member trustees a delay in arriving at a decision will not adversely affect the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the matter shall be submitted to a mail vote of Conference delegates. (G.S.B. Bylaws, "Meetings, Notice and Vote")

G.S.B. Bylaws Amendment

The Board is expected, although not legally required, to submit any amendment or amendments of the Certificate of Incorporation and of these bylaws to Conference delegates, either by mail or at the annual meeting of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. (G.S.B. Bylaws, "Amendment")

* Approved by the 2018 General Service Conference

¹ See "How the Conference Operates."

² See "Excerpts Regarding Polling from the General Service Conference Charter, from 'A Resolution,' and from the General Service Board Bylaws."

Polling Process

Initiation of a Poll

The Conference Charter and the General Service Board bylaws state that a poll may be taken in support of the General Service Board or its related services. The poll should be approved by the General Service Board, although it may be conducted by a committee or service corporation.

Quorum

The Current Conference Charter states that for Conference business, "A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of all the Conference members registered." (*The A.A. Service Manual*, Appendix C, Article 4). For the purpose of determining a quorum for polling between conferences, abstentions *will* be counted. Abstentions will *not* be counted in the vote totals. The responsibility to vote is incumbent on each Conference member.

Clarity of Motion

It is the responsibility of the board or committee undertaking the poll to ensure that the motion is stated clearly, and that any background included with the poll will be appropriate and complete. So that voters can be clear on what they are voting for, the expected result of the passage of the motion ought to be outlined, as well as the expected result of the failure of the motion.

Poll Delivery

Notice of the poll determination will be emailed to all Conference delegates. To help guarantee the availability of each Conference member to participate, anyone whose email bounces back will be contacted by telephone.

Voting Process

Conference members may vote by email or by phone. All responses will be made to the email address and phone provided in the original poll. Conference members will be sent a voting form by email.

To vote by email, Conference members mark an "X" next to their choice, and return it to the email address indicated. The poll document will include a space to indicate yes or no. To vote by phone, Conference members may call the number provided and leave a message with their name, service position and vote.

Timing

In keeping with the G.S.B. Bylaws, Conference members will be given two weeks⁴ from the time the poll is emailed to respond with their vote. Dates for all votes and motions will be included with the poll, using a form similar to the "Timeline for Polling Conference Between Meetings." All times listed are Eastern Time.

The original poll will be emailed by 2 p.m., and discussion will open that day and remain open for one week. Voting will commence on day seven at 2 p.m. after discussion closes.

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Voting will close at 2 p.m. two weeks after the poll was emailed. By 5 p.m. on the day the poll results are due, Conference members will be notified of the results by email. A request for any minority opinion will be included with the poll results.

Minority Opinion

Minority opinion is due by 2 p.m. two days after the poll results have been emailed. The minority voice may be submitted to the same email or phone number to which poll results were submitted.

By 5 p.m. on the day that the minority opinion is due, a document with the compiled minority opinion will be distributed to Conference members.

Motion to reconsider

A motion to reconsider can only be made from someone on the prevailing side. To move to reconsider, a member may email or call the number provided and leave a message with their name, service position and the motion.

The motion to reconsider is due by 2 p.m. two days after the minority opinion is distributed.

If a motion to reconsider is received by the deadline, a notification will be sent to Conference members, and a request for a "second" will be sought. The notification will be sent by 5 p.m. on the deadline date. A "second" of the motion to reconsider is due by 2 p.m. two days after the motion is distributed.

If no second is received by the deadline, the vote stands. If a "second" is received, a voting form with the motion to reconsider will be emailed to Conference members. The voting form will be sent at the latest by 5 p.m. of the deadline for the "second" of the motion to reconsider.

The vote on reconsideration is due by 2 p.m. two days after the motion to reconsider is emailed.

By 5 p.m. on the day the vote on reconsideration is due, Conference members are notified of the results of the vote.

If the vote to reconsider passes, a new poll is generated. If the vote to reconsider fails, the vote stands.

⁴ See "Excerpts Regarding Polling from the General Service Conference Charter, from 'A Resolution,' and from the General Service Board Bylaws."

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Timeline for Polling Conference Between Meetings		
Action	Day	Time*
Poll emailed and discussion opens	Day 1	2 p.m.
Discussion closes	Day 7	2 p.m.
Voting opens	Day 7	2 p.m.
Voting closes	Day 14	2 p.m.
Email notification of poll results sent to Conference members	Day 14	5 p.m.
Minority opinion due	Day 16	2 p.m.
Minority opinion distributed to Conference members	Day 16	5 p.m.
Motion to reconsider due	Day 18	2 p.m.
If received, motion to reconsider is distributed to Conference Members, and second is sought	Day 18	5 p.m.
Second of motion to reconsider due	Day 20	2 p.m.
If second is received, motion to reconsider is distributed to Conference members	Day 20	5 p.m.
Voting closes on motion to reconsider	Day 22	2 p.m.
Email notification of reconsideration results sent to Conference members	Day 22	5 p.m.
If reconsideration passes, a new poll is initiated with the same timeline cycle	Day 1	2 p.m.
* All times are Eastern Time		

SAMPLE CONFERENCE POLL VOTE SHEET

It is recommended that:

[MOTION TEXT]

If the motion passes, the expected result is:

[EXECTED RESULT]

If the motion fails, the expected result is

[EXPECTED RESULT]

Put an "X" before your choice and return this form by email to [EMAIL ADDRESS]:

____ Yes

____ No

____ Abstain

OR

Call in your vote to [PHONE NUMBER], stating your name, service positon and vote.

The [BOARD OR COMMITTEE] sincerely thanks you for your participation in this process.

**Excerpts Regarding Polling from the General Service Conference Charter,
from “A Resolution,” and from the General Service Board Bylaws***

General Service Conference Charter, Article 9.

The General Service Conference Meetings: The Conference will meet yearly in the City of New York, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

General Service Conference Charter, Article 10

Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever take any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole, without first consulting the Conference. It is nevertheless understood that the board shall at all times reserve the right to decide which of its actions or decisions may require the approval of the Conference.

A Resolution ((from Appendix C in the Service Manual)

AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD: That neither the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous nor the warranties of Article XII of the Conference Charter shall ever be changed or amended by the General Service Conference except by first asking the consent of the registered A.A. groups of the world. [This would include all A.A. groups known to the general service offices around the world.]¹² These groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such Conference action can be taken, there must first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of all those registered groups who respond to such proposal.

G.S.B. Bylaws, “Trustees”

No person shall become a member trustee of the General Service Board until all Conference delegates have been polled by mail or at an annual meeting of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, as the Board of Trustees may determine.

G.S.B. Bylaws, “Meetings, Notice and Vote”

Whenever in the judgment of one-third of the member trustees present at a meeting a decision to take any action involves a matter of principle or basic policy and in the judgment of at least one-third of the member trustees a delay in arriving at a decision will not adversely affect the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the matter shall be submitted to a mail vote of Conference delegates, and if a majority of the Conference delegates votes against the taking of such action, then the Board of Trustees will be expected to refrain from deciding to take such action.

Whenever a mail vote is taken of Conference delegates, at least two weeks' notice shall be given, and the vote shall be determined in keeping with an analysis of such vote by the chair and secretary, or in their absence, by a vice-chair and assistant secretary, at the end of such two-week period. An announcement of the result of such vote shall thereupon be mailed by the secretary or assistant secretary to Conference delegates and to member trustees.

G.S.B. Bylaws, “Amendment”

In keeping with the spirit and principles of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Board is expected, although not legally required, to submit any amendment or amendments of the Certificate of Incorporation and of these bylaws to Conference delegates, either by mail or at the annual meeting of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous as the Board of Trustees may determine, and if a majority of such delegates disapproves of such amendment or amendments,

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the member trustees are expected to refrain from proceeding therewith, except when such amendment or amendments are otherwise required by law.

- * These documents can be found in the Appendices to *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

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2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM G: Consider a request that a procedure be drafted for appealing a ruling by a General Service Conference Chair.

Background notes:

The Conference Coordinator received three letters supporting the Area 29 proposed agenda item.

The panel 70 delegate from Area 81 wrote that Area 81 discussed the proposed agenda item fully and felt that “if anything it would be health to at least look at this proposed motion because it does help protect our 12 legacies.”

The panel 69 delegate from Area 60 wrote that, “At a meeting of Area 60 of Western Pennsylvania on Sunday, December 6, 2020, a motion was made, and approved by substantial majority to support the attached Agenda Item from Area 29 Maryland.”

And the panel 69 delegate from Area 65 Northeast Texas wrote the following:
“We did not have the time nor availability to formally vet and vote on the motion, but a survey was emailed out to all Area AA members, with 90% of the responses in agreement that this motion has merit and is worthy of our support. Anything that can be done to guide and clarify our processes and procedures, allowing the body to be more efficient with our trusted servants’ time and service would be beneficial to our General Service Conference proceedings.”

The submitter letter from Area 29 presents the motion and its path to approval within the area. Area 29 also provided “Key Points, Relevant Details and Final Conclusion” which contains documented references to the Traditions, Concepts, and to a recent edition of Roberts Rules of Order.

Background:

1. Submitter letter from Area 29
2. Area 29 Key Points, Relevant Details and Final Conclusion

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POLICY/ADMISSIONS
Item G
Doc. 1

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 8043
Elkridge, MD 21075

December 14, 2020

Patrick C., Conference Coordinator
General Service Office
P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

Dear Patrick,

Attached to this correspondence is the document that provides information for a suggested Conference Committee Agenda item from Area 29 for the 71st General Service Conference.

The Motion reads:

Area 29, Maryland adopts this agenda item to request a procedure be drafted to appeal a ruling by the Conference Chair. This procedure may include that the Chair may provide an explanation as to such ruling and the process for challenging a ruling of the Chair as defined in Robert's Rules of Order.

This Motion was brought forward from the Area 29 Committee to the Area 29 Assembly held on December 12, 2020. The Motion passed with substantial unanimity (only three dissenting votes) in favor of forwarding it to the Conference Coordinator including all additional background information. The Motion originated with the Area 29 Delegate and a committee made up of at least one member of each of the four geographically-distinct Area 29 Conference Agenda Review Committees (CARCs) and a past Area 29 Delegate to the GSC. The motion was then forwarded to the Area 29 Committee for approval and subsequently on to the Area 29 Assembly.

Thank you for all that you do for the GSO and the members of our amazing Fellowship. Please contact me with any questions that you may have concerning this potential Agenda item.

Cynthia M T.

Delegate
Area 29 Panel 70
"Thank you for your life"



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**71st General Service Conference
Proposed Agenda Item by Area 29**

Area 29, Maryland adopts this agenda item to request a procedure be drafted to appeal a ruling by the Conference Chair. This procedure may include that the Chair may provide an explanation as to such ruling and the process for challenging a ruling of the Chair as defined in Robert's Rules of Order.

Key Points:

- Area 29 examined AA literature and legal documents that are germane to this particular issue: The Twelve Traditions, The Twelve Concepts, The Bylaws of the General Service Board, and the Conference Charter.
- Traditions 2 and 9 are relevant to the proposed agenda item. Tradition 9 talks about AA leadership being authorized by the top of the triangle, the AA groups. Our leaders are but trusted and experienced servants and derive no real authority from their titles. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness. Tradition 2 states that our leaders do not govern and that the ultimate authority is “a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”
- The Concepts provide a wealth of background which support the proposed agenda item. In reviewing them, Concepts II, III, IV, V, X, and Warranties 1, 3, 5 and 6 all have relevance to the issue. Central to the issue, are Concept 5 and Warranty 3. Concept 5 ensures a “right of appeal” for the Conference, and Warranty 3 reminds us that no Conference member shall be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others. The purpose of the proposed agenda item is to preserve and protect this right of appeal as well as to clarify the role of the Chair at Conference.
- The Bylaws reinforce that the guiding principles of the General Service Board are the Twelve Traditions, and that members of the Board, are during conference, referred to as “Conference Delegates”, with the same rights and responsibilities as each Delegate.
- The Conference Charter reinforces the proper role of the Conference, not becoming a seat of perilous wealth or power.
- The Conference operates under a modified Roberts Rules of Order and Roberts Rules has a process for an appeal for a ruling of the Chair.

These spiritual principles and practical guides will enable the Conference to build on the history of those Delegates that have gone before as well providing tools for future

Conferences.

Relevant Details:

Tradition 2 states that our leaders do not govern and that the ultimate authority is “a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience” expressed through the voice of the AA Group. Any leader who has unchecked authority – whose decisions may not be appealed – clearly “governs” in a strong way.

Concept V guarantees all Conference members the Right of Appeal, which may require a specified process. Bill W. wrote about Concept V:

“Fortunately, we are not obliged to maintain a government that enforces conformity by inflicting punishments. We need to maintain only a structure of service that holds aloft the Traditions, that forms and executes our policies thereunder, and so steadily carries our message to those who suffer.

Hence we believe that we shall never be subjected to the tyranny of either the majority or the minority, provided we carefully define the relations between them and forthwith tread the path of world service in the spirit of our Twelve Steps, our Twelve Traditions, and our Conference Charter - in which I trust we shall one day inscribe these traditional Rights of ‘Appeal’ and ‘Petition.’¹”

Because “problem, consternation, prayer and reflection, discussion and discernment, and [present] action” have happened in this case, a specified process is indeed needed now – otherwise the issue would not have come up. What kind of process can be developed that both protects the authority of the Chair to run an effective meeting, yet ensures the “Right of Appeal” when a legitimate appeal of a ruling of the Chair is deemed necessary?

Concept VII reminds us “...AA’s General Service Conference is clothed with such great tradition influence and financial power that, if necessary, it could overcome the legal rights of the Board of Trustees. It can therefore give the Trustees directives and secure compliance with them-practically speaking”² and further “As the conscience of AA, the Delegates would find themselves in ultimate authority over our General Service Board and also its corporate arms of active world service.”³

Warranty Three states that “None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.” Bill cites the importance of this principle by writing:

“We have learned that this principle is of incalculable value to the harmonious

¹ The AA Service Manual – Combined with “TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE” © 2018-20 edition Concept 5, pp 22, 23

² Concept 7 p 27

³ Ibid

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conduct of our Conference affairs...our world servants, both as individuals and as groups, shall be entitled to voting rights in reasonable proportion to their several responsibilities.

Because this right of participation is so important, we have made it the subject of this Warranty, thus providing insurance that Conference action alone can never overturn or amend this right...

The voting rights urged under our concept of 'Participation' are simply the practical means of checking any future tendency to an unqualified authority of any sort.⁴

The Chair is still a member of the Conference and as such does not have unqualified authority over others. When it is perceived that the Chair has exercised such authority, it is incumbent a clear process be established to protect this Warranty.

In examining the Bylaws of the General Service Board, we see the proper functions, from where the authority derives, that guides decisions and the awesome responsibility of being the Guardians of the Twelve Traditions.

"The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., now has but one purpose, that of serving the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous."⁵

"Members of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous are hereinafter referred to as "Conference delegates."⁶

"The General Service Board in its deliberations and decisions shall be guided by the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, hereinafter referred to as the 'Traditions'"⁷

"The General Service Board shall use its best efforts to insure that these Twelve Traditions are maintained, for it is regarded by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as the custodian of these Traditions and, accordingly, it shall not itself nor, so far as it is within the power so to do, permit others to modify, alter, or amplify these Traditions, except in keeping with the provisions of the Charter."⁸

The Conference Charter speaks of the Conference relation to the whole of A.A. and the importance of the Delegate vote. "The Conference will act for A.A. in the perpetuation and guidance of its world services, and it will also be the vehicle by which the A.A. movement can express its view upon all matters of vital A.A. policy and all hazardous deviations from A.A. Tradition. Delegates should be free to vote as their conscience dictates; they should also be free to decide what questions should be taken to the group

⁴ Concept 12 Warranty 3, p. 66

⁵ Service Manual S114

⁶ Service Manual S115

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Service Manual S116

level, whether for information, discussion, or their own direct instruction.”⁹

The Charter cautions the Conference to always be mindful of the spirit of A.A. Tradition “In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.”¹⁰

Robert’s Rules of Order speaks to this Issue. The “motion to appeal” is one of the lesser-known motions in Robert’s Rules of Order. All of us are very familiar with the role of the Chair of the meeting. Under Robert’s Rules of Order, the Chair has the duty of keeping things on track. The Chair is responsible for announcing each item of business, recognizing speakers, and for protecting the group from wasting its time.

It is important to remember as well that the Chair is subject to the authority of the whole group. If the Chair says that a given subject is not relevant to the discussion or refuses to recognize someone who is entitled to speak, any two members can appeal. When that happens, the group makes the decision.

It keeps the power in the hands of the group and ensures that the Chair of the meeting always serves the group’s wishes. It is basic to our democratic process. The appeal process is spelled out clearly where any two members have the right to appeal, one member making the appeal and the other seconding, the question is then taken from the Chair and vested in the assembly for final decision.

In sum: an appeal from the ruling of the Chair:

Can interrupt a speaker who has the floor.

Needs to be seconded Is debatable unless the immediately pending question is not debatable.

Can’t be amended.

Requires a majority vote to overturn the decision of the Chair.

⁹ Service Manual S105

¹⁰ Service Manual S108, 109

Can be reconsidered.¹¹

Conclusion:

Area 29 believes that a procedure for appealing a ruling of the Chair at Conference would provide a process to assist the Chair when situations arise that the Chair may make a ruling. How should that be handled? What is the process involved? What rights do the conference members have? What rights does the Chair have?

We believe this proposal to be a healthy one. A.A. history often evolves through a process leading from a problem, to consternation, to prayer and reflection, to discussion and discernment, and finally to action. For example, our Traditions are based upon the fellowships experience, good and bad, over the early years (ten or so) of AA's existence. Experience both good and bad remains beneficial to the Fellowship after 85 years of existence, providing we use it to improve our procedures and to bring them more in line with our principles.

Finally, Bill reminds us in Warranty Six,

We expect that our Conference will always try to act in the spirit of mutual respect and love – one member for Another. in turn, this sign signifies that mutual trust should prevail; that no action ought to be taken in anger, haste or recklessness; that care will be observed to respect and protect all minorities; that no action should ever be personally punitive;that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the majority or the minority.¹²

¹¹ Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised 11th Edition §24 Appeal pp 255-260

¹² Concept 12 Warranty 6, p, 72

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2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM H: Discuss the revised proposed process for equitable distribution of workload.

Background notes:

From a 2018 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions committee consideration:

- The committee reviewed the trustees' General Service Conference Committee's Report on Equitable Distribution of the Workload of Conference Committees. The committee encourages the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference to continue reviewing options in order to create a workable plan for equitable distribution of the workload of Conference committees by combining and/or creating committees. The committee looks forward to a plan or progress report on this important process for review by the 2019 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions.

From a 2019 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions committee consideration:

- The committee noted that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee scheduled a Presentation/Discussion on the Equitable Distribution of the Workload of Conference Committees at the 69th General Service Conference. The committee looks forward to receiving a plan or progress report on this important process for review by the 2020 General Service Conference from the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

From a 2020 Additional Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions committee consideration:

- The committee considered a proposed process for the equitable distribution of Conference committees' workload and noted that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee made significant progress on this complex challenge and further that the proposed process selected by the committee is the appropriate option. The committee agreed that the proposed process would help ensure an equitable distribution of the Conference committees' workload and noted that the Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form would bring much needed structure and clarity to the process.

The committee requests that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee clarify the specifics of the proposed plan and bring back a more fully developed

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process for review by the 2021 General Service Conference. The committee agreed that more specificity is needed on the following:

- Precisely how this proposed process will impact what will happen regarding agenda items considered at the Fall and Winter trustees' committees' meetings.
- Clarity on how the proposed process will impact or change the delegate chairs' participation in the Winter Board Weekend and on the Conference Committees' January conference call to obtain feedback on proposed agenda items. The committee noted that significant progress has been made in involving delegates in the agenda item selection process and would not want to take any steps backward.
- Creating additional primary committees as needed: develop a sample composition, scope and procedures document for an "additional primary committee."
- Provide examples, using sample agenda items, showing how the entire process would work.

The committee looks forward to receiving a more detailed plan for this important process for review by the 2021 General Service Conference from the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

From the August 1, 2020 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

The committee reviewed the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions request that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee clarify the specifics of the proposed plan provided to them this year and bring back a more fully developed process for review by the 2021 General Service Conference. The chair appointed a subcommittee, chaired by Josh Eggleston, with Deborah Koltai and Peter Luongo to consider finalizing this process. A progress report will be provided for review at the October 2020 meeting.

From the October 31, 2020 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

The chair of the subcommittee on equitable distribution of workload presented a progress report. The committee had a robust discussion on the options being presented for addressing equitable distribution of workload. The committee looks forward to reviewing a final subcommittee report at the January 2021 meeting.

From the January 2021 meeting of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference:

The committee agreed to forward the revised proposed process for equitable distribution of workload, including a scoring tool, to the 2021 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions for their consideration.

Background:

1. Final Report from 2020 TGSCC on Equitable Distribution of Workload
2. Standardized G.S.C. Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form
3. Process Timeline & Workflows
4. Scope and Procedures for TCGSC Subcommittee
5. Scoring Tool and Methodology
6. Example of Equitable Workload Distribution Process

**Report from 2020 trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference on
Equitable Distribution of Workload:**

Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool

January 30, 2020

Subcommittee: Josh E., chair; Deborah K., Peter Luongo, and Patrick C. secretary

Scope item: The committee reviewed the 2020 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions request that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee clarify the specifics of the proposed Equitable Distribution of Workload process provided to them and bring back a more fully developed process for review by the 2021 General Service Conference.

Introduction

A subcommittee was appointed in July 2020 and met several times and communicated via email to review and discuss enhancing the process to address the 2020 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions Additional Committee Consideration.

2020 Conference Policy/Admissions Committee Consideration:

The committee considered a proposed process for the equitable distribution of Conference committees' workload and noted that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee made significant progress on this complex challenge and further that the proposed process selected by the committee is the appropriate option. The committee agreed that the proposed process would help ensure an equitable distribution of the Conference committees' workload and noted that the Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form would bring much needed structure and clarity to the process.

The committee requests that the trustees' General Service Conference Committee clarify the specifics of the proposed plan and bring back a more fully developed process for review by the 2021 General Service Conference. The committee agreed that more specificity is needed on the following:

- Precisely how this proposed process will impact what will happen regarding agenda items considered at the Fall and Winter trustees' committees' meetings.
- Clarity on how the proposed process will impact or change the delegate chairs' participation in the Winter Board Weekend and on the Conference

Committees' January conference call to obtain feedback on proposed agenda items. The committee noted that significant progress has been made in involving delegates in the agenda item selection process and would not want to take any steps backward.

- Creating additional primary committees as needed: develop a sample composition, scope, and procedures document for an "additional primary committee."
- Provide examples, using sample agenda items, showing how the entire process would work.

The current subcommittee believes the goal is to ensure that the Conference committees receive an equitable distribution of agenda items that require a depth and substance of discussion. The discussion and development of a solution has taken place over several years.

The remainder of this report focuses on the final agreed upon Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool and the enhancements included to address the 2020 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions Additional Committee Consideration.

Final Agreed Upon Option - Overview of the Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool

The subcommittee felt that the following foundational ideas are important:

- Keep the current committee structure intact.
- Move additional items onto a committee for equity.
- Add additional primary committees as needed. For example; having a second PI or Literature committee.

The following documents are provided for your review and discussion of a Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool:

1. A standardized G.S.C. Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form
2. Process timeline including a change in the submission deadline to Sept 15
 - a. A workflow of the Conference assignment disposition of proposed agenda items
 - b. A workflow of the Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool

3. Scope and Procedures for a new TCGSC's Subcommittee on G.S.C. Committee Workload
4. Scoring Tool and Methodology: To Standardize the Evaluation of a Proposed Agenda Item.

2020 Documentation Enhancements - Overview of the Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool

New Impact Assurance Statements: To address the first two Additional Committee Consideration bullets

- A. Impact Statement: *Precisely how this proposed process will impact what will happen regarding agenda items considered at the Fall and Winter trustees' committees' meetings.*

Today, as proposed agenda items are submitted, each are routed and then considered by the appropriate body, according to the proposed agenda item process.

The Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool includes a new annual deadline of September 15 for proposed agenda item submissions for an upcoming General Service Conference. The Fellowship will need to adjust local processes to ensure that proposed agenda items ideas are initiated in plenty of time for a group conscience to formulate. Any subsequent vote at a district and/or area level to submit an item will also need to be calculated into the new timeframe. Communication of the new deadline will be important because many proposed agenda items are submitted by individuals or groups directly to the Conference Assignment.

All proposed agenda items that come in after the September 15 deadline will be held and considered for the subsequent year's General Service Conference.

In the first year of the new deadline proposed agenda items for the upcoming General Service Conference will only be considered at the Summer and Fall Corporate Board meetings and trustees' Committee meetings. At the end of the Fall Board Weekend we will complete the list of Final Agenda Items that have been forwarded to the upcoming General Service Conference.

After the first year of implementation, the new schedule may see more items ready for review in the Summer Board Weekend from those that arrived after Sept 15th.

In the month leading up to the Winter Board weekend a new trustees' General Service Conference Committee's Subcommittee on G.S.C. Committee Workload will score and then create a final agenda item document detailing the

equitable distribution of Conference committees' workload. The full trustees' General Service Conference Committee will review and approve the equitable distribution plan and documentation.

- B. Impact Statement: *Clarity on how the proposed process will impact or change the delegate chairs' participation in the Winter Board Weekend and on the Conference Committees' January conference call to obtain feedback on proposed agenda items. The committee noted that significant progress has been made in involving delegates in the agenda item selection process and would not want to take any steps backward.*

The Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload will not impact delegate's participation in the proposed agenda item selection process. The following communication points have been implemented and will continue:

1. Both before and after the Summer and Fall Board Weekends the quarterly Trustees chairs communication with corresponding Conference committee chairs regarding potential and proposed agenda items and the committee's work will continue.
2. Before and after the Winter Board Weekend there will be no proposed agenda items to discuss because the final agenda items list will be complete. However, there will be plenty of other trustees' Committee work to discuss.
3. At the Winter Board Weekend, the full trustees' General Service Conference Committee will review and approve the equitable distribution of workload documented plan. After the weekend, this information will be communicated to the full Conference membership along with the final agenda item list as adjusted for equity.
4. The Conference Committee chairs will still be encouraged to communicate with their committee both before and after the Board weekend conference calls with their corresponding trustees' committee chairs.
5. At the January Conference Calls between the trustees' Committee chairs and the corresponding Conference Committees the trustee chairs will verbally review the following:
 - a. Agenda items already forwarded to the Conference committee
 - b. Proposed agenda items that the trustees' Committee took no action

At the timing of the January Conference Calls there will be no more proposed agenda items that will appear on the Boards or trustees' agendas as we lead up to the Winter Board Weekend.

- C. Impact Statement: *Creating additional primary committees as needed: develop a sample composition, scope, and procedures document for an “additional primary committee.”*

The subcommittee determined that adding or making an Additional Conference Committee is the least likely scenario. This subcommittee believes it is always ideal to redistribute a Final Agenda Item to the existing Conference Committee structure, but this subcommittee wants to leave the possibility on the table that an Additional Conference Committee can be added if warranted for any given year to come.

5. Provide Example of Equitable Workload Distribution Process: Using 68th G.S.C. showing how the newly formed trustees’ General Service Conference subcommittee could have distributed some items from literature to other committees.

Final comments:

A change was incorporated in the Process Timeline & Workflow to ensure that the New TCGSC Subcommittee on G.S.C. Committee Workload work is completed in the month of November. At the end of November, the composition of the Conference Committees must be known so all Delegates can be assigned as needed. We must not impact the Committee Selection process.

**General Service Conference (G.S.C.)
Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form**

Annual deadline for submissions for a General Service Conference is September 15*.

What types of proposals, suggestions or ideas rise to the level of needing a General Service Conference “action” or “decision”?

Proposals that are important to the future of Alcoholics Anonymous, policy decisions or request for changes to Conference-approved literature and items that might require the collective conscience of the Fellowship. The trustees, corporate directors and staff bring together years of experience in A.A. service in making decisions about the appropriate process or disposition of proposed Conference agenda items. Warranty six reminds us “that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government...” *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service* page 72.

The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service states on page S57 that:

The final agenda for any Conference consists of items suggested by individual A.A. members, groups, delegates, trustees, area assemblies, area committee members, and directors and staff members of A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine. The Conference considers matters of policy for A.A. as a whole, and there are tried-and-true procedures for placing an item on the agenda in the most effective way — or, when the suggestion does not concern overall policy, for routing it to the most appropriate part of the service structure.

If a G.S.R. has an idea for an agenda item, chances are that he or she will want to discuss it first with the group, then at a district or area meeting, which can then forward it to the staff member at G.S.O. currently serving as Conference coordinator. An A.A. who is not part of the general service structure can give the idea to the group's G.S.R. or write directly to the Conference coordinator.

The following is from a process overview document “FAQs on Group Conscience Consideration for Proposed Conference Agenda Items.”

- Q. What happens when a proposed Conference agenda item arrives at the Conference Coordinator's desk?
- A. The Conference Coordinator acknowledges receipt of the proposed agenda item and lets the sender know which of the following options is most appropriate and, if necessary, an explanation of why and how the proposed agenda item is being directed. Some of the possible routes are:
1. Forwarding to a Trustees' Committee via a G.S.O. Staff Member or Department Head;
 2. Forwarding to G.S.O.'s Publications Director or Group Services Staff person;
 3. Forwarding to A.A. World Services, Inc.;
 4. Forwarding to Chair of the General Service Board;
 5. Forwarding to the A.A. Grapevine Corporate Board/AA Grapevine Publisher.
- Q. What happens when it is unclear what committee should address a proposed item or where an item should be routed?
- A. When it is unclear where a proposed item belongs, it is most frequently forwarded to the trustees' Committee on the Conference for direction.

If a proposed agenda item does not rise to the level of a Conference action the topic could be programmed during Conference in a different way like a presentation/discussion or workshop.

This overview is general and includes many but not necessarily all of the possible routes a proposed agenda item follows in the trustee, G.S.O. and Grapevine review process. There is no “one size fits all” procedure and, on a case-by-case basis over time, there may occasionally be inconsistencies.

*Created for proposed process from 2019 Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload that includes a change in submission date - 1/19/2020

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(1) Submit a clear and concisely worded motion.

(2) What problem does this proposed item address?

(3) What level of group conscience, if any, discussed the proposed agenda item? Make it clear who is submitting the item (an individual, group, district, area, etc.).

Note: While all items are received equally, experience has shown that ideas greatly benefit from the value of a broader group conscience. Consider if and with whom you would like to have a group conscience discussion on the proposed agenda item prior to submitting.

(4) Provide background information that describes and supports the reasoning for the proposal. List background material(s) included with the proposal:

*Created for proposed process from 2019 Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload that includes a change in submission date - 1/19/2020

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(5) What are the intended/expected outcomes if this proposed item is approved?

(6) Provide a primary contact for the submission.

(7) Final comments:

*Created for proposed process from 2019 Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload that includes a change in submission date - 1/19/2020

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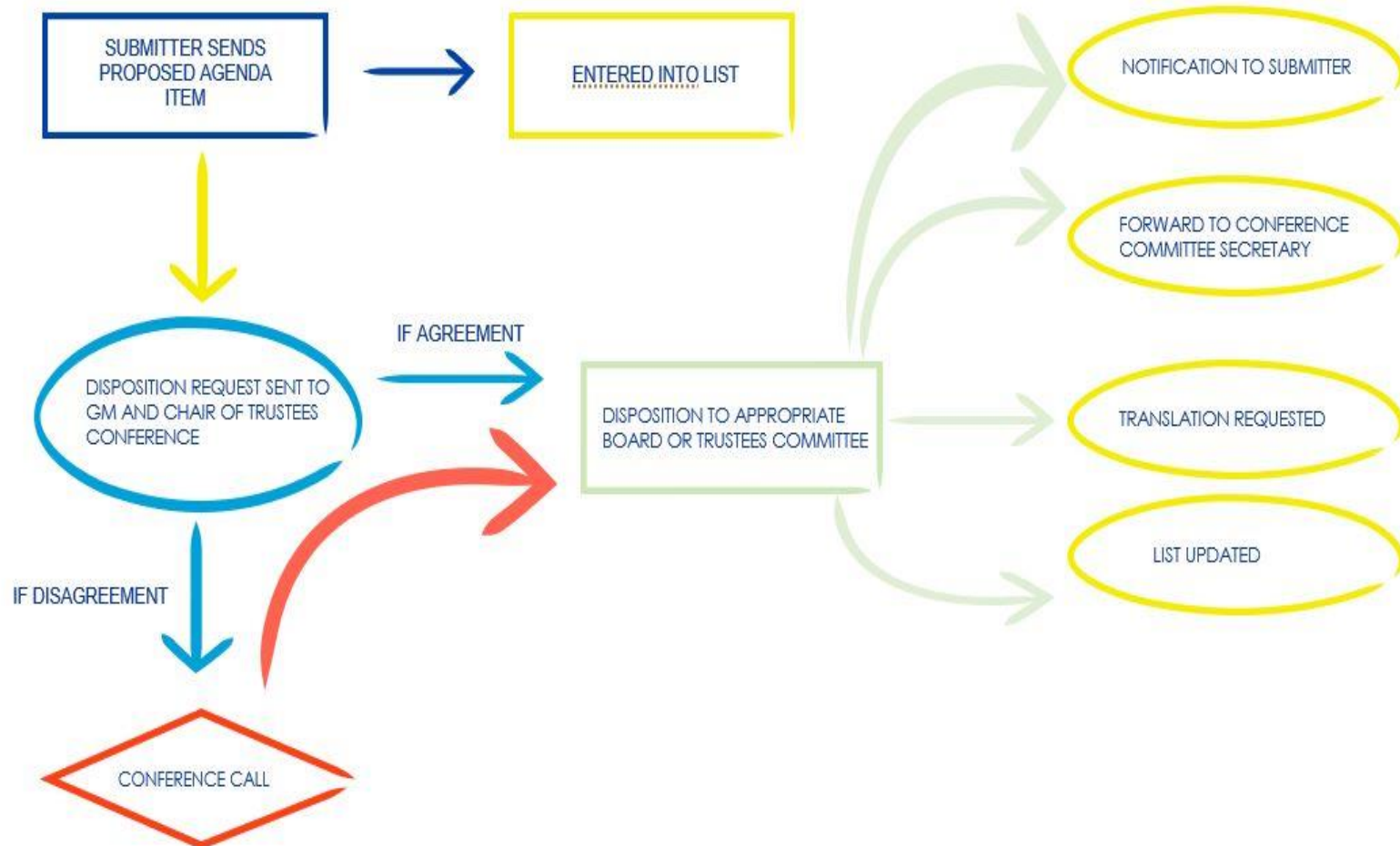
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Process Timeline & Workflows

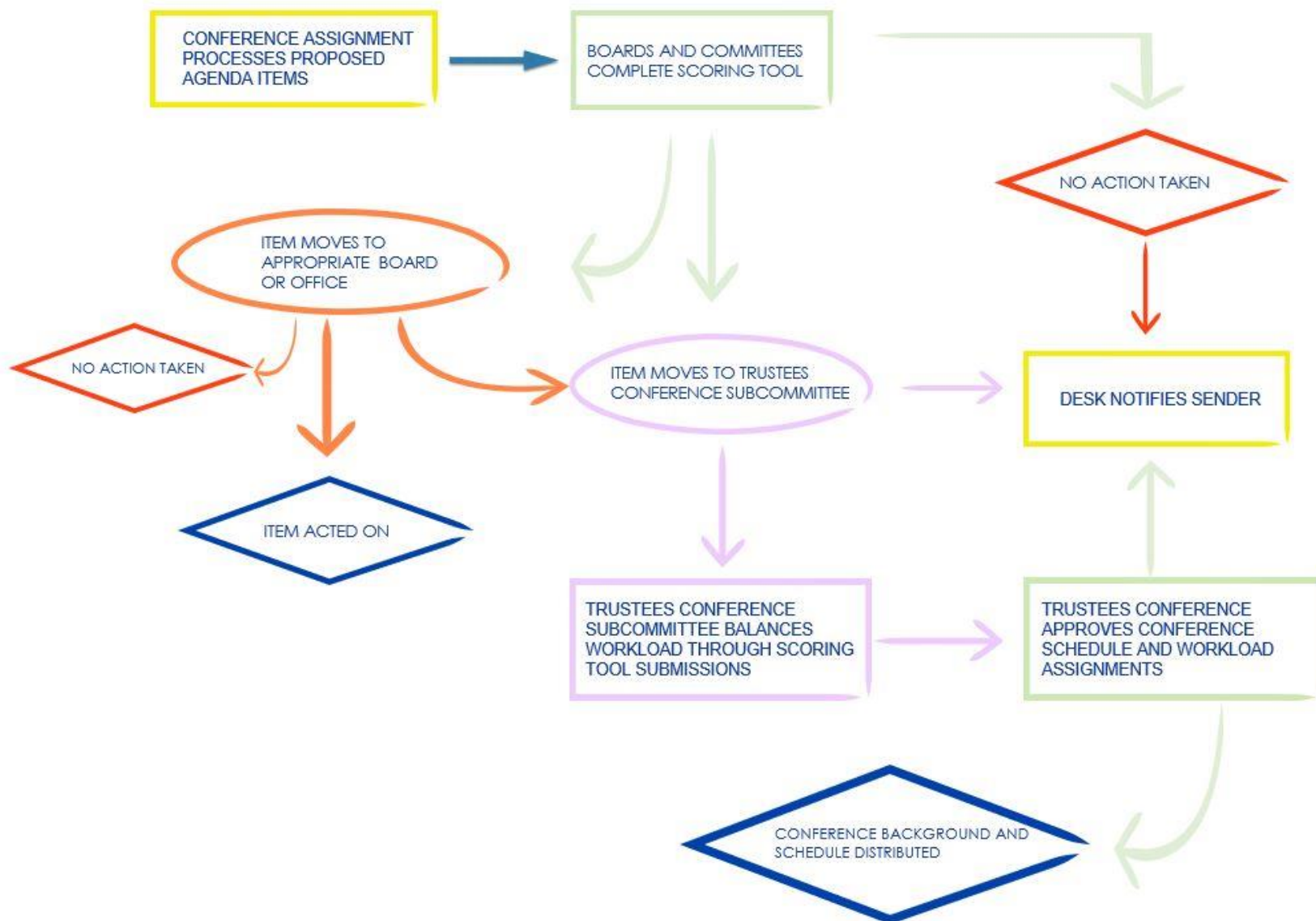
APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE			GENERAL SERVICE BOARD MEETING		NEW DEADLINE FOR PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS IS SEPT 15	GENERAL SERVICE BOARD MEETING			GENERAL SERVICE BOARD MEETING	CONSOLIDATED CONFERENCE BACKGROUND IS POSTED FEB 15	
	CONFERENCE ASSIGNMENT PROCESSES PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS			CONFERENCE ASSIGNMENT PROCESSES PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS							
			BOARD OR COMMITTEES COMPLETE SCORING TOOL			BOARD OR COMMITTEES COMPLETE SCORING TOOL			FINAL CONFERENCE AGENDA APPROVED AND POSTED		
							TRUSTEES CONFERENCE SUBCOMMITTEE WORKS THROUGH SCORING SUBMISSIONS FOR FOLLOWING CONFERENCE				
			CONFERENCE SCHEDULE DRAFT			CONFERENCE SCHEDULE DRAFT		CONFERENCE SCHEDULE DRAFT	CONFERENCE SCHEDULE APPROVED		

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CONFERENCE ASSIGNMENT PROCESSES PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS



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Scope and Procedures for TCGSC Subcommittee on G.S.C. Committee Workload

The purpose of the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference (TCGSC) Subcommittee on General Service Conference (G.S.C.) Committee Workload is to ensure that there is a reasonable attempt to distribute the workload for conference committees equitably across the standing committees. Prior to the formation of this subcommittee, little consideration has been given to the complexity and time-demand of individual agenda items. Experience shows that the number of items assigned to a committee, is itself, an insufficient indication of the workload demand on a committee during conference week.

Each agenda item is first handled by Staff assigned to the Conference desk, who assigns the item to the appropriate corporate board or trustees committee or G.S.O. department for review, in consultation with the Chair of TCGSC, and GM. This committee or board uses a scoring tool to evaluate the item and assign an estimate of the complexity and thus, time demand that each item would place on a G.S.C. committee.

What follows are procedures for the TCGSC Subcommittee to equitably distribute the workload for committees.

The TCGSC Subcommittee,

- Receives conference agenda items from designated Boards and Committees **after** the Boards and Committees have applied the scoring tool to each agenda item;
- Reviews the number of agenda items assigned to each committee,
- Tallies and analyzes the number of items for each committee **by its time estimate**,
- Reassigns agenda items from committees with excessive workloads to those with additional work capacity

Scoring Tool and Methodology: To Standardize the Evaluation of a Proposed Agenda Item

There are two ideas represented in this proposed Scoring tool and methodology:

1. The first idea is to document what the reviewing bodies evaluation process is for a proposed agenda item.
2. The second idea is to document that the evaluation takes place against a clearly defined standard which is outlined in the tool.

The Scoring Methodology:

A new Scoring tool is to be completed by the assigned appropriate reviewing trustees' committee, corporate board or G.S.O. department. The goal is for them to in make an initial determination about an individual proposed agenda item's discussion time estimation and possible routing.

Then all the completed Scoring Tools will be sent to a new trustees' Committee on General Service Conference Subcommittee for the equitable distribution of workload review, discussion and decision.

The Scoring tool:

Scoring: Below you will find an example of a completed tool. This tool is designed to facilitate the process of routing proposals.

Once a proposed agenda item is received, the first portion of the tool is completed by the Conference Assignment and forwarded along with submitter's proposal to the appropriate reviewing trustees' committee, corporate board or G.S.O. department for review and discussion.

After the cut-off date for submission of items, all proposed agenda items are reviewed, and the equitable disposition of each is decided, through assignment to the committees by a new subcommittee that would be appointed by the trustees' Committee on General Service Conference.

For illustration purposes a proposed agenda item that was not forwarded to conference is presented and evaluated.

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Proposed Conference Agenda Items Routing

Proposed Agenda Item: *Trustee committees of the General Service Board shall only be chaired by Class B Trustees.*

Reviewing Body: *Trustees Nominating Committee*

The proposed item is:

	Y	N (If checked provide reason)
Policy focused	X	
Clearly written	X	
Specific	X	
Has been previously proposed	X	No previous submission

The proposed item is submitted with rationale/background with the following elements:

The problem that this proposed item is addressing

AA's should be in charge of the future of AA.

The intended/expected outcomes if this proposed item is approved

A visible statement that the future of AA is in the hands of the Fellowship.

The unintended/unexpected outcomes if this proposed agenda item is approved

A diminished role for Class A Trustees, difficulty recruiting Class A Trustees, difficulty retaining Class A Trustees. Raises the question of why does AA need Class A Trustees?

The proposed item is submitted by: An A.A. Area Delegate

The proposed item reflects a group-conscience: Yes _____ No Unclear

Time estimate:

☐ Low ☐ Average ☒ More than Average ☐ Substantial

Possible Routing:

☐ Report & Charter	☐ Agenda
☐ Finance	☐ Literature
☒ Trustees	☐ CPC
☐ Treatment/Accessibilities	☐ Public Information
☐ Policy/Admissions	☐ Grapevine
☐ Corrections	☐ Archives
☐ Int'l Conv/Reg Forums	

Example of Equitable Workload Distribution Process

As an example of how the subcommittee might distribute items, let's look back at the 68th General Service Conference as an illustration. In that year there was a disproportionate list of agenda items for Literature compared to many of the other committees.

VI. Literature

1. Review report and suggestions on the inclusion of language related to safety in A.A. literature.
2. Review revised draft pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman."
3. Review revised draft pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic."
4. Review draft pamphlet "A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues."
5. Review revised draft pamphlet "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and its Services."
6. Review progress report and draft revised text for the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated."
7. Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet "Too Young?"
8. Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet "Young People and A.A."
9. Review matrix of A.A. recovery literature.
10. Consider request for the development of a new book combining *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* with *Twelve Concepts for World Service*.
11. Consider request to update the video "Your A.A. General Service Office, the Grapevine and the General Service Structure."
12. Consider request for revision to *Living Sober*.
13. Consider request for the development of a new pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women alcoholics.
14. Consider request to add a section on anonymity to the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship."
15. Consider request that A.A. (U.S./Canada) publish "The God Word" (a pamphlet currently published by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain).
16. Consider request for the development of a pamphlet for atheist and agnostic members.
17. Consider request for the development of a pamphlet based upon A.A.'s Three Legacies.
18. Consider request to change the subtitle of the pamphlet "G.S.R. General Service Representative: May Be the Most Important Job in A.A."

II. Cooperation with the Professional Community

1. Review the trustees' committee report regarding LinkedIn as a platform for reaching professionals.
2. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional."
3. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "Members of the Clergy Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous."
4. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "If You Are a Professional..."
5. Review contents of C.P.C. Kit and Workbook.

III. Corrections

1. Consider request to create a pamphlet for inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration.
2. Review contents of Corrections Kit and Workbook.

IV. Finance

1. Consider developing a method to standardize increases to the limits on individual contributions and bequests to the General Service Board.
2. Review Self-Support Packet.

Let's imagine that year that our newly formed standing subcommittee of Trustee's Conference might have moved some items from literature to other committees like so...

VI. Literature

1. Review report and suggestions on the inclusion of language related to safety in A.A. literature.
2. Review revised draft pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman."
3. Review revised draft pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic."
4. Review draft pamphlet "A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues."
5. Review revised draft pamphlet "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and its Services."
6. Review progress report and draft revised text for the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated."
7. Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet "Too Young?"
8. Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet "Young People and A.A."
9. Review matrix of A.A. recovery literature.

Ultimately, we moved over items that are being considered for the first time while making sure to leave WIP items that are brought back to Literature for continuity .

As none of our committees are formally populated with subject matter experts, any committee is qualified to have discussions and come to group conscience on these new requests and to present to the Conference as whole on these items.

II. Cooperation with the Professional Community

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2. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional."
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2. Review Self-Support Packet.
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2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM I: Review the report on the Conference Committee Assignment Application implemented for the 2020 Committee Selection process.

Background notes:

From the January 30, 2020 minutes of the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference

The trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference discussed a report on the newly developed Conference Committee Assignment Application implemented for the 2020 Committee Selection process. The committee agreed to forward the report to the 2021 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions for consideration.

In August 2020, the Conference Coordinator was given the green light to research a possible helpful technical tool for the Committee Selection Process: a web-based application solution. The goal was to alleviate the possibility of human error and provide for the absolute randomization of the committee selection while meeting all Advisory Action and best practice constraints. The report documents the process, cost, and shares the results.

Background:

1. Report to TGSCC on Committee Assignment Application

Report to Trustees' General Service Conference Committee
Automation of the Conference Committee Selection Process
January 25, 2021

Introduction

The trustees' General Service Conference Committee's Composition, Scope and Procedures outlines one of its key responsibilities is:

Selecting by lot, within well-established practices that account for rotation, regional mix, gender mix and committee size, the first term delegate members on each Conference committee.

In 1983, the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference recommended that the selection of Conference committee members take place in mid-December (at the time of the A.A.W.S. Board Meeting) in the presence of two trustees or members of the trustees' Conference Committee, thereby gaining one month in communication time with Conference committee members.

This is a very manual and involved process as we currently manage it.

The 1989 General Service Conference recommended the reaffirmation of a 1970 Conference Action: "Conference Committee selections continue to be by lot with the widest possible geographical distribution." It was the sense of the meeting that any other method could erode the confidence of the Conference in the committee system. (Policy and Admissions)

Note: In 1970, the Conference recommended that "The procedure for selecting Conference committee members continue to be from the hat; that no area be represented on any standing committee for more than two consecutive years; that when any state or province has more than one area, no standing committee will have more than one member from each state or province." (Policy)

In August 2020, the Conference Coordinator was given a green light to research a possible helpful technical tool for the Committee Selection Process.

A local member from Oregon communicated with the office a couple of times since 2018. Specifically, his communications were directed to Staff members on the Conference Assignment.

He shared he had developed a Committee Assignment Web Application. He let me know that a past trustee had participated in the Committee Selection Process during her tenure and that was where he had received information about the defined constraints outlined for the process.

Several video conferencing sessions later, the Conference Coordinator understood that the program is developed to a place of readiness to support the Committee Selection Process for the forty-eight incoming Panel 71 delegates. The reason this idea is pursuable now is that we will have to perform the Committee Selection Process virtually this year and our very manual process seems quite daunting to consider.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

On October 21, 2020, the Conference Coordinator presented a "Proposal to Purchase the Committee Assignment Application" to the management team and the trustees' General Service Conference Committee chair. It was well received, and it is suggested to move forward with the presentation to the full trustees' General Service Conference Committee at the October 31, 2020 meeting.

The committee reviewed a progress report on a Committee Assignment Web application as presented by the Conference coordinator, including the demonstration of a new technical tool for the Committee Selection Process. The committee noted that the tool is needed for performing the selection process virtually in December 2020. The committee agreed that utilizing the new technical tool as a solution will save time and is a necessary process improvement.

A critical goal was to successfully ensure that a change from the manual in-person process to a technical solution would satisfy all the policy requirements.

The process involved the two assigned trustees in demonstrations to fully understand that the policy requirements are intact.

Committee Assignment Application - Documentation

The Committee Assignment Application is a web service that allows the Conference Coordinator to perform the annual assignment of new delegates to primary and secondary conference committees.

It is important to note that this application's database is designed to be used to complete the conference committee assignments and does not maintain the source data on delegate assignments. This information is maintained in the MS Access database named the Conference Database. So not only can the application be used to assign delegates, but it can also be used to explore past assignments or "play around" with older panels to explore the dynamics of the assignment process.

Inputs

When the application is first set up by a developer, part of the set-up process is to add the primary and secondary committees, areas, and a list of adjacent areas to the database. These essential data elements must be loaded into the system before the application will run.

The data that users do have control over is the list of past-panel and the new-incoming panel of delegates that is loaded on the home page. We have decided that each time we need to reload the delegate data the export file will contain all delegates beginning with Panel 67 to the current incoming panel. This way we will have two full odd and even panels of delegate committee assignments for our system constraints to run against.

The application uses the data on past delegates to build a history of committee assignments for each area, which is required in evaluating one of the constraints.

Committee Assignments

General Approach

The committee assignment process is constructed as two nested loops. The inner loop is the core of the assignment process. A list of delegates is randomized, and an attempt is made to assign each delegate to a committee. To be assigned to a committee, the delegate must be validated against several constraints (discussed in detail below). Usually, the first iteration of the system process results in several delegates without an assignment because they failed to validate with strict adherence to the constraints. If this happens, another iteration of assignments is tried using only the unassigned delegates, but with slightly looser constraints. In this manner, the constraints are successively loosened with each iteration. If there are still unassigned delegates after 10 iterations, the application considers it a lost cause and gives up. This cycle of assignment iteration and constraint loosening is at the heart of the application's assignment process.

The first pass of the inner loop is treated slightly different from subsequent passes. In the initial pass of the inner loop, delegates are grouped into their regions, and the assignments are attempted in order of largest region to smallest. Because of their size, large regions are more likely to fail constraint validation checks as the committees fill up. Assigning large regions first helps minimize the constraint violations across the whole conference.

The outer loop of the process is simply a repetition of the core inner loop. Currently 10 runs of the inner loop are completed, and the best run is saved to the database and displayed to the user. In this case, "best" is defined as the run with the lowest iteration count. Because the constraints are loosened as the iteration count goes up, runs with lower iteration counts are more likely to be closer to strict adherence to the constraints and are therefore considered better. Failed runs where some delegates could not be assigned are discarded.

The process described above is generally valid for both primary committees and secondary committees (Archives and International Conference / Regional Forums), but there are some differences. Every delegate must be assigned to a primary committee whereas only some delegates are assigned to secondary committees. Both are still random assignments, but because the number of delegates far outnumbers the secondary committee slots, some of the constraints are stricter for the secondary committees (see the constraints sections below for details).

Constraint Validation

In general, the idea behind the constraints is to ensure an even distribution of delegates across committees on several advisory action and best practice criteria that include region, gender, and area history. The specific constraints are discussed in more detail below.

To allow some control over which constraints have priority over others, each individual constraint has several configurable properties that control how the constraint is loosened as the inner loop iteration count goes up. There are up to three of these properties per constraint, although the effect of the configurations varies from one constraint to another.

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- *Base value*: this controls the initial setting for the constraint and is considered the strict value.
- *Loosening threshold*: this controls when the constraint should be loosened. For instance, if this is set to 3 for a constraint, the constraint will start to be loosened on the 3rd iteration.
- *Limit*: this represents the maximum deviation from the base value that is allowed, no matter how high the iteration count gets.

The constraint validation for secondary committees functions slightly differently to primary committees. The constraint configuration for secondary committees is based on the primary committee configuration but is modified to set the adjacent area base value to 0 and the gender limit setting to 2.

The following validations are built into the system:

- Regional spread validation

This is considered the highest priority constraint, and as such is probably the least flexible. A portion of the constraint is not user-configurable, and even the part that is user-configurable has only one reasonable setting.

The non-configurable part of the constraint is that before a second delegate from any region, with eleven or more areas, can be assigned to a primary committee, all eleven primary committees must already be assigned a delegate from that region. This ensures a minimum distribution of delegates from large regions across primary committees and has the effect of never having more than one delegate from smaller regions, those with less than eleven areas, on the same committee.

- Opposite panel validation

In addition to the limit on how many delegates from the same region can be on the same committee, it is desirable to ensure that if two delegates from the same region are on the same committee, they should not be from the same delegate panel.

- Gender balance validation

The application tries to roughly mirror the overall gender ratio for a conference on each committee. There is currently no specific mechanism of accommodating delegates identifying as non-binary, but it is on the roadmap for a future system enhancement. Because the base constraint values are dependent on the overall gender ratio, the base value is not user configurable. The constraint works by using the overall conference gender ratio to calculate a starting point for the maximum number of each gender that will be allowed on a committee.

- Non-adjacent Area validation

To maximize geographic representation on committees, it is desirable to eliminate or at least limit the number Areas on a committee that share a border. A list of all the areas that share a border was created and saved.

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The application would initially prevent any delegates from adjacent areas from being on the same committee. Starting on the 6th iteration, the application would start allowing one pair of delegates from adjacent areas on the same committee.

- Prior delegate committee assignment validation

To ensure that areas can serve on different committees, a delegate from an area that has been recently assigned to a particular committee should not be assigned to the same committee for the incoming panel delegate.

After assignment

After pressing the assign button, the application will reload the page with either a message that it could not completely assign the delegates, or a success message with the number of iterations used for the best run. It will show the composition for each committee. It uses the constraint configuration saved in the database to highlight any assignments that were made by loosening the constraints. For instance, if the assignments could only be made once the adjacent areas constraint had been loosened, any committee containing delegates from adjacent areas will list which areas those were and highlight them in red. Gender ratios are listed and similarly highlighted if they are not consistent with the overall ratio. One thing to watch for is area committee history listed under a delegate's name. This indicates that the incoming delegate has been assigned to a committee more recently than is considered ideal.

Once the assignment process is completed it is possible to download an Excel file with the result of the assignments. This Excel file has three tabs.

- The "all delegates" tab contains all the delegates currently loaded into the database. This sheet will be used if the workbook is fed back into the application as a source for Delegate data.
- The "panel XX delegates" tab contains just the PersonID, PrimaryCommittee, and SecondaryCommittee columns, and only for the incoming panel that was assigned. This should be useful for uploading to the Conference MS Access database.
- The "verification grid" tab contains a matrix of committees, panels, areas, and regions. This format will be used to do some constraint validation and will be helpful for an additional manual proofing of the assignments during the committee assignment process.
- The "configuration settings" tab contains the last-used configuration settings. This is provided as documentation for the selected committee assignment since the configurations can have a significant impact on how the application functions. It can also be useful in subsequent years to remind the Conference Coordinator about how the application was set up in prior years.

Pane 71 Incoming-Delegates Results

True Panel 70 Assignment	Manual Process - In Person		Adjacent Area Issues	Gender Ratio issue?	Delegate Serve on Same Committee as Prior Delegate	Secondary Committees had Delegates on Same Committee as Prior Delegate (Archives and IC/RF)	
			17	1	1	2	
New System - Assignment # Attempt	Primary Committee Iterations	Secondary Committee Iterations	Adjacent Area Issues	Gender Ratio issue?	Delegate Serve on Same Committee as Prior	Two Delegates from Same Region and Same Panel	
1	6	7	10	2	0	0	
2	2	7	6	0	0	0	Josh E., Trustee Jimmy D., Trustee S. J., Developer Patrick C., Conference Coordinator Nay W., Conference Assistant Accepted the 2nd assignment attempt for P71. Reasoning, improved on Adjacency Area issues over 50% from Manual process of P70 and There were no Gender Ratio Issues.

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Conference Coordinator Confirmed Adjacent Area Issues			Gender Ratio Issues	
Panel 71	6	Improvement	Panel 71	0
Panel 70	17	65%	Panel 70	1
Detail on Adjacent Area issues.				
Archives: 40 and 91				
PI: 38 and 64				
Report & Charter: 33 and 84				

Summary

The selection process has developed over many years, and the institutional memory of the procedures has been carried forward by the rotation memos of staff members assigned to the Conference desk. It was an important and timely improvement this year to take a pause to develop a web-based application solution. This solution has proven to alleviate the possibility of human error and provides for the absolute randomization of the selection while meeting all Advisory Action and best practice constraints. One of our selected participating Trustees shared "I really like the randomness of what we created, and I am more than comfortable with the results. I am ecstatic about them. I personally think the cleanest approach is to avoid manual changes to keep the system random."

The other Trustee simply shared, "I reviewed the committee assignments, and it all looks good to me. What a privilege to run this first time through."

The new web application is well organized and achieves the objectives mandated by the Conference and the additional interpretations that have come into practice over the years in fulfilling the Conference directives. Phase 1 is complete. Phase 2 will be negotiated in 2021.

Cost for Phase 1 of Committee Assignment Application

Conference Committee Assigner application project estimates			
My estimate for Phase 1 application development, technical and training support.			
Description	Hour estimate	Recommended?	Hourly Rate
Application development:	50	Yes	\$55.00
* Refine existing constraint validations and encode several that were not in the original demo software.			
* Implement delegate importers and exporters			
* Write unit tests			
* Formalize constraint configuration and expose to users through the administration interface			
December 5, 2020 Demonstration of system with trustees selected to be involved in Committee Selection process	2	Yes	
December 8, 2020 Committee Selection processing	3	Yes	
Sub-total of required work to complete Phase 1	55		
Total	55		\$3,025.00

2021 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM J: Consider requests regarding participation of online groups in the General Service Structure.

Background notes:

From the January 30, 2021 meeting of the trustees Committee on the General Service Conference:

The committee agreed to forward to the 2021 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions six proposed agenda items related to the topic of online groups not affiliated with a physical meeting space having a voice and a vote in the General Service structure.

While each of the six agenda items are related to the same topic of the participation of online-only groups in the General Service structure, they are unique in how they are worded, their path to becoming an agenda item, and what if any background they have included with the submission; all have a unique way of wording the request. Each individual proposal is listed below, and the submission documentation provided is what makes up the majority of the background. In the case of, and with the help of the International assignment, a request was sent to all the General Services offices outside the U.S./Canada structure asking for any shared experience they might be able to offer regarding online groups and their participation in general service.

J.1 - Consider a request from a local district that recognizes “Online Groups” as voting members of the district and asks that the Conference take action to grant “Online AA Groups” the same privileges as “Brick and Mortar Groups”.

J.2 - That the General Service Conference consider allowing participation of all virtual groups, not affiliated with a physical meeting space, by creating a 94th Area to our Service Structure that will encompass those A.A. groups.

J.3 - Adapt the General Service structure to recognize online-only groups as official groups. Without that recognition, members have no voice and are denied access to service opportunities.

J.4 - Consider allowing Virtual or Online Groups to register under their respective district and area instead of the Online Inter group.

J.5 - Consider holding a discussion about how to give online only (virtual) meetings a voice and a vote in the General Service Structure and access to General Service Offices (GSO) services.

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J.6 - Discuss the current procedure of referring non-face-to-face Groups to an entity outside the A.A. service structure to be listed and consider creating a Traditions based policy that meets the needs of the Fellowship and its Groups.

Background documents:

1. Submitter letter District 10/Area 15
2. Submitter letter Area 51
 - a. Area 51 Additional information
 - b. Application for Additional Delegate Area (for reference)
3. Submitter letter Portland Eye Opener Group
4. Submitter letter Area 20
 - a. Area 20 Additional information
5. Submitter letter District 17 Area 72
 - a. District 17 Additional information
6. Submitter letter Tues. Night Traditions & Concepts Study Group
7. Sharing gathered from International G.S.O. offices



GENERAL SERVICE DISTRICT 10

www.district10miami.org

December 10, 2020

To the General Service Conference

District 10 Miami, South Florida Area15, voted with substantial unanimity on December 1, 2020 to forward to the 2021 General Service Conference for their information and consideration that District 10 recognizes "Online Groups" as voting members of our District and requests that the Conference take action to grant "Online AA Groups" the same privileges as "Brick and Mortar Groups".

During the beginning of the Pandemic, Groups in District 10, like groups everywhere, rushed to continue to help alcoholics get and stay sober by using online platforms (mostly using ZOOM) to continue to have AA meetings. At one point there were over 300 meetings in our District which encompasses Miami-Dade County Florida. As the pandemic and online meetings continued, the District became aware that there were meetings being held without association with any particular groups. One such online group, Early Risers, approached the District and asked how they could formally become a group and were counseled to get organized by calling a business meeting to elect officers, open a bank account, set a meeting schedule and file for a group number with the General Service Office. All of that was accomplished and a representatives from the group participated in District activities. The Group asked that they have voting ability just as other groups have. Thus began a conversation among our District, the Area 15 Panel 69 Delegate, the Area 15 Chair and the Area 15 District Chairpersons. The outcome of those discussions were that: other Districts in Area 15 had similar situations evolving in their Districts; the Area Chair agreed that online Groups would be able to vote at the next Quarterly Business meeting if they had a group number, had elected officers, held business meeting and had their meeting schedule published by the local Intergroup or Central Office; and the Panel 69 Delegate would pursue appropriate action at the Conference level. District 10 voted unanimously in November 2020 to grant the Early Risers Online Group the same privileges granted to all Groups. The Panel 71 Area Chair has agreed to continue to grant Online Groups voting ability at the Area level through our April Quarterly in hopes that the 2021 General Service Conference will provide direction on this matter.

Thus, the Early Risers Group, and other such groups throughout South Florida, have a VOICE in Alcoholics Anonymous. They will be heard at the District Level. They will be heard at the Area Level. Their voice will be included in the deliberations that our Panel 71 Area 15 Delegate brings to the 2021 Conference. District 10 asks that the Conference take immediate action to

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embrace Online Groups as they would any other Group and not prohibit their complete participation in decisions made by Alcoholics Anonymous because of the Way they wish to meet.

In Fellowship and Service with prayers for your good health and safety,
Gerry S., Chair,
District 10 Miami
Panel 69
Chair@district10miami.org

Cc: Shirley P., Delegate Panel 69 Area 15
Tom W., Delegate Panel 71 Area 15
Cary W., Chair Area 15 Panel 69
Lisa D., Chair Area 15 Panel 71
Alex V., DCM District 10 Area 15
Ric B., Chair District 10 Miami Panel 71
Erica ., General Service Representative, Early Risers Group

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POLICY/ADMISSIONS
Item J
Doc. 2

From: Katy P.
Sent: Friday, December 11, 2020 2:37 PM
To: Conference <conference@aa.org>
Subject: Re: Proposed Agenda Item Submission Deadline - December 15, 2020

Happy Friday Patrick! Thank you for the reminder. In Area 51, at our Fall Assembly October 31, we voted to propose two agenda items. I will send one to you in this email, and the second one separately.

On October 31, 2020, Area 51 voted to support the following proposed agenda item for the 71st General Service conference:

Area 51 requests that the GSC consider allowing participation of all virtual groups not affiliated with a physical meeting space by creating a 94th Area to our Service Structure that will encompass those A.A. groups.

There was much discussion, and the informed group conscience was attained with substantial unanimity. Our Area feels very strongly that the online groups need to have a voice and a vote in our service structure, and the formation of a 94th area would help accomplish that intent. I have attached the agenda item and the background that accompanied it as presented at our Fall Assembly.

I would be happy to complete the detailed application for an Additional Delegate Area, referenced in the Service Manual, if deemed necessary. Let me know about that.

Thank you for your service! And Happy Holidays to you!

In AA love and service,

Katy P.
Panel 69 Delegate ~ Area 51 NC

Area 51 requests that the GSC consider allowing participation of all virtual groups not affiliated with a physical meeting space by creating a 94th Area to our Service Structure that will encompass those A.A. groups.

Background Information:

This motion comes from District 18. Currently there is no way for a virtual group to be registered with GSO, have a group number, or a voice in AA affairs. While many of the new Zoom meetings are affiliated with face-to-face meetings, there are also virtual meetings which serve a need in AA but are not associated with a home group that has a GSO number and listing. In addition to the new meetings created in response to COVID, the On-Line Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (OIAA) has supported virtual meetings for years. Allowing them to have a GSN would ensure their voice in the AA service structure.

The OIAA Directory features 1,000+ online AA meetings worldwide, ranging from video or telephone conferences to email or chat groups in many languages, available 24/7.

Virtual groups utilize technology to conduct their meetings.

- Current technology in use includes video conference platforms such as Zoom, phone conference,

message boards, email listservs, chatrooms. As technology evolves, the tools Alcoholics use to get and stay sober will undoubtedly change.

- AA is not a place; a home group doesn't need a permanent physical address.
 - Our service manual states "the home group affords individual A.A.s the privilege of voting on issues that affect the Fellowship as a whole; it is the very basis of the service structure."

Service Manual S25

- Tradition 3 states "any two or three alcoholics may call themselves an A.A. group,

provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation."

- Providing a Group Service Number for Virtual Groups creates communication from the GSRs through the Delegate to GSO.
 - "The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group's thoughts to the district committee member and to the delegate, who passes them on to conference." Service Manual S26

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- “To assure direct and regular communication between the group and GSO, each group is assigned a service number.” Service Manual S28
 - The A.A. virtual population has grown but their voice is not heard through a Delegate.
- “If the A.A. population seems to have grown to the point where the current delegate and other trusted servants can no longer provide adequate service and communication, there may be local interest in forming a new area. In such a case, the area committee or committees involved may write to G.S.O. and request an application for an Additional Delegate Area.” Service Manual S42
- Are we including the whole fellowship when virtual groups are excluded from the service structure? Concept 1: The final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

Since all Areas are autonomous, the new Area should organize in the way that is most effective for the groups and members involved.

By allowing virtual groups to become part of the service structure, AA as a whole will benefit from the unique experiences of members that are unwilling or unable to attend traditional meetings. In addition, members that are only able to attend virtual meetings will become knowledgeable of the larger AA world and resources available to them through GSO.

"Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination." -- Bill W., The Grapevine, November, 1960

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TO: Conference Policy/Admissions Committee
General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

POLICY/ADMISSIONS

Item J

Doc. 2.b

APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL DELEGATE AREA

Please return to G.S.O. no later than January 1st preceding the General Service Conference

When completing this form, the Area may add response space as needed. Responses should be typed or printed, with clear and concise details. Inclusion of applicable dates is helpful.

Date _____

From: _____
(Area)

1. Reasons and origin of request for additional delegate area.
2. What measures has the area taken to resolve the area's specific problems short of adding an additional delegate area?

When?

What were the results of those measures?

3. Number of groups in current area: _____
4. Describe the process by which the area decided to submit this application.
 - a. Number of groups that participated in the request for a new delegate area. _____
 - (1) For _____
 - (2) Against _____
 - (3) No Opinion _____
 - (4) Comments of minority opposing new delegate area:
 - b. Past Delegates' Comments:
 - c. Regional Trustee's Comments:
5. Over the past twelve (12) months:
 - a. What was the average number of G.S.R.s present at area assemblies?
 - b. How many G.S.R.s were present at the assembly that approved this application?

6. Historical five-year A.A. growth in existing area on a yearly basis:

Groups

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Districts/Etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

7. Structure and function of existing area:

- a. List area officers
- b. List alternate area officers
- c. List standing committees
- d. Assemblies
 - (1) How often held?
 - (2) Do assemblies rotate?
 - (3) Where held over past 2 years?
- e. Area committee meetings
 - (1) How often held?
 - (2) Do area committee meetings rotate?
 - (3) Where held over past 2 years?
- f. Districts
 - (1) Number of districts in area?
 - (2) Number of active districts?
- g. District meetings
 - (1) How often held?
 - (2) Do district meetings rotate?

h. Number of active district committee members in area?

Do the DCMs assist the delegate and alternate?

In what ways?

i. When, if ever, did the area redistrict or subdivide districts?

j. Number of active GSRs in area?

8. List languages spoken in existing area.

a. In what languages are A.A. meetings held?

b. What linguistic districts are in the area?

c. How will an additional area affect any of the above?

9. Attach map of area as it now exists.

10. Attach map of proposed boundaries for each area. (Identify one area as A and one as B)

11. What criteria were used to develop the proposed boundaries?

12. Geography of existing area:

- Size (square miles)
- Terrain and effect on area, if any (mountains, desert, bodies of water, isolated areas, etc.)
- Current maximum travel distances
- Current maximum distances to assembly/committee meetings

13. Geography of proposed new areas:

A. Size (square miles)

- ° Terrain and effect on area, if any (mountains, desert, bodies of water, isolated areas, etc.)
- ° Maximum travel distances
- ° Maximum distances to assembly/committee meetings

B. Size (square miles)

Terrain and effect on area, if any (mountains, desert, bodies of water, isolated areas, etc.)

Maximum travel distances

Maximum distances to assembly/committee meetings

14. Has the existing area considered the financial impact of a new delegate area?

Describe the financial impact of a new delegate area on each resulting area.

A.

B.

15. A.A. population of existing area? (Data reported to GSO)

16. A.A. population of proposed areas?

A.

B.

17. How many groups in proposed areas?

A.

B.

18. Describe specific plan for implementing new areas.

19. Describe timetable for implementing new areas.

20. What specific problems, if any, do you anticipate in implementing the new areas?

21. Additional comments (use separate sheet of paper).

Signature _____
(Delegate) (Area)

Date _____

Request to Include Online AA Groups in the General Service Structure

Proposed Agenda Item:

Adapt the General Service structure to recognize online-only groups as official groups. Without that recognition, members have no voice and are denied access to service opportunities.

Submitters:

Two of us are former members of groups in District 5 Area 15 but have now joined the Eye Opener Online Group of Alcoholics Anonymous (<https://www.portlandeyeopener.org/WebMeeting>, Tax ID [REDACTED]), which began in Portland Oregon but is now global in membership. This online-only group has been in existence since 2016 and is a robust group in every way except that we cannot do service beyond the group level or take part in decisions that affect A.A. as a whole. We plan to remain members of this online group when the pandemic is over. The third submitter is a cofounder of the Eye Opener Online Group.

Anne H. - Anne has served as the District 5 Area 15 Literature committee chair and has and would like to continue service on a Literature Committee.

Gayle F - Gayle was a member of the District 5 Area 15 Literature committee and would now like to serve on an Accessibilities committee. Gayle created a digital newcomer packet for the groups in District 5, which was quickly copied and utilized by other districts in Area 15 and then by other Areas.

Cole B. - Cole was a cofounder of the Eye Opener Online Group and former GSR in Area 58, and is now serving as Alternate DCM for Area 58, District 9, even though he considers his homegroup to be the Eye Opener Online Group.

Justifications Based on Traditions (long form):

- **Tradition 1** - *Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole.*

Without a group ID, members of Eye Opener Online Group of Alcoholics Anonymous:

- can have no GSR
- have no voice in General Service activities and decisions
- are denied access to service opportunities beyond the group level.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Include Online Groups in General Service Structure - 12/11/2020

- **Tradition 3** - *Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group.*
 - Eye Opener of Alcoholics Anonymous has been gathering since 2016 and currently has 70-120 members gathering each day. See Appendix A.
- **Tradition 5** - *Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose - that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*
 - At the group level, the group functions well but our ability to work with corrections, accessibility, treatment, etc., is hampered.
- **Tradition 6** - *Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim.*
 - Online only groups greatly reduce the problems of money and property. With no leases to negotiate and sign, buildings to maintain, or expensive rents to pay, diversions are minimized. The cost of video conferencing accounts are often much less than building leases, leaving more money available for general service work.
- **Tradition 7** - *The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their members.*
 - Eye Opener of Alcoholics Anonymous is fully self supported with a prudent reserve. The group conscience is currently donating 90% of funds, after expenses, to GSO amounting to hundreds of dollars each month.
 - For the last couple of years we have been a leading contributor to the [Portland Deaf Access Committee](#).
 - Without a group ID, significant financial contributions cannot be recognized as coming from the group.
- **Tradition 9** - *Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best.*
 - The group has a strong commitment to operating with full respect for the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - The group has a strong service culture, with 49 daily service positions (7 people on the service team for each day of the week) that rotate every month. See the current service roster for the main room [here](#).
 - The group conducts training sessions after meetings several times a week, focussed primarily on bringing new people into AA service as quickly as possible, and on spreading the blessings of AA service around the group as evenly as possible.

- The group has a strong team of Elected Servants who begin their terms of service each January.
-
- The group uses (and helps alcoholics around the world learn to use) procedures and tools that come directly from the AA service manual, including "Sharing Sessions" for discussion of group-business issues.

Group History

If you're not familiar with the Eye Opener Online Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, here is some of why AA as whole should be open to the involvement of groups like ours in the General Service Structure:

- The group started years before the pandemic began, and was one of the first AA groups in the world to begin using Zoom, after experimenting for months with about a half-dozen other video-conferencing technologies. We are only aware of one other AA group -- the 5th Dimension Young Person's group -- that started meeting on Zoom before we did.
- Attendance before the pandemic began had already reached an average of 50 to 60 alcoholics per day. It now averages somewhere between 70 and 120 alcoholics per day.
- The group has a strong commitment to operating with full respect for the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, and within the bounds of less formal traditions hammered out on the anvil of experience by many face-to-face AA groups over decades. For example, we ask that only AA-conference-approved literature be read aloud in our meetings. We limit sharing to those with a desire to stop drinking. We strenuously discourage crosstalk. We have written procedures for dealing with safety issues, and have now built up considerable experience in dealing with them. We honor the principle of rotation in every part of our service structure. We encourage sponsorship, and make twelve side-rooms available primarily for sponsor/sponsee and committee meetings at all times.
- The Eye Opener made the transition from "meeting" to "group" long ago. It has a strong service culture, with 42 daily service positions (6 people on the service team for each day of the week) that rotate every month. You can see the service roster for the main room [here](#). The group also has a strong team of Elected Servants who begin their terms of service each January. We conduct training sessions after the meeting several times a week, focussed primarily on bringing new people into AA service as quickly as possible, and on spreading the blessings of AA service around the group as evenly as possible.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Include Online Groups in General Service Structure - 12/11/2020

- The group uses (and helps alcoholics around the world learn to use) procedures and tools that come directly from the AA service manual, including "Sharing Sessions" for discussion of group-business issues that are not yet ready to be voted on, and 3rd-Legacy Elections.
- The group has its own group-owned bank account and is formally incorporated in the State of Oregon, separately from the face-to-face Portland Eye Opener which meets at 7:00 a.m. in the basement of the First Baptist Church.
- The group has long contributed generously to other levels of AA, steadily increasing over time, and now averaging hundreds of dollars in each month's distribution of 7th Tradition contributions exceeding our prudent reserve. Most recently we distributed \$900 to GSO in one month. For the last couple of years we have been a leading contributor to the [Portland Deaf Access Committee](#).
- The group has always been unusually open and welcoming, and did not change after "Zoom bombing" made its way to meetings like ours. Instead, the group learned to deal with disruptions compassionately but effectively, and became a leader in helping other online meetings do the same.
- More than a handful of other Zoom-based AA groups have spun out of the Eye Opener Online Group, usually with encouragement and substantial support from our group. At least two of those spin-off groups are now stronger (by some measures) than the Eye Opener Online Group itself, but we remain close to them, with lots of overlapping attendance and mutual support.
- The group continues to work on better practices, particularly for creating meeting environments that are welcoming and accommodating of both those newest to AA and those with long-term sobriety in the program. As well-run online meetings can enjoy large attendance with easy accessibility, every meeting now includes a small-group breakout session that accommodates those who want to share in a less crowded but still structured setting.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

POLICY/ADMISSIONS
Item J
Doc. 4

December 12, 2020

Dear Conference Coordinator,

At the Northern Illinois Area 20's Winter Assembly on December 12, 2020, the attached Floor Motion to have the Delegate to forward a letter to the Conference Coordinator at the General Service Office with the following request: **To allow Virtual or Online Groups to register under their respective district and area instead of the Online Intergroup <https://aa-intergroup.org/>.**

This was discussed and voted on and approved by 84% of the voting members.

The motion is attached.

Respectively submitted,

Marilyn F., Area 20 Northern Illinois Delegate.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Motion: The Area 20 Registrar and Alternate Registrar motion to request that the Area Delegate forward a letter to the Conference Coordinator at the General Service Office prior to the December 15, 2020 deadline, with a request to allow Online Groups to register under their respective district and area instead of the Online Intergroup “<https://aa-intergroup.org/>”.

Background Material:

The Area 20 Registrar contacted the Records Department at the General Service Office to determine what process is used to register virtual meetings. The following response was received:

“As you are aware, our structure encompasses the U.S. and Canada. Because online groups and meetings are by nature international, they are not listed as regular groups in G.S.O.s records. Whether an bunch of alcoholics meeting online consider themselves a group is up to them, as laid out in the Third Tradition (any two or three alcoholics...).

In keeping with a 2006 General Service Conference Advisory Action, G.S.O. provides contact information for online groups and meetings that request us to have this information:

Online meetings listed in A.A. directories under “ONLINE MEETINGS” continue to be listed with an e-mail contact address only, in keeping with the 1997 General Service Conference recommendation that: On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the “International Correspondence Meetings” in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as “mail” contact.”

This information is provided in the A.A. Directories in a special section titled ““Online Meetings/Online Groups.” The Online A.A. Intergroup is also listed in our records and in the A.A. Directories.

Area 95 is sort of a catchall area in our records system. It was created for any individual or entity which has a record in our system, but that isn’t part of the U.S./Canada general service structure. It includes international G.S.O.s, World Service Meeting delegates, intergroup/central offices, online and phone meetings, etc.

G.S.O.’s listing of online groups and meetings is not comprehensive. A much more complete list can be found through the Online A.A. Intergroup: www.aa-intergroup.org. An online group or meeting can be listed with either or both entities.”

When a New Group Form from an online meeting in District 28 was received, it was forwarded to the records department at GSO requesting that they process the new group form and that although this group is only meeting virtually right now we would like to register it under Area 20 and not an online meeting. We received the following response from the Group Services coordinator.

“The Records Department forwarded your email to me. It would be helpful for us to know more about this. First off, has District 28 discussed this and approved having this group participate in the district? And likewise, has Area 20 discussed this and approved having this group participate in the area?”

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

As many groups were forced to go virtual, new online groups were formed. We feel that each group should have the option of continuing to be a part of the service structure in the district and area that they reside.

The AA Group:

1. The AA Group registers with the General Service Office (GSO) and assigned a group number.
2. The AA Group receives a complimentary handbook and a small supply of literature at no charge when it registers with the GSO.
3. The AA Group provides a strong bond between the AA member and the Fellowship.
4. The AA Group has a General Service Representative (GSR) and Alternate that is the group's link with the General Service Conference via the district and area.
5. The AA Group is the shared experience and voice of AA's collective conscience.

The Online Intergroup:

1. The Online Intergroup is a service entity.
2. The Online Intergroup operates outside of the service structure and does not have representation at the General Service Conference.
3. The online Intergroup maintains their own online meeting information.
4. The Online Intergroup identify members as voting or non-voting members of the online intergroup.
5. The Online Intergroup is self-supporting through voluntary contributions of its members.

As it says in Concept I:

The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

The A.A. Group — the Final Voice of the Fellowship

"Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside down organization because "the ultimate responsibility and final authority for world services resides with the groups — rather than with the trustees, the General Service Board or the General Service Office in New York."

"Twelve Concepts For World Service Illustrated"

Advisory Actions relating to Online Groups

2005 Advisory Action recommended that:

Online meetings in languages in addition to English, French and Spanish be listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" with the meeting language indicated next to the listing and in accordance with the 1997 Conference Advisory Action that:

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the "International Correspondence Meetings" in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

Online meetings listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" continue to be listed with an e-mail contact address only, in keeping with the 1997 General Service Conference recommendation that:

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the “International Correspondence Meetings” in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as “mail” contact.

2008 Advisory Action recommended that:

The Online Intergroup of A.A. (OIAA) be listed in a new section titled “Online Intergroups” under the section “International Correspondence Meetings” in the A.A. Directories above where “Online Meetings” appear; the listing will include the online intergroup Web site and e-mail addresses.

The statement “This Directory is not to be used as a mailing list or for any form of solicitation or commercial venture” that appears on the cover of A.A. Directories be made significantly more prominent, e.g. use borders, larger type face, etc. (Rescinded by Floor Action)

The Advisory Action of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter, Item B2, which recommended that the statement: “This directory is not to be used as a mailing list or for any form of solicitation or commercial venture” that appears on the cover of A.A. Directories be made significantly more prominent, e.g. use borders, larger type face, etc., be rescinded. (Floor Action)

2016 Advisory Action recommended that:

The category title “Online Meetings” be changed to “Online Meetings/Online Groups” on page vi and vii in the A.A. Directories.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol H.
Area 20 Panel 70 Registrar
Cell:
registrar@aa-nia.org

Rob M.
Area 20 Panel 70 Alternate Registrar
Cell:
alt-registrar@aa-nia.org

Mailing Address: PO Box 524, Crystal Lake, IL 60039-0524

From: AREA DCM17 <dcm17@area72aa.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 5:07 PM
To: Conference <conference@aa.org>
Subject: District 17 (NW Seattle in Area 72) Agenda Item Request for 71st GSC to Consider

Hi Patrick,

Thank you for your direction and for past GSO Staff member Doug R. guidance (on behalf of Pacific Regional Correspondent at GSO Rick W.) to District 17.

District 17 of Area 72 (NW Seattle) requests that the 71st General Service Conference (GSC) to be held in the spring of 2021 consider holding a discussion about how to give online only (virtual) meetings a voice and a vote in the General Service Structure and access to General Service Offices (GSO) services.

Although our area is being cautious and waiting another year to bring the matter through a full year of quarterly discussions at the Area level, District 17 and Area 72 have done significant work on the subject already in 2020. In our additional material you will find:

(1) Summary of District 17's Rationale for its Request for an Online Meeting Discussion Topic at the 71st GSC (pp 1-3), **Timeline** (pp 4-5) & **Supporting Information** from District 17 Meetings, discussions, informed group consciences and DCM and Alt DCM presentations to Area Committee and Discussions at Area 72 July Quarterly, Pre-Conferences, Annual Assembly and 5 months work of an Ad Hoc Committee (pp 6-33) in PDF and Word.

(2) Area 72 Ad Hoc Committee Report dated October 2020

I understand that our Panel 69 Delegate Alan F may have already shared the October 2020 Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Online Meetings with AAWS (Recommendation 1 of the Report). To be sure that GSO has it, a copy of the Area 72 Ad Hoc Committee Report on Online Only Meetings is also attached in PDF. Portions of this report are included in District 17's supporting information.

Thank you for all you do to serve us! Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions that you have for District 17. I wish you all GSO staff a Healthy, Safe and Happy Holiday Season!

Yours in Service,

Karen S.

DCM District 17 (NW Seattle)
in Area 72 Western Washington
dcm17@area72aa.org

71st General Service Conference - Proposed Agenda Item

Discussion Topic by District 17 (NW Seattle) for Consideration

District 17 (Northwest Seattle) of Area 72 (Western Washington) requests that the 71st General Service Conference (GSC) include a discussion topic to address the following challenge:

The AA General Service Structure as described in the Service Manual is geographically based and does not allow online-only meetings to participate in the General Service Structure.

Online-only meetings are without either a voice or a vote in the AA General Service Structure and cannot access services from the General Services Office (GSO).

Given the sudden proliferation of online-only meetings and their very likely continuation beyond the duration of the global coronavirus pandemic, and given the real potential to better serve a broad range of populations through online-only meetings, it seems urgent that GSC amend AA's General Service structure to allow online-only meetings to participate in General Service and benefit from GSO's services and support. Service Concept Four states that "At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional "Right of Participation," allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge." To do that, GSO needs to provide a clear (and clearly communicated) means by which online-only groups can register and participate in the General Service Structure.

History: Online-only meetings are not a momentary phenomenon. AAs have been meeting online for 25 years. The Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (OIAA) directed Area 72's Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee to an article in Grapevine entitled, "How do cyber meetings act like F2F AA meetings?" (AA Grapevine, **May 1996**), whose author raises the same questions we ask today:

"Questions facing online groups are: Are they to be registered at GSO as face to face meetings are? How do online meetings fit into the existing service structure? GSO does not register online meetings at present.One anonymous online argues that online entities are indeed groups and that "it is up to my home group and my online group to determine whether they meet the definition of an AA group as established by the Forty-First General Service Conference and as reflected in the service manual." He continues: "AAs communicate in a vast variety of ways: F2F, TDD for the deaf, correctional facilities mail, telephone, Loners and Internationalists, and now online. *What's important is that we share our experience, strength, and hope, and stay sober--not how we communicate. [emphasis added]*"

Proliferation: Not only are the vast majority of AA's attending online meetings during the pandemic because their in-person home group is not able to meet face-to-face and has shifted to online, thus normalizing online meetings, COVID-19 has brought about a veritable super-bloom of new meetings that are online-only.

Using Area 72 as an example:

- Pre-COVID-19, Area 72 had NO online-only meetings.

- Pre-COVID-19, 3,553 meetings were listed on Area 72's website, www.area72aa.org. In the early months of the pandemic (March to early July), 28% of those groups formed online meetings -1000 groups are meeting online.
- In Area 72, at least 53 online-only meetings were discovered to have formed in four months, between March 6 to early July 2020.

Looking at OIAA as a broader reference, Pre-pandemic, OIAA listed 175 online-only groups. From the start of the pandemic thru August 2020, OIAA's online-only list topped 1,700 virtual meetings. *This is a ten-fold increase in four months.* As of Dec 13, OIAA reports the following regarding online meetings currently listed in the OIAA Directory:

- 3,000 online meetings
- Zoom-enabled meetings estimated at 2,750
- 17 languages, 21 Countries

AAWS Technology Committee has fielded dozens of queries about online-only meetings and has been talking about this issue. Their so far informal discussions have touched on two ideas:

- (1) Have virtual groups geographically anchored and send GSRs to local district meetings, thus folding those groups into the current service structure
- (2) Create a virtual area for the US/Canada region that would conduct all business virtually and send one delegate in person to the annual General Service Conference.

Breadth of Service and Outreach: Online-only meetings or groups offer vital connection and support to elderly or immune-compromised people, people in remote communities, homebound or time-bound people, and provide the opportunity to attend meetings in myriad languages, time zones, and flavors.

They offer a more comfortable avenue of entry to young people who are tech natives, and people who may be intimidated by (or entirely averse to) in-person meetings. This seems clear from OIAA numbers (again, 12/13/2020):

- OIAA website currently averages over 22,000 views a day, with that number growing
- 650,000 visitors a month

Online meetings/groups also offer entirely new opportunities to reach alcoholics in treatment centers and potentially in corrections facilities.

Further, they pose a viable alternative for groups struggling to meet rising in-person meeting costs such as rent and insurance.

Proposal for GSC

We look to GSC to explore the pros and cons for options to integrate online-only meetings into and then define a clear path that meets the needs beyond our area and even our region.

As the discussion moves forward in the GSC, we ask that the GSC consider **Tradition Four**, which states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or

A.A. as a whole." Online-only groups' potential in service and outreach has a *profound* effect on the evolution of A.A. as a whole.

As well, please consider **Service Concept Four**, which states that "At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional "*Right of Participation*," allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge." This Concept fairly demands that GSO reach out to online-only groups to give them a voice in the process of determining a solution to this issue, which in some sense transcends limited geographical units like "District" or "Area."

We understand that other Areas are also seeking solutions and submitting their requests and/or specific motions to address this issue. We wish to add District 17's (NW Seattle's) voice to the upswell of voices urgently requesting this change from the GSC in the AA Service Structure and GSO's policies and practices. We are willing to participate in any ad hoc committee exploration at the GSC and/or GSO committee level.

As Bill W wrote in the November 1960 issue of the AA Grapevine:

"A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches [...] Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination."

Contact: Area 72 District 17 DCM at email address: **dcm17@area72aa.org**
(current DCM Karen S, 2019-2020, Panel 69 and incoming DCM Seonaidh D 2021-2022, Panel 71)

Attachments:

Please note that we included a brief timeline of the actions within District 17 and Area 72 in 2020. The second attachment provides supporting and background information from Area 72 including an Ad Hoc Committee on Online Only Meetings created after District 17 brought the matter for discussion to Area 72's July 2020 Quarterly.

District 17 submits this Area 72 information and documentation to support District 17's request.

- 1) Timeline of District 17 and Area 72 Exploration of Online-Only Meetings in 2020 (pp 4 and 5)
- 2) Brief Summary, Area 72 Ad Hoc Committee on Online Meetings (including documents gathered and presented in reverse chronological order) (pp 6-ff)
 - a) Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee Reference Sheet (November 15, 2020)
 - b) Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee Report (presented at Area 72's October 2020 General Assembly and published in the November 2020 issue of the Area 72 Newsletter)
 - c) The 2020 Area 72 Assembly Online Only Meeting Presentation and Discussion Topic #3 Remarks (group comments are in Area Assembly minutes and available upon request)
 - d) Six Pre-Assemblies Discussion Summary Notes on Online Meetings from Area 72's six pre-assemblies – includes general feedback, benefits, concerns and possible solutions
 - e) Area 72 July 2020 Quarterly Introduction of the discussion topic by District 17 to the Area Committee at the July Quarterly (group comments are in Area Quarterly minutes and available upon request)
 - f) The original District 17 agenda item discussion topic presented and discussed at June 11, 2020 meeting (district minutes available upon request)
 - g) District 17's Initial correspondence to/from GSO (June 11/ June 15, 2020)
 - h) GSO Archives: History, Actions and Discussions: Listing Online Meetings/Groups and General Service Structure (September 2020)

2020 Timeline of District 17 and Area 72 Exploration of Online-Only Meetings

- June 11, 2020 at the District 17 Meeting, District 17 members discussed the fact that online-only meetings are springing up but are not currently able to engage in the General Service structure, which is geographically based. District unanimously votes to request that it be raised as a possible discussion topic at the July quarterly:
“How can Area 72 optimize the ongoing use of online only meetings and give participants who can only participate in online only meetings a voice in the service structure?”
- July 11, 2020 at the July Area Quarterly, the Area Committee discussed District 17’s discussion topic:
“How can Area 72 incorporate online only meetings, those without a physical address, and provide homegroup members of online only meetings a voice in the AA Service Structure while supporting and ensuring that online only meetings are able to carry out our primary purpose?”
- After the Area July Quarterly, the Area 72 Chair created an ad hoc committee to investigate the need in our area and appointed the Alt DCM of District 17 to Chair the Committee. The Ad Hoc committee is composed of GSRs, Alt DCMs, DCMs, and other district positions, together representing 14 districts (2, 4, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 28, 32, 39, 44, 46, and 57), as well as area appointeds, area electeds, and past delegates. They researched history and conducted outreach to online meetings to ask about their future, their interest in being part of the service structure, etc.
- October 3, 2020 the Area 72 Assembly, the Area body discussed the following topic from the July Quarterly along with information gathered by the Ad Hoc Committee:
“How can Area 72 incorporate online only meetings, those without a physical address, & provide homegroup members of online only meetings a voice in the AA Service Structure while supporting & ensuring that online only meetings are able to carry out our primary purpose?”

The ad hoc committee made four recommendations:

1. The Delegate share a copy of the Ad Hoc Committee report and work of the ad hoc committee to the AAWS chair in response to his interest in learning more about what Area72 thinks about this topic
2. Area 72 request that GSO find a solution to this issue of lack of inclusion into the service structure during the 71st GSC in 2021
3. Area 72 create a new virtual district, similar to a linguistic district, to serve the unique needs of online only groups (not hybrid groups)
4. The Online Meeting Ad Hoc Committee continue through the end of this rotation to incorporate feedback from today's body and report additional findings at the January 2021 Quarterly

- Before October 3, 2020, a group's GSR provided a floor motion and background information to the Area Chair and the materials were posted on the Area website along with other materials for the 2020 Annual Area 72 Assembly. The floor motion asked Area 72 to create a virtual district (recommendation #3 in the Ad Hoc Committee report, above). The floor motion was the last item on the Assembly agenda and at 12:40 AM on October 4 the Area body majority voted to postpone the discussion of the floor motion until the Area 72 January 2021 Quarterly.
- November 12, 2020, because of the outcome of the Assembly and not wanting its original work to languish for a year, the District 17 DCM included the matter on the November 12, 2020 district agenda. District 17 discussed what occurred at the Assembly and voted to move forward and DCM called for volunteers for a committee to draft a request for GSC to consider how to resolve the urgent issue. The committee agreed to bring their proposal back to the district for an informed group conscience vote on the proposal at its December 2020 business meeting.
- December 10, 2020 the District 17 committee presented a recommendation to submit the issue of online only meetings inability to participate in the General Service Structure as a discussion item rather than a motion. They provided a two-page framework, to which they are adding a timeline. District 17 unanimously voted to approve the two-page framework and timeline. The DCM is to submit the revised district's request for an online meeting discussion item (and not as a motion) to GSO for consideration to be placed as an agenda item on the 71st GSC. The deadline for submission to GSO is December 15th.
- December 10, 2020 DCM17 shared the district meeting agenda/discussion with current Area leadership and the Area Alt Delegate (and incoming Area 72 Delegate Panel 71) asked the DCM to provide District 17's submission to GSO for GSC Consideration to all of the incoming Area 72 electeds and DCM17 agreed to follow-up.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS for
DISTRICT 17 (NW Seattle)'s
REQUEST for
ONLINE MEETINGS DISCUSSION ITEM on
AGENDA of
71ST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

BRIEF SUMMARY OF
AREA 72
AD HOC COMMITTEE WORK

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee Reference Sheet

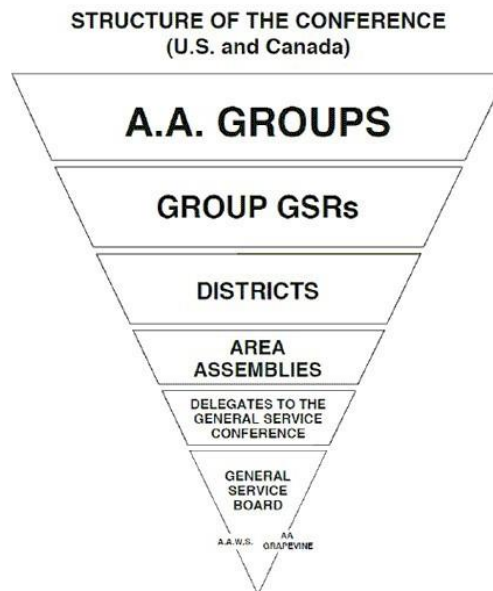
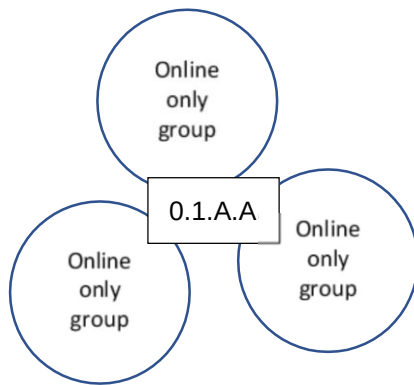
(as of 11.15.2020)

Mission: The Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee was created at the July 2020 Area 72 Business Quarterly following a presentation by District 17 to investigate the need for inclusion of online only meetings into the general service structure. The Ad Hoc committee will continue to meet bi-weekly through the end of the year. The committee researched the issue and concluded that there is a desire and need in Area 72 for online only groups to be included into the service structure. Following discussion at the October 2021 Area 72 Assembly, the Ad Hoc Committee recognized a need for clarity around this. The aim of this document was drafted to provide clear information for General Service Representatives, District Committee Members, and all A.A. members.

Goal: Provide possible solutions for online-only groups (not hybrid groups or brick and mortar groups temporarily online) that want a voice in the General Service structure, namely through election of a G.S.R. to represent their group within the district and area structure.

Issue: Online-only groups are not represented within the General Service Conference.

At present, listing an online group with G.S.O. only provides the group with a customer ID number (for tracking 7th tradition contributions) but does not provide a group ID number (which designates that group as part of the general service structure). Online groups are associated with the fictitious Area 95 for record keeping only and encouraged to connect with the Online Intergroup (O.1.A.A.) if they want to be listed and part of this international intergroup.



Online Only Groups that want to exercise their Right of Participation and communicate within the general service structure are not able to and are instead encouraged to register with the Online Intergroup of A.A. and have an intergroup representative instead.

Choice of Virtual Platforms is not part of this issue: An online group may use whatever tool(s) they wish. Zoom is a commonly used tool, but other connection modes are also being used.

For the purpose of this document, we offer the following definitions:

G.S.O.:	General Service Office in New York City, NY
A.A. Meeting:	Any gathering of alcoholics focused on recovery from alcoholism
A.A. Group in General Service:	A meeting that has received a group number from G.S.O., which has a physical meeting address, and assigned district and Area numbers. They may or may not have a General Service Representative (GSR) who attends meetings at the Area and District levels.
Hybrid Meeting or Group:	A meeting or group that streams their physically located meeting virtually for simultaneous participation.
Online Only Group:	Any virtual group with no physical or hybrid connection <i>that wants involvement in general service</i>
A.A. District:	A geographic area coordinating a collection of groups, as well as linguistic districts; however, online only groups are excluded
Area :	A section of the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico coordinating a collection of districts and represents the groups at the general service conference; 93 Areas at present
Intergroup/Central Office:	An office representing a collection of meetings and groups providing services for meetings and groups for literature distribution, web sites, schedules, call centers, etc. and can represent anything from a single district to a metropolitan area

Recommendations of Ad Hoc Committee to Assembly Body and Responses:

1. The Delegate share a copy of this report and work of the ad hoc committee to the AAWS chair in response to his interest in learning more about what Area72 thinks about this topic: *The Delegate plans to email the AAWS chair*
2. Area 72 request that GSO find a solution to this issue of lack of inclusion into the service structure during the 71st GSC in 2021: *A motion about this would need to be made by an individual, group, or district by December 15th*
3. Area 72 create a new virtual district, similar to a linguistic district, to serve the unique needs of online only groups (not hybrid groups): *Floor motion at October Assembly to create an online district in Area 72 was not discussed it will be an agenda item for discussion at the January Quarterly . As a result of the discussion, a motion may be created, and if passed at a Quarterly meeting, then it would be placed on the agenda at the Area Assembly in 2021.*
4. The Online Meeting Ad Hoc Committee continue through the end of this rotation to incorporate feedback from today's body and report additional findings at the January Quarterly: *The committee will meet 5 times between the Assembly and the end of December to further this research and exploring additional options.*

Resources:

GSO pamphlet, [P-16, The A.A. Group...where it all begins:](#)

"Is There a Difference Between a Meeting and a Group?

"Most A.A. members meet in A.A. groups as defined by the long form of our Third Tradition (see page 44). However, some A.A. members hold A.A. meetings that differ from the common understanding of a group. These members simply gather at a set time and place for a meeting, perhaps for convenience or other special situations . The main difference between meetings and groups is that A.A. groups generally continue to exist outside the prescribed meeting hours, ready to provide Twelfth Step help when needed."

GSO pamphlet [P-19, G.S.R. General Service Representative:](#)

'You transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of "the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship," as expressed in the General Service Conference.'

GSO other material [F-12, Your D.C.M. District Committee Member:](#)

"The heart of A.A . is the group, which elects a general service representative (G.S.R.). The G.S.R. attends district meetings that are made up of the groups in that district. The G.S.R.s elect a district committee member (D.C.M .). Thus, the D.C.M. is the vital link between the group's G.S.R., and the area service structure, including the area's delegate to the General Service Conference."

GSO service material [SMF-129, Structure of the Conference](#)

Upside down triangle image

Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee Report

Area 72 Assembly

October 2020

Ad Hoc Committee Members

The committee is composed of GSRs, Alt DCMs, DCMs, and other district positions, together representing 14 districts (2, 4, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 28, 32, 39, 44, 46, and 57), as well as area appointeds, area electeds, and past delegates from panels 59 and 61. Specific members include Lisa S (chair), Jack J (secretary), Lupita Y-M (technology host), Angel GR, Crystal S, Dale B, Dave T, Eric S, Frank M, Geene, Jordan L, Juan MV, Keith M, Kristee M, Lee R, Linda L, Meghan K, Karen S, Noah, Patty S, Thomas L, Will L, Geoff, Peeps, Andrea Z, and David G.

Formation of the Ad Hoc Committee

The ad hoc committee was formed on July 11, 2020 at the Area 72 July Quarterly by the Area Chair, Heather. Alt DCM 17, Lisa S, was appointed the ad hoc committee chair.

Purpose of the Ad Hoc Committee

This committee was formed to investigate the discussion question *"How can Area 72 incorporate online only meetings, those without a physical address, and provide homegroup members of online only meetings a voice in the AA Service Structure while supporting and ensuring that online only meetings are able to carry out our primary purpose?"*

Specifically, the committee aimed to answer the following questions:

- "What need does this serve?"
- "Is there really a problem?"
- "Is this actually a different problem?"
- "What are different options that would help solve the problem?"

Additionally, the ad hoc committee would allow those who have had experience with the same or similar issue to share how that situation was handled and whether there are details around the topic that are historically recorded but possibly mostly unknown by the current body.

Ad Hoc Committee Meetings Overview Summary

Since the July 11, 2020 creation of the ad hoc committee, five meetings were held on the virtual platform Zoom. Committee meetings took place on July 26th, Aug 9th, Aug 23rd, Sept 6th and Sept 20th and totaled 9.5 hours of focused discussion.

Members of the committee attempted to attend 56 online meetings, targeting the 53 meetings that had been designated as online only on websites of Intergroups and CSOs in early July and adding a few extra since not all CSOs or district websites stated whether or not the meeting was truly online only. The committee sought to collect information regarding whether those groups currently meeting online intended to return to face-to-face meetings, to adopt an online and physical presence (hybrid meetings) or continue online only after the end of

pandemic restrictions. Additionally, committee members hoped to hear whether groups knew of and desired to participate in general service.

Investigation of Need/ Outreach to Online Meetings

The table below demonstrates the outcome of the outreach by commit members. 11 of the 56 assigned meetings (20%) could not be accessed due to an incorrect website link, missing password, or no host present. Of the 45 meetings they did attend (100%), 18 meeting (42%) members said that they would not be staying online after the pandemic ends. The remaining 26 meetings {58%} were either planning to stay online or had not decided with certainty. Of those 26 remaining groups, 12 groups (27%) said they might be online only, 5 meetings {11%} reported that they would be going hybrid, and 9 meetings (20%) said that they were probably staying online and 7 of the groups {16%} said that they wanted to be involved with a district and general service.

Online Groups Attempted to Attend	56	100%
Bad Password, Link, No Host	11 <i>this number will be removed from the count</i>	(20%)
Attended Meetings	45 <i>new adjusted total</i>	100%
Not staying Online post-COVID	19	42%
Might be online only	26	58%
Undecided about which online format	12	27%
Going hybrid	5	11%
Probably staying online	9	20%
Wants involvement with District and General Service	7	16%

The first two sessions were focused on reviewing background data, assigning tasks to gather more information, and dividing up suspected online only groups for committee members to visit and survey. Most discussions were enlivened by reports from the six Pre-Assemblies held in August. The Discussion Topic was presented at each Pre-Assembly by the committee chair. Raw capture of those discussions was made, compiled, and distributed to committee members for summary (see pp. 4-6).

Consistent experience of committee members was that social media pages, central offices, and intergroups too often posted misinformation for online group meetings, which complicated surveying 20% of attempted group visits. Already out-of-date links and changed or not posted passwords are just two barriers to gaining a stronger pulse on the desire for general service by members of online groups. Members researched ways that the General Service Office in NY registers online groups; the history of online groups (see attachment at end of this document); and compiled spreadsheets to track the attended meetings and feedback. Members reached out to other Areas and to general and elected servants across the country.

Throughout the committee discussions, similar to the issues raised at Pre-Assemblies, are questions as age-old and ever-present as any in Alcoholics Anonymous: what constitutes a group, what differentiates meetings from groups, and how can we reach the still suffering alcoholic? How does the Right of Participation tie into this situation? Was there a demonstrated need? We discussed the quick mobilization to online meetings in the

response to the pandemic limitations. For some, the unexpected efficient urgency highlights the need to act quickly to form a virtual district within Area 72 to allow current and future servants of online groups an opportunity to be in service to the fellowship.

Acknowledging the cautious history of the General Service Office, mandated in the Service Manual written by Bill W., members discussed the role of the Ad Hoc committee to research and bring to the larger body of the assembled General Service Representatives ideas, pros and cons, and determined that there exists a stated need for inclusion.

The ad hoc committee would like to offer 4 recommendations based on our findings thus far. We acknowledge that today's assembly discussion will provide a wealth of understanding regarding the extent of the need and are eager to hear what the body thinks about this topic.

Recommendations

The Online Meeting Ad Hoc Committee recommends the following 4 actions:

1. The Delegate share a copy of this report and work of the ad hoc committee to the AAWS chair in response to his interest in learning more about what Area72 thinks about this topic
2. Area 72 request that GSO find a solution to this issue of lack of inclusion into the service structure during the 71st GSC in 2021
3. Area 72 create a new virtual district, similar to a linguistic district, to serve the unique needs of online only groups (not hybrid groups)
4. The Online Meeting Ad Hoc Committee continue through the end of this rotation to incorporate feedback from today's body and report additional findings at the January Quarterly

Thank you, Heather.

Hi everyone. My name is Lisa and I serve as the Alt DCM for District 17 and the Chair of the Online Meetings Ad Hoc Committee. I am very excited to share the work that our committee has done.

Our ad hoc committee was formed by our Area Chair after rich discussions took place during the July 11th Area Quarterly. Our committee is comprised of 26 Area members including GSRs, Alt DCMs, DCMs, other district positions, area electeds, and area appointeds. It would have been 27 members had I not misplaced the contact information of one person. The committee was formed to investigate discussion topic #3.

Our focus and purpose have been to identify and quantify the need for inclusion of Area 72s online only meetings into our service structure. If a need was identified, then we would consider the pros and cons of possible solutions. We also sought to understand the history of this topic and experience of others with this or similar issues.

Committee members attempted to attend and survey all 53 virtual meetings that were specified as "online only" on intergroup or CSO websites by the end of June, plus a few other online meetings. In total, we attempted to attend 56 meetings.

20% of those meetings were not reachable due to incorrect website links, lack of contact information to obtain passwords, or no hosts to start the meeting.

We were able to attend and gather feedback from members of 45 online meetings. We learned that:

- 19 of those groups did not plan stay online post-COVID.
- 12 meetings were undecided about whether they would go hybrid or stay online only.
- 5 meetings indicated that they planned to take a hybrid format.
- And 9 meeting representatives said they planned to remain online only.

That means that nearly 50% of all 45 meetings attended planned to stay online in some capacity.

The main point of observation we discovered was that 7 of the 45 meetings, or 16% of those surveyed, said that they wanted involvement with a district and in General Service. We have learned of other new online only groups that have formed since the initial list was created.

The committee discussed the expressed desire for participation from those groups surveyed, the Right of Participation from Concept IV, and comments made at the mic from participants at each of the 6 pre-assemblies. The end result was that the committee saw a need to find a way to include online groups so that the voices of those members could be included in our Area's group conscience.

We then began to talk about pros and cons regarding possible solutions and reached out to other areas to see how they were responding to similar situations.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

We confirmed with GSO that currently physically located groups and by extension hybrid groups, would be recognized as part of the service structure and provided a group ID number. In contrast, those meetings without a physical address would be provided a customer ID number and placed in the fictitious Area 95, which is merely a designation in their system that the group is online.

We also learned that 2 other areas planned to submit motions that GSO find a way for inclusion of online groups into the service structure. A different area has been envisioning what a virtual area could look like.

After reviewing the history of online meetings, the current practice of GSO to exclude online only meetings from the general service structure, and the identified need in our Area, we recommend the following 4 actions:

1. The Delegate share a copy of this report and work of the ad hoc committee to the AAWS chair in response to his interest in learning more about what Area 72 thinks about this topic
2. Area 72 request that GSO find a solution to this issue of lack of inclusion into the service structure during the 71st GSC in 2021
3. Area 72 create a new virtual district, similar to a linguistic district, to serve the unique needs of online only groups (not hybrid groups)
4. The Online Meeting Ad Hoc Committee continue through the end of this rotation to incorporate feedback from today's body and report additional findings at the January Quarterly

This concludes the ad hoc committee report.

Okay, let's get ready to discuss this. Discussion topic #3 is about this question:

How can Area 72 incorporate online only meetings, those without a physical address, and provide homegroup members of online only meetings a voice in the AA Service Structure while supporting and ensuring that online only meetings are able to carry out our primary purpose?

The issue we are concerned with is that there are online groups in Area 72 that desire participation in general service, but they are not currently able to participate given the existing service structure.

Physical meetings can send a GSR to their local district meeting; *online only meetings are not attached to any district. They have no physical meeting placement that aligns them into a District.*

We would like to continue thinking about how to include online-only meetings into the General Service Structure.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Online meetings allow inclusion of the elderly, the permanently ill, or otherwise remote members who are unable to maintain a physical homegroup. They carry the message, include sponsorship, and can function as a real homegroup. They are here to stay. But, again, there is not currently an avenue for them to become part of the general service structure.

It is through this structure, visualized as an upside-down triangle, that the voices of alcoholics reach the general service conference to help make informed decisions regarding the future of AA. We all have a voice in Alcoholics Anonymous. Each member can vote or express their opinion on topics or motions that *could change the future of AA*. But *only* if our groups participate in the upside-down triangle.

GSO currently recognizes online only meetings as those that fall outside of this service structure due to the international geography of online meetings. Online only groups can register with the Online Intergroup. Intergroups are entities that provide services to AA, groups, and the public, but are not included in the upside-down triangle.

The A.A. Online Intergroup reported that pre-pandemic, they listed less than 175 groups and by July 23rd, they reported 629 groups providing nearly 2,000 meetings to alcoholics. We can see that the continuance of online meetings is impacting not just Area 72, but our *entire* conference area.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services knows this is an issue. On July 9th, the AAWS Chair reported to our Area Delegate that the AAWS Technology Committee has already been talking about this issue. Their *so-far-informal-discussions* had at that point touched on two ideas:

- (1) Have virtual groups geographically anchored and send those GSRs to local district meetings, thus folding online groups into the current service structure
- (2) Create a virtual area for the US/Canada region that would conduct all business virtually and send one delegate in person to the annual General Service Conference.

The AAWS Chair also said that they would like to hear *our* thoughts on this.

We are eager to continue this discussion today at the Area Assembly so that we can get a solid pulse on what the Area thinks about this.

As stated during the ad hoc committee report, some in-person meetings *currently meeting online* are considering transitioning to online-only meetings after the pandemic restrictions are lifted. New online groups continue to pop up in our area. At least 7 online meetings plan to remain online only and another 12 are unsure if they will become a hybrid group or an online only group.

We would like to hear if this is something *districts and groups* view as a problem. If so, what are some possible solutions? What might a virtual district look like? We also want to know if this is *not* a problem in other parts of our Area.

Bill W wrote in the November 1960 edition of the AA Grapevine:

*"A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches [...]
Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination."*

Thank you for allowing me to introduce this topic.

Discussion Summary from Pre-Assemblies 1-6

How can Area 72 incorporate online only meetings, those without a physical address, and provide homegroup members of online only meetings a voice in the AA Service Structure while supporting and ensuring that online only meetings are able to carry out our primary purpose?

Discussion Summary

General Feedback

- Online meetings represent a growing trend, not limited to scope of today, but future as well
- Pandemic was a blessing in disguise; more remote groups getting involved
- AA and technology move snail-pace to catch up; AA has moved forward Sx faster than usual
- A solution to this meets a whole new need: a new audience is participating
- Older members are now participating and embracing online meetings more often
- Some groups want to stay online; some groups want to return to in person meetings
- How many groups plan to stay non-tethered-strictly virtual meetings, not groups?
- 4 other Areas are talking about this; 2 Areas plan to submit a motion to general service conference
- Tying this topic to GSO representation is the key
- Spiritual parity: "Us" and "Them" needs to be pointed out
- The group conscience will decide where they want to be represented - in person or virtual

Online Meetings (Issues)

- At least one pre-COVID group had to splinter over issues of control
- Some [elders, and others] are confused by Zoom; need training
- Zoom info changes and not updated
- Trouble getting info on group meeting links/IDs & passwords, contact person
- Not excited about getting back to face-to-face; online is the way some will go

Online Meetings (Benefits)

- Serves health needs
- People are welcome to form groups that speak in different languages
- May be the only way some members can attend meetings due to mobility issues
- People with different schedules can attend meetings around world
- People 60+ years old, those with health needs or with disabilities are able to go to meetings more often
- Several new meetings started in Area 72 drawing people from around the nation and world

General Service Structure

- Bill W. built service geographically, intergroups serve groups, but aren't part of area structure
 - This is the wave of future: Bill said communication will expand, he was really looking down road and saw communication as important
- Can online meetings register with GSO with an email as the address or must they have a physical address?
 - Online meetings can register with GSO and will be assigned a customer ID# (for tracking) under the fictitious Area 95; they can then register with the online intergroup, but remain outside the general service structure

In-Person District Involvement

- **General Feedback**
 - At least one new online only meeting opened a PO Box and bank account in their district, assigned themselves to that district, and are functioning as a group
 - Two other meetings are already tethered to districts (previously in-person groups)
 - Some groups plan to participate in their district meetings
- **Benefits**
 - It's cool to be centered in a district for potential face-to-face contact
 - it could be a beneficial contact, possibly for Bridge connection
 - Many groups want to stay part of their current district and are comfortable with that connection
- **Concerns**
 - May limit participation if online only group GSRs are required to attend in-person district meetings and can't for health, location proximity, or other reasons
 - What if virtual and in-person district meetings are held at the same time?
 - Could members from different Areas be GSRs in Area 72 online only groups?
 - If participating in person without geography issue solved, how do other online only groups become part of the general service structure?
 - Online-only groups will have unique needs that require different support from districts

Virtual District Creation

- **General Feedback**
 - Why is A.A. staying geographically anchored in changing times?
 - Why can't we just join the current service structure without requiring a physical address? (would PO Box, someone's home, or IP address be sufficient?)
 - This pandemic presents us with an opportunity to create a virtual district
- **Benefits**
 - Online Group GSRs won't have to wait 12-18 months to have voices heard, if we act now
 - Opportunities to outreach young people, women and other needs across the world
 - We already have a working model in the linguistic districts, DI & D57, to use as an example
 - Could allow full area-wide general service participation, being inclusive
 - Different needs of the online community may be better met
 - Adds positivity to the Area; as an upside-down triangle, we need to be all-inclusive

- **Concerns**

- With world-wide members, where do anchor? How do we vet Area 72 groups? Who decides?
- Logistical constraints of a virtual district- it's not an inter-area service (no virtual area exists)
- Some disparity because GSRs/DCMs won't be allowed to serve Area 72 if they live in other areas
- What about the newcomer's sobriety?
- Would this cause separation? Will there be double voting (one virtual, one local)?
- Is there enough need to create this new district?
- Would service positions need to be parallel to face to face districts?

Possible Solutions

- Create an overlain district as has been done with the Spanish-speaking districts
- Creation of an online-only district that serves virtual meetings
- Hold online and in-person district meetings at separate times to avoid splitting the District
- Recreate a platform for AA (look at experience in BC Yukon)

I want to thank Lisa for her presentation today. I want to thank Heather for this opportunity to discuss this with the Area Committee today. I also want to thank Eddy for posting our research to-date and four documents on the Area website. I am talking about **Virtual Representation in the Service Structure**.

I am DCM of District 17 and a grateful recovered alcoholic and my name is Karen S.

First things first, GSO verified that:

The AA General Service Structure as described in the Service Manual is geographically based and does not allow online only meetings to participate in the General Service Structure.

“A change in the General Service Conference structure [in] U.S./Canada would need to be discussed and approved by the Conference

“Bringing your idea to your district meeting is certainly where this ought to be discussed. If there is agreement, it might go to the Area for wider discussion and possibly a proposal for a Conference agenda item.”

District 17 discussed this issue in June and unanimously agreed to bring this to the Area Committee Quarterly.

**What suffering alcoholics are we trying to serve and provide AA meetings for?
People who are:**

- Physically unable to attend in-person meetings, including vulnerable from COVID-16
- Those over 60 years old (28% of our membership from GSO's 2014 membership survey)
- At home with an illness
- Not quite ready to go to an in-person meeting, but want to check out AA
- Unable to attend a meeting due to lack of childcare, transportation, or other requirements needed to attend in person
- Want to continue online and not lose people from AA when AA land-based meetings cease online

In addition to GSO, we talked with several webmasters, Intergroups and Central Service Offices, past Delegates in multiple areas, Area 72 Archivist and Delegate, Online Intergroup of AA (OIAA), Technology in AA, and learned:

- Pre-COVID-19, Area 72 had NO online only meetings.
- Pre-COVID-19, 3,553 meetings were listed on the Area website. 28% of those groups formed online meetings – 1000 groups. (new numbers from Eddy today)
- In Area 72 at least 52 new online only meetings do not have a physical location.
- The Online Intergroup of AA began 25 years ago and had 175 groups. Since the pandemic began, OIAA has roughly 1700 virtual meetings. This is a 10-fold increase in four months.
- With the COVID-10 pandemic raging, nearly 1/3 of our membership is vulnerable and over age 60 years and unable to return to in-person meetings for some time.

I look forward to hearing from other districts committee members about their experience with online only meetings and HOW we might address the gaps in getting online only meeting members a seat at the table in Service Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I close with Four Questions for DCMs and Groups to further discuss:

1. Are we willing to lose 1/3 of our elders/vulnerable members' participation in our General Service Structure since their home groups are not land based?
2. Wondering whether Area72 needs to establish a Remote Communities Committee? RC is the likely committee to research, discuss and bring this issue to the General Service Conference.
3. Do we want to consider piloting a Virtual District in Area 72 for the approximately 52 existing groups to address the unique challenges AND allow them to elect GSRs and a DCM and participate in the Area and GSC and share what we learn?
4. Can we create an Ad Hoc Committee to further research this issue?

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Hi everyone. My name is Lisa and I serve as the Alt DCM for District 17.

The issue we are concerned with is that there are over 50 new online only meetings in Area 72, created during the pandemic, and online only meetings are not currently able to participate in the General Service Structure.

Physical meetings can send a GSR to their local district meeting; *online only meetings are not attached to any district. They have no physical meeting placement that aligns them into a District. Therefore, it is not possible, currently, for online-only meetings to have a GSR, and thus these meetings cannot participate in the General Service Structure.*

We would like to think about how to include online-only meetings in the General Service Structure.

Online meetings include the elderly, the permanently ill, or otherwise remote members who are unable to maintain a physical homegroup. They carry the message, include sponsorship, and can function as a real homegroup. They are here to stay. But, again, there is not an avenue for them to have a GSR.

We all have a voice in Alcoholics Anonymous. Each member can vote or express their opinion on topics or motions that could change the future of AA. But *only* if those groups participate in the General Service Structure.

Since the pandemic hit, 23% of all area 72 meetings have gone online. In addition, 52 meetings that do not have physical locations were created.

Online only meetings will continue after the pandemic. Some in-person meetings currently meeting online are considering transitioning to online only meetings because they can financially stay afloat with only a \$15 monthly overhead for Zoom.

The A.A. Online Intergroup (which is not part of the General Service Structure) said that before the pandemic they listed less than 175 groups in their directory in all 5 formats: email, discussion forums, text-based chats, phone, and zoom/skype. Now they are at roughly 1700 virtual meetings.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services knows this is an issue. Last week the previous AAWS Director forwarded the current AAWS Chair an email I sent to the Online Intergroup about the inability to bridge online meetings into the general service structure. In fact, mine was only one of 20-30 emails with a similar inquiry sent to the Online Intergroup.

On Thursday, the AAWS Chair reported to our Area Delegate that **the AAWS Technology Committee has already been talking about this issue.** Their so far informal discussions have touched on two ideas:

- (1) Have virtual groups geographically anchored and send GSRs to local district meetings, thus folding those groups into the current service structure
- (2) Create a virtual area for the US/Canada region that would conduct all business virtually and send one delegate in person to the annual General Service Conference.

The AAWS Chair also said that they would like to hear our thoughts on this.

This impacts not just Area 72, but our entire conference area.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

District 17 has talked about how a virtual district could be a solution for anyone unable to access a physical meeting. This would allow others to become homegroup members of an online only meeting and still have a voice in the Area.

District 17 would like to ask the Area Committee to consider this issue, and to respond to the request from the AAWS Chair to hear our Area's perspective and ideas.

We would like to hear if this is something other districts view as a problem and if so, what are some possible solutions. We want to know if this is *not* a problem in other parts of our Area.

Bill W wrote in the November 1960 edition of the AA Grapevine:

"A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches [...] Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination."

Thank you, Heather, for allowing us to bring this discussion topic to the Area today.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Discussion Topic for Area 72 July 2020 Quarterly from District 17:

“How can Area 72 incorporate online only meetings, those without a physical address, and provide homegroup members of online only meetings a voice in the AA Service Structure while supporting and ensuring that online only meetings are able to carry out our primary purpose?”

INTRODUCTION

At District 17's business meeting on June 11, 2020, a fourth item of new business was discussed. Lisa S (Alt DCM) presented a discussion topic regarding a need for inclusion of online only meetings into Area 72. The purpose was to obtain District support for a possible discussion topic at the July Quarterly: *What can we do to incorporate online only meetings into our district structure / AA as a whole in order to provide AA meetings for those who are only able to attend online meetings.*

BACKGROUND

Lisa hosts two online only meetings each week, which began on Friday, March 6th. The meetings occur on Monday and Friday nights at 7 pm. Both meetings are called Our Primary Purpose. Attendees include out-of-state residents, and one regular attendee from out of state refers to it as his “Seattle Home Group.” Three business meetings have been held to-date.

Lisa explained that there is not currently a known way to bring problems from online only meetings to a district or the Area or to bring district and Area information to those groups. Furthermore, if online only meetings could be organized into a district, then they could participate in the Area and learn about how to set up 7th tradition contributions, which could help support a district, the Area and GSO. Finding a way to include the group conscious of those members whose homegroup meets online only into a district and our Area so that their voices are heard and that Area business is carried to them, would support our 5th tradition, which states “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

DISTRICT DISCUSSION

District 17 reviewed the discussion topic during its June district business meeting; see attached PDF titled, “District New Business Discussion Item at June 11 2020 District 17 Business Meeting” Comments, suggestions and questions from groups included:

- Recommend reviewing current online meeting information at aa.org
- Recommend reading the pamphlet SMF-124 [“Online Meetings/Online Groups”]
- This seems like an Accessibility issue (NOTE: D17 does not current have an Accessibility Chair to speak about this topic.)
- One GSR who also serves as the Greater Seattle Intergroup Webmaster said that there are going to be more online only meetings and that this is an important discussion topic to bring forward to the Area

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- The DCM suggested the need to investigate how online meetings in remote communities and active military members are connected to the AA Service Structure.
- Question of whether this was for hybrid meetings that some groups will possibly form (i.e. groups with a physical meeting space who moved to online meetings when the state locked down may bring a laptop to the meeting to pull people in via Zoom when in-person meetings resume)
- The Alt DCM clarified that this need was specific to online only meetings. She offered one possible solution of the creation of an online only meeting district that has a DCM and each online meeting elects its own GSR who participates in their own district to carry the message to/from the groups and Area.

Lisa suggested that others in the area may have additional ideas that could be heard if this topic was discussed at the upcoming Area Quarterly.

DISTRICT OUTCOME

- One-third of the district vocalized support of this discussion topic being brought to the July Area Quarterly.
- When voted upon using a poll, the idea passed with 100% support. 23 members were present in the meeting with 19 people voting, excluding Alt GSRs and a visitor.
- The Alt DCM and GSRs from three groups (Serenity at Week's End, The Solution Group and Cute But Dangerous), stated that they would help do necessary research if this topic were to be moved forward to the October Assembly.
- Suggested wording was provided by GSRs on how District 17 could ask that this topic be placed on the upcoming Area July Quarterly agenda.
- District 17 proposes the following as a discussion item at Area 72's upcoming July Quarterly:

"How can Area 72 optimize the ongoing use of online only meetings and give participants who can only participate in online only meetings a voice in the service structure?"

GSO

In addition to including the issue on the June 2020 district agenda and as a new discussion item, Karen S, DCM District 17 encouraged Lisa to also write an email request to GSO seeking advice.

On June 11, Lisa wrote an email to GSO. On June 15th she received a reply from GSO, which she forwarded to Karen. The email exchange with GSO is attached.

Two important excerpts from GSO's email are:

1. **"A change in the General Service Conference structure U.S./Canada such as you suggest would need to be discussed and approved by the Conference - it is this body that represents the group conscience of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada and is responsible for defining its structural parameters."**

And

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2. **“Bringing your idea to your district meeting is certainly where this ought to be discussed. If there is agreement, it might go to the Area for wider discussion and possibly a proposal for a Conference agenda item.”**

AREA 72

On June 16, Karen S, DCM, called Heather C, Area 72 Chair, and discussed the issue. Karen relayed what had occurred at the June District 17 meeting, the response from GSO and requested that this item be placed on the July Area Quarterly business meeting agenda as a discussion item. The Area Chair raised many questions which would need to be answered. In addition, the DCM asked that the Area Chair consider creating an Ad-Hoc committee to carry out the research into Accessibility, Remote Communities, Military Meetings, how existing online meetings remain connected to the Service Structure and all other questions that arise from Area Committee members if and when the item is discussed at an Area Quarterly.

The Area Chair agreed to include the discussion item on the Area July Quarterly agenda and to take under advisement consideration of creating an Ad Hoc Committee to research the issue. Heather asked that District 17 provide the handout from the district meeting, a summary of the district meeting discussion and polling and the email correspondence with GSO.

Heather informed Karen that if an Ad Hoc Committee were created it would have to be chaired by District 17's DCM or Alt DCM. Because an Area Ad Hoc committee is created by the Area Chair and we rotate every two years, such Ad Hoc Committee would only operate until the end of this rotation, December 31, 2020. If the work needed to continue, the District would have to ask the new Area Chair, serving 2021-2022, to again create and appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to continue the work.

Karen committed to getting the information to the Area Chair by the end of the week so that there is ample time for translation and posting of the information on the Area website for review by DCMs and groups well in advance of the Area July Quarterly.

This document was written by District 17's DCM, Karen, and Alt DCM, Lisa.
Questions can be directed to: Karen at dcm17@Area72aa.org or Lisa at altdcm17@Area72aa.org

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District New Business Discussion Item at June 11 2020 District 17 Business Meeting

Proposed Discussion Topic for July Area Quarterly - Lisa

Purpose: Obtain District support in the following discussion topic

What can we do to incorporate **online only** meetings into our district structure/ Area/ AA as a whole in order to provide AA meetings for those who are :

- Physically unable to attend in-person meetings
- At home with an illness
- Not quite ready to go to an in-person meeting, but want to check out AA
- Unable to attend a meeting due to lack of childcare, transportation, or other requirements needed to attend in person
- Want to continue on-line (not lose people from AA when AA stops meeting on-line)

What need does this fill?

- People will have a voice in the service structure (the online meeting burst was created due to COVID-19)
- Increased financial contributions
- To reach more alcoholics in need of recovery (our primary purpose)
- Tie in online members to the service structure so that we can hear all members' voice

Possible solutions:

- Create an online meeting district so that those voices can receive information from GSO and vote on issues.
- Lisa willing to offer herself as chair an ad hoc committee (if the Area Chair is willing to create this committee) to do the research on how military and remote communities gets plugged into the service structure to educate the area and suggest possible solutions to the continuance of online meetings.

Goal:

Have this issue discussed at the Area Annual Assembly in October, which requires discussion at the Area July Quarterly.

Questions:

1. Is the district behind this discussion topic?
2. If yes, who from the district would be willing to help on this committee

6/19/2020

Gmail - FW: Pacific Region: Request Phone Call



Lisa

FW: Pacific Region: Request Phone Call

2 messages

Staff Correspondence <staffcorrespondence@aa.org>

To: "LISA."

Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 8:40 AM

Dear Lisa,

Warm Greetings from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous! My name is Doug; I am a past GSO staff member helping out with the large amount of emails coming into the other staff assignments here. It is good to have this chance to be in touch.

Just to clarify, the General Service Office publishes A.A. literature and also houses a readily available accumulation of A.A. history and experience.

GSO does not coordinate or have guidelines related to setting up any online meetings nor does it possess the authority to make changes in the A.A. service structure. A change in the General Service Conference structure U.S./Canada such as you suggest would need to be discussed and approved by the Conference - it is this body that represents the group conscience of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada and is responsible for defining its structural parameters.

Bringing your idea to your district meeting is certainly where this ought to be discussed. If there is agreement, it might go to the Area for wider discussion and possibly a proposal for a Conference agenda item.

Thank you for writing. Our best wishes and gratitude for your willingness to serve A.A. are sent along with this note.

In fellowship,

Doug R.

For Rick W.

Pacific Regional Correspondent at G.S.O.

From: noreply@aa.org [<mailto:noreply@aa.org>]

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 2:51 PM

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=a90a760f9e&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1669580093856744362&simpl=msg-f%3A1669580093856744362&...> 1/2

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6/19/2020

Gmail - FW: Pacific Region: Request Phone Call

To: Nominating <nominating@aa.org>
Subject: Pacific Region: Request Phone Call

Here is your copy of a message sent via an aa.org webform to the Pacific Regional Correspondent at G.S.O.

Name: Lisa
Location: Washington

Email:

Message: Dear trusted servant, I would like to speak with someone at GSO about online meetings. I am of the opinion that they are going to stick around. I would like to see online meetings have one new district per area, lead by a DCM that participates at their area level, and that amongst all district DCM's, a delegate could go to the conference next year. I also want to generally know if GSO already has a plan about this. The benefit to organizing the online meetings is to keep those people who won't attend in person AA meetings an opportunity to attend and have their voice heard as part of a group conscience. Furthermore, with education by online district DCMS, online meetings can learn more about how to follow the 7th tradition and how to deal with incoming money so that GSO is financially supported. I am going to bring this concern to my district meeting tonight and also want to understand what GSO thinks (is something like this reasonable? possible? if something else is already in motion?). I'm generally available most of the time including early mornings EST after 8 am. Thank you for your service and for helping me grow in my understanding of matters such as this. Warmly, Lisa

DISCLAIMER: This email message and any attachments are for the sole use of the intended recipient(s). Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, copying or distribution, without the express permission of the originator, is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message and any attachments.

Lisa To: Karen S dcm17@area72aa.org Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 9:46 AM

This just in.

Lisa

[Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=a90a760f9e&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1669580093856744362&simpl=msg-f%3A1669580093856744362&...> 2/2

CONFIDENTIAL: This is background for the 71st General Service Conference, and as such may be a confidential A.A. document. Distribution is limited to A.A. members. Placement of this material in a location accessible to the public, including aspects of the Internet, such as Web sites available to the public, may breach the confidentiality of the material and the anonymity of members, since it may contain members' full names and addresses.

History, Actions and Discussions: Listing Online Meetings/Groups and General Service Structure

The earliest recorded discussions regarding online groups may have occurred in the late 1990s. The findings are presented chronologically below.

1996

In 1996, the Conference Committee on Report and Charter considered an agenda item relating to online groups. However, the committee's recommendation was not approved by the Conference body. The failed recommendation read:

Recognizing the unique characteristics of online groups with membership in many areas throughout the U.S. and Canada and also internationally, the committee recommended that members of online groups/meetings participate in the general service structure through regular face-to-face groups meeting in one location. (Note: Recommendation Did Not Pass)

1997

Two advisory actions relating to online groups.

Conference Advisory Actions, Report and Charter Committee

1. Online A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the "International Correspondence Meetings" in A.A. directories, that each listing include the Internet address of the online meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.
2. An intergroup serving online A.A. meetings should be listed adjacent to online A.A. meetings in the section on "International Correspondence Meetings."

1998

At the Western Canada Regional Forum in 1998, there was a Workshop on Online Meetings/Web Sites and a summary of the Workshop published in the Forum's Final Report read:

Online Meetings/Web Sites

In wondering where online meetings fit into the structure, it was noted that these meetings will be listed in the next printing of the directory. It is difficult to assign service structure for some worldwide electronic meetings. It has been suggested that eventually there be an Internet Region created. Some online meetings have hundreds of members, while others have only a few. Interactive online meetings correspond to real-time meetings, rather than an e-mail format. Regarding online meetings and the Seventh Tradition, contributions could be affected as more and more people "attend" meetings online, although some of the meetings provide

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contribution addresses. The A.A. website is the responsibility of the A.A.W.S. Board; and the A.A. Grapevine also has a website. Areas that set up a website need a group conscience to do so; and the site should have someone assigned a protective password, with that person authorized to make necessary updates.

2005

In 2005, the Conference Committee on Report and Charter considered two subjects concerning online meetings; both subjects were grouped under the standing agenda item, "Discuss A.A. Directories." See image below:

C. Discuss A.A. Directories.

- C1. Consider request to include online meetings in languages other than English, French and Spanish in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS."
- C2. Consider request to include adding Web site information for online meetings listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS."

Following discussion, the Conference approved the committee's recommendations.

2005 Conference Advisory Actions:

1. Online meetings in languages in addition to English, French and Spanish be listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" with the meeting language indicated next to the listing and in accordance with the 1997 Conference Advisory Action that:

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the 'International Correspondence Meetings' in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

2. Online meetings listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" continue to be listed with an e-mail contact address only, in keeping with the 1997 General Service Conference recommendation that:

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the 'International Correspondence Meetings' in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-

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line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

2006 - 2007

In 2006, the Intra-Office Website Committee (I.O.W.C.) of the A.A.W.S. Board (now known as the Technology/Communication/Services Committee T.C.S.) discussed a suggestion to add to the GSO AA website, an online Intergroup website address for online AA meetings. The Board approved the committee's recommendation and forwarded the item to the 2007 Conference Report and Charter Committee.

A.A.W.S. Meeting minutes, December 2006:

The committee forwarded a recommendation to the A.A.W.S. Board that the 2007 Conference Committee on Report and Charter consider adding to the A.A. Directories (Canada, Western U.S., and Eastern U.S.) a separate subsection within the section "INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE MEETING" for listing "Online Intergroups" that request to be listed, and that online intergroups thus listed provide an e-mail and/or Website address to be included on those directories. A motion to approve this recommendation was passed by the Board and will be forwarded to the 2007 Conference Committee on Report and Charter.

The 2007 Conference Committee on Report and Charter took "no action" on the suggestion.

- The committee considered a suggestion to add to the A.A. Directories (Canada, Western U.S., and Eastern U.S.) a separate subsection within the section "INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE MEETINGS" for listing "Online Intergroups" that request to be listed, and that online Intergroups thus listed provide an e-mail and/or Web site address to be included in the directories and took no action.

2008

In 2008, the Conference Report and Charter Committee considered the following agenda item:

Consider listing the Online Intergroup of A.A. (OIAA) in a new section titled "Online Intergroups" under the section "International Correspondence Meetings" in the

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A.A. Directories where "Online Meetings" appear and include the online intergroup web site and email addresses.

The background supporting the 2008 proposal is depicted below:

In keeping with the scope of the Conference Report and Charter Committee, I would like to request that the 2008 Conference Committee on Report and Charter consider listing Online Intergroup of A.A. (O.I.A.A.) in a new section titled "ONLINE INTERGROUPS" under the section "INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE MEETINGS" in the A.A. directories where "ONLINE MEETINGS" appear, and to include the online intergroup website and email. I have attached a mock sample to illustrate this. Please note that while O.I.A.A. has been listed with G.S.O. since 1997 per Advisory Action, it does not appear in the current 2007-2008 printing of the directories because G.S.O. did not have a current email address for O.I.A.A. at the time of the printing, which we since received.

Based on inquiries I have received over the years and my experience, the question has been raised many times as to why O.I.A.A. is listed in the section "ONLINE MEETINGS." The answer to this is simple in that the following 1997 Advisory Action reflects the current policy: "It is recommended that an intergroup serving on-line A.A. meetings should be listed adjacent to on-line meetings in the section on International Correspondence Meetings."

As most of us know today, online intergroups are not online A.A. meetings. In some respects online intergroups are similar to face-to-face intergroup offices in that they provide online A.A. meeting information to Internet users; however, because it serves an international community on the Internet where there are no geographic boundaries, in this sense it is international in scope and one reason why it is not listed as an intergroup/central office of the U.S./Canada structure.

Having been at the 1997 Conference and participating in the loving discussion, there was limited Internet experience amongst the Conference body and knowledge of O.I.A.A. The Conference felt it would be best to list O.I.A.A. with online meetings at the time. At this point in time, to continue listing an online intergroup as an A.A. meeting in A.A. directories is misleading and I suggest that the Conference Committee on Report and Charter consider listing O.I.A.A. in a new section titled "ONLINE INTERGROUPS" under the section "INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE MEETINGS" in the A.A. directories where the section "ONLINE MEETINGS" appear.

The subject resulted in the following 2008 Advisory Action:

The Online Intergroup of A.A. (OIAA) be listed in a new section titled "Online Intergroups" under the section "International Correspondence Meetings" in the A.A. Directories above where "Online Meetings" appear; the listing will include the online intergroup Website and email addresses.

2014

In 2014, the Trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference discussed two requests regarding online groups. One request pertained to the policy established by the 2005 Conference Advisory Action regarding listing of online groups and the other pertained to the participation of online groups in the General Service Structure. Following discussion, the committee "agreed to forward to the General Service Board, a request to consider changing the structural relationship between online groups and the General Service Structure."

In November, at the GSB's Planning/Sharing Session, they "discussed a request to include online groups in the General Service Structure and, after thoughtful consideration, agreed to take no action."

2015

Committee Consideration, Conference Report and Charter Committee

The committee considered the A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., Western U.S. and International) and suggested that the section currently called "Online Meetings" be reviewed and possibly renamed "Online Meetings/Groups" to reflect the Twelfth Step work that some online groups carry out beyond the meetings.

2016

Advisory Action

The category title "Online Meetings" be changed to "Online Meetings/Online Groups" on page vi and vii in the A.A. Directories.

December 15, 2020

General Service Office of Alcoholics of Anonymous

Attention: Conference Coordinator, Patrick C.

Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 459

New York, New York 10163

Dear Patrick,

We are members of Alcoholics Anonymous who belong to various Home Groups across the United States. We have been meeting on a weekly conference call for over ten years to share our experience, strength and hope in the study of applying our A.A. Traditions and Concepts in our daily lives and service work. We serve and have served our AA Fellowship in various service positions from the Group to the corporate board levels of our AA service structure. As a result of the rapid and widespread changes brought on by the global pandemic, the following has come to our attention through our in-depth discussions about our principles.

We unanimously agree and humbly request inclusion of the following item on the 71st General Service Conference agenda in order to allow for full Fellowship discussion and an informed Conference to offer spiritual guidance and direction to the Trustees and staff to lead us through these worldly times:

Discuss the current procedure of referring non-face-to-face Groups to an entity outside the A.A. service structure to be listed and consider creating a Traditions-based policy that meets the needs of the Fellowship and its Groups (see enclosed email and Advisory Actions).

Some additional points that we discussed which would be helpful in your consideration include:

- Preservation of the principle that the Group is the most important entity in the A.A. service structure.
- The shift in wording from “registering” Groups to “listing Groups” or “adding Groups to the database” without Conference input or explanations of the principles that guided that shift and how this serves our Fellowship.
- Tradition 5’s statement that an A.A. Group ought to be a “spiritual entity” which does not define a Group as a physical entity that meets face to face, nor does it limit a Group’s right to be served by our service structure. The platform in which a Group functions and the method of accessing its meetings are a matter of “autonomy “ (Tradition 4).
- Review “Area 95” (already created for bookkeeping purposes, not approved by the Conference) in light of past Advisory Actions concerning creation of new Areas. If such an Area is requested by the non-face-to-face A.A. Groups, should it be created by the Conference? Should it be used to communicate with Groups that do not meet face to face and wish to participate in the service structure but don’t have ties to a particular physical Area (compare with linguistic districts)? Would its creation need to follow the instructions as given in The A.A. Service Manual (2018-2020, pS33)? If the Area were created, which region would it join?
- The difference between the purpose of the general service structure versus the purposes of intergroups/central offices and whether the current procedure of only referring a Group

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to an intergroup ignores the Group's right of participation in the service structure and is in opposition to the A.A. Service Manual (2018-20 Chapter 2, pS28).

Our experience suggests that this item would be best discussed in the General Service Conference Policy and Admissions Committee which is why we will also attempt to send this to that committee's chair.

Godspeed,

A Tuesday Night Traditions and Concepts Study

Cc: Mike L., West Central Regional Trustee
Jimmy D., Southwest Regional Trustee
Mark E., East Central Region Trustee

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Hi Irene,

Thank you for your email and response to my inquiry. My other question is do these online meeting register directly with GSO or as an area registrar would I complete the registration process?

Thank you,

Carol [REDACTED]

Area [REDACTED] Registrar

On Wed, Aug 19, 2020 at 10:03 AM Access <access@aa.org> wrote:

Dear Carol,

Greetings from you virtual G.S.O. office!

My name is Irene, I am an alcoholic, and I am responding to emails from your region.

Carol, I am writing to you regarding an email that was forwarded to me from the Records Department.

Thank you for your question! Here is the shared information I can provide to you:

As you are aware, our structure encompasses the U.S. and Canada. Because online groups and meetings are by nature international, they are not listed as regular groups in G.S.O.s records. Whether an bunch of alcoholics meeting online consider themselves a group is up to them, as laid out in the Third Tradition (any two or three alcoholics...).

In keeping with a 2006 General Service Conference Advisory Action, G.S.O. provides contact information for online groups and meetings that request us to have this information:

Online meetings listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" continue to be listed with an e-mail contact address only, in keeping with the 1997 General Service Conference recommendation that: On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the "International Correspondence Meetings" in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

This information is provided in the A.A. Directories in a special section titled "'Online Meetings/Online Groups.'" The Online A.A. Intergroup is also listed in our records and in the A.A. Directories.

Area 95 is sort of a catchall area in our records system. It was created for any individual or entity which has a record in our system, but that isn't part of the U.S./Canada general service structure. It includes international G.S.O.s, World Service Meeting delegates, intergroup/central offices, online and phone meetings, etc.

G.S.O.'s listing of online groups and meetings is not comprehensive. A much more complete list can be found through the Online A.A. Intergroup: www.aa-intergroup.org. An online group or meeting can be listed with either or both entities.

I hope this information is helpful. We are all here grateful for your service and efforts to keep A.A. doors open.

In fellowship,

Irene [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

G.S.O. U.S./Canada: Coronavirus (COVID-19) helpful resources

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From: Carol [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, July 30, 2020 10:24 AM

To: [REDACTED] Karen [REDACTED]

Subject: Registration of Zoom Meetings

Hi Karen,

The question has been raised as to how to register virtual meetings. Many existing meetings have migrated to virtual and some new meetings have sprung up as virtual.

What is the policy now regarding virtual meetings? Should we do group change forms for meetings that have changed to virtual? Can we register meetings that are virtual only as long as we have a contact or GSR?

Thank you,

Carol [REDACTED]

Area [REDACTED] - Panel 70 Registrar

[REDACTED]

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for *World Service* on page 66, third paragraph, fourth line: "This set income to the groups..." be corrected to "This net income to the groups..." in the next printing, noting that this typographical error has existed since the first printing of *Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

For clarification, third paragraph of the Preface to *Twelve Concepts for World Service* be revised as follows:

"Following the recommendation of an ad hoc committee of the A.A. General Service Board, the 1985 General Service Conference recommended that future publication of the Concepts in *The A.A. Service Manual* and the booklet *Twelve Concepts for World Service* be in the original 1962 version,..."

Special International Contacts be listed in A.A. Directories if they serve special populations (young people, doctors, gays and lesbians, etc.) which meet some of the following criteria: (1) Large membership, (2) Annual international meetings, (3) Regional and state contacts, (4) Maintenance of membership lists and/or directories of special interest meetings for our Twelfth Step purposes, (5) Serve as a "bridge" into the Fellowship.

International correspondence groups such as International Deaf Group by Mail and Groupe Bonjour le Monde be listed in A.A. directories under the category of "International Correspondence meetings" in order to provide additional sharing opportunities for A.A. members.

1997 It was recommended that:

The selected diagram, as modified, illustrating the Third Legacy Procedure be added to the next edition of *The A.A. Service Manual* adjacent to page S41 to help people new to general service understand the process described on pages S41, S63-64 and S118 of the 1996-1997 edition of *The A.A. Service Manual*, and that each description of the Third Legacy Procedure in the next edition of *The A.A. Service Manual* refer to the diagram.

The paragraph on page S41 of the 1996-1997 edition of *The A.A. Service Manual*, reading "After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds on the first ballot), any candidate having less than *one-fifth* of the total vote will be withdrawn *automatically*, except that the TWO TOP CANDIDATES must remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.)" be replaced by "Withdrawals start after the second ballot. If any candidate has less than one-fifth of the total vote, his or her name is *automatically* withdrawn—except that the top two candidates must remain. (If there are ties for second place, the top candidate and all tied runners-up remain as candidates.)"; that paragraph (i), page S64, be replaced with the same language; and, that a sentence be added to the description of the Third Legacy procedure on page S118 at the beginning of item 1 "The first candidate to receive *two-thirds* of the total vote is elected."

Because of the importance of this principle to A.A. unity worldwide, there be no change to Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Current Conference Charter.

A thorough review of *The A.A. Service Manual* be undertaken by the Publications Department of the General Service Office for the purpose of increasing readability, consolidating and clarifying the text, and that a preliminary draft be sent to the 1998 Conference Committee on Report and Charter no later than February 1, 1998, for consideration.

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the "International Correspondence Meetings" in A.A. directories, that each listing include the Internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting

to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

An intergroup serving on-line A.A. meetings should be listed adjacent to on-line A.A. meetings in the section on "International Correspondence Meetings."

1999 It was recommended that:

The review of *The A.A. Service Manual* undertaken by the publications department of the General Service Office as the result of a 1997 Conference Advisory Action be accepted, and that the revised manuscript distributed to all Conference members in April 1999 be approved as the 1999-2000 Edition of *The A.A. Service Manual*.

2000 It was recommended that:

The description of the A.A. Group (Long Form Tradition Three and a section of Warranty Six, in Concept Twelve) be added in Chapter Two: "The Group and Its G.S.R." in *The A.A. Service Manual*.

In the section "Area Newsletters or Bulletins" in Chapter Four: "The Area Assembly and Activities," the following sentence "Many local publications quote from A.A. literature such as the Big Book, the Twelve and Twelve, *The A.A. Service Manual*, and Conference-approved pamphlets" be removed from *The A.A. Service Manual* and replaced with the following:

"Local A.A. publications are permitted to quote a phrase, sentence or brief paragraph excerpted from A.A. literature such as the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *The A.A. Service Manual* and Conference-approved pamphlets without a prior, written request to do so."

The phrase "to use their experience, strength and hope" be inserted in the first sentence under "Sharing Sessions" in Chapter Four: "The Area Assembly and Activities" on Page S36 in *The A.A. Service Manual* to read as follows:

"In a sharing session, everyone has a chance to use their experience, strength and hope to contribute ideas and opinions about the welfare of A.A."

On Page S69 in the subsection titled "Financial Support" under A.A. World Services, Inc., in Chapter Ten: "The Board's Operating Corporations" the sentence "Some groups set up a regular contribution plan, using various methods" be removed from *The A.A. Service Manual* and replaced with the following two sentences from the previous edition of *The A.A. Service Manual*:

"Many groups have found it convenient to set up a *regular contribution plan* whereby they send in a predetermined percentage each month or each quarter. For part of this—or to make additions to it—they use various methods."

2001 It was recommended that:

In the section titled "Third Legacy Procedure" in Chapter One on Page S21 referring to the fifth ballot, the sentence "At this point, balloting usually involves only the top two or three candidates" be removed from *The A.A. Service Manual* and replaced with the following:

"At this point, the top two candidates remain. In case there are ties for first place, all tied first-place candidates remain. In case there are no ties for first-place, the top candidate and any tied second-place candidates remain."

"Telephone A.A. meetings" that request to be listed in A.A. Directories be added to the section "International Correspondence Meetings" on page v under a section to be titled "Telephone Meetings."

2002 It was recommended that:

The Publications Department add a map of U.S. areas, and a map of Canada areas to *The A.A. Service Manual*.

In keeping with the purpose of the A.A. Directories to provide A.A. members with contact information, the "List of General Service Conference Area Web Sites" be added to the Canadian, Eastern and Western United States A.A. Directories.

2003 It was recommended that:

The first sentence of the third bullet under "Delegates Duties" in Chapter Six in *The A.A. Service Manual* be replaced with: "Be prepared to attend all area and regional service meetings and assemblies applicable to his/her respective area."

The following two new bullet points be added as the first and second items under the section titled "Duties" in Chapter Two: The Group and Its G.S.R. in *The A.A. Service Manual*:

- G.S.R.s attend district meetings
- They also attend area assemblies

In *The A.A. Service Manual* the words "to reprint the Steps, Traditions, and/or the Concepts, and" be added to the first sentence in paragraph three under the section "Area Newsletters or Bulletins" in Chapter Four: The Area Assembly and Activities, to read:

"Local A.A. publications are permitted to reprint the Steps, Traditions, and/or the Concepts, and to quote a phrase, sentence or brief paragraph excerpted from A.A. literature such as the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *The A.A. Service Manual* and Conference-approved pamphlets without a prior, written request to do so."

2005 It was recommended that:

The existing chart of the "A.A. Grapevine, Inc." in *The A.A. Service Manual* be replaced with the updated version.

The following text pertaining to the A.A. Grapevine Digital Archive be added to *The A.A. Service Manual*:

The A.A. Grapevine Digital Archive

In June 2004, Grapevine articles were preserved electronically and posted on the website, making it possible for A.A. members, professionals working in the field of alcoholism, and others interested in the Fellowship to access almost every Grapevine article and letter ever published.

With articles written by A.A. members from June 1944, when the magazine was first published, to the present, the archive offers a vivid account of A.A. history as well as a view of the Fellowship today. It also makes stories easy to find. Using keywords, visitors can search the archive by location, author, or subject to find the first version of the Traditions, to learn what A.A.s have said about such topics as sponsorship and self-support, and to explore how much—and how little—A.A. has changed. Readers may also browse through the collection by department, topic, or date to find hundreds of jokes and cartoons, along with thousands of articles.

The following text pertaining to the A.A. Grapevine Reprint Policy be added to *The A.A. Service Manual*:

General Guidelines for Reprinting Art and Articles from the A.A. Grapevine

Permission to reproduce articles or other A.A. Grapevine or La Viña material, either in print or via electronic media (such as web pages), must be obtained from the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Each article or item must be reprinted in its entirety and carry the following credit line:

Copyright © (month, year) A.A. Grapevine, Inc.
Reprinted with permission.

Organizations, publications, or websites outside of A.A. must add the following:

Permission to reprint the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., copyrighted material [in this publication, organization, or website] does not in any way imply affiliation with or endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

Logo and Artwork

Only the Grapevine cartoons Victor E. and Clara T. may be reprinted with permission.

The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., does not grant permission to reproduce either its logo or registered trademarks (The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Box 1980, The Grapevine, La Viña, etc.) or its artwork or any other cartoons on any other website or in any other publication.

Online meetings in languages in addition to English, French and Spanish be listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" with the meeting language indicated next to the listing and in accordance with the 1997 Conference Advisory Action that:

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the "International Correspondence Meetings" in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

Online meetings listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" continue to be listed with an e-mail contact address only, in keeping with the 1997 General Service Conference recommendation that:

On-line A.A. meetings that request to be listed in A.A. directories be added to the "International Correspondence Meetings" in A.A. directories, that each listing include the internet address of the on-line meeting, and that each on-line meeting requesting to be listed in our directories furnish G.S.O. with the name and physical address of a member willing to serve as "mail" contact.

2006 It was recommended that:

The graphic, "Service Structure Inside the A.A. Group," as it appeared in the 1998-1999 edition, be restored in Chapter 2 of *The A.A. Service Manual*.

The following descriptive sentence be added to the second paragraph on page S63 of *The A.A. Service Manual* in the section "Trustees-at-large":

"In the year between the World Service Meetings, the trustees-at-large may attend a Western Hemisphere zonal meeting, the Meeting of the Americas, as delegates representing the U.S. and Canada."

The statement on page ii of each A.A. Directory located below the box "An A.A. Group" be revised to read:

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION
ABOUT THIS DIRECTORY**

As embodied in the Fourth Tradition, the formation and operation of an A.A. group resides exclusively within the group conscience of its members. While, hopefully, every A.A. group adheres closely to the guiding principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, A.A.W.S. neither monitors nor oversees the activities or practice of any A.A. group. Groups listed in this directory appear at their own request. A directory listing does not constitute or imply

Thanks to the help of the International Coordinator at G.S.O., a request for shared experience was sent to International General Service Offices around the world. It included a few simple questions:

- *Did online-only groups participate in your general service structure before the pandemic?*
- *Are they able to participate now?*
- *If online-only groups do participate in your service structure, are there any concerns that members from outside of your structure have a voice and/or a vote?*

The responses follow below:

ARGENTINA

I am sending you the answers that the International Committee of Argentina gave to the following questions:

Q: Did online-only groups participate in your general service structure before the pandemic?

A: We did not have online groups. We did have WhatsApp groups with specific purposes, namely, communication among members of face-to-face groups, fellowship, trusted servants, etc., but these groups were not in the general service structure as online groups.

Q: Are they able to participate now?

A: No policy has been defined yet. In some cases, groups take the physical location of the founders of the online group and they place themselves in the corresponding geographical area. Other times, they do not. GSO, when asked by the group in question—and provided they do not have any other purpose—will include its meetings in a directory that is posted in the A.A. Argentina webpage: <https://aa.org.ar/grupos-virtuales-argentina/>.

Q: If online-only groups do participate in your service structure, are there any concerns that members from outside of your structure have a voice and/or a vote?

A: We have not gathered experience regarding group conscience actions about this topic.

With gratitude from Argentina - Alberto C. Chair, International Committee of the GSB

AUSTRALIA

Advisory Action #009/2020

Conference resolved that the creation of a virtual Area be included as part of the review of the General Service Structure by the Conference Policies & Admissions Committee.

All Conference members are requested to advise of any concerns so they can be addressed in a guideline for creating a virtual Area. A draft of this guideline will be circulated to Conference members for input, following which a mail poll will be conducted for approval of the guideline prior to Conference next year.

Voting: 25 For: Against: 3 Abstain 2 The motion carried.

It was noted that the Conference Policies & Admissions Committee will hold review meetings once a month starting in February.

Manager - General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia

BOLIVIA

With regard to online groups, the first experience of this sort in Bolivia occurred in March 2020, because of the pandemic. In fact, we do not consider them groups, but A.A. meetings, and they currently do not take part in our service structure.

Approximately 70% of the groups have reverted to having face-to-face meetings but, unfortunately, at this time, our country is going through a second wave of the pandemic—much more severe than the first one—and we are certain that virtual meetings will come back and the issue of virtual groups will be discussed at our 2021 Conference.

We are also paying attention to the decisions and experiences of larger structures, so we may follow their example.

In closing, we would like to express our feelings of love and gratitude.

BRAZIL

Online meetings have been taking place for over twenty years [mainly in southern Brazil, using their own platform] but our Conference did not approve these meetings as part of our structure as either groups or areas. However, during the pandemic, our General Service Board designed and approved a proposal called Integrated Internal Communication Project, which includes a paid master Google Meet account contracted by JUNAAB, with dedicated addresses available for areas, districts, and groups.

Districts are meeting on line and each area committee has its own Google Meet link. Many area committee meetings and area assemblies have been held virtually, as their regular meeting places were closed.

CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background

Here is the link for the project: <https://sites.google.com/aa.org.br/g-suite/reunioes-a-distancia/lista-das-reunioes>, including daily reports from our 45 areas and addresses for people interested in A.A.

Some groups have chosen to meet using the Zoom platform, but these meetings are not part of our integrated communication system created by JUNAAB in March 2020, at the start of the pandemic.

An interesting development in our structure is hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings are face-to-face meetings [frequently with limited attendance] which install a computer or cell phone hooked to a projector. An online connection is established, streaming the face-to-face meeting, and the platform is projected onto a wall or screen at the physical location. Thus, both online and face-to-face attendees can participate and share, leading to unity in the groups.

I would like to quote from Warranty Four in Concept XII, which I believe should always be our guide:

“That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.”

“Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision that we are called upon to make in the Conference.”

Thank you for asking us to share our experience. That is how A.A. works!

Links provided by Brazil:

- <https://www.aa.org.br/reuniao-a-distancia>
- <https://sites.google.com/aa.org.br/g-suite/reunioes-a-distancia/lista-das-reunioes>
- <https://sites.google.com/aa.org.br/g-suite/reunioes-a-distancia/relatorios-de-utilizacao?authuser=0>

COSTA RICA

We are writing to you to share our experience on the creation of virtual groups. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, online groups have been created, but this experience is new for us at Alcoholics Anonymous in Costa Rica. Therefore, we have not included this type of groups within our structure as described in our Service Manual.

Sincerely,

Rosemary C. L. Class A Trustee, Class A Trustee

FRANCE

Thank you for your mail. We ask about the same questions here in France. As we are still in the process of reflection, here is the answer we are able to provide you regarding exclusively online groups in France.

We had eight such groups before the pandemic. In order to be considered as groups in their own right, we asked them to set up a committee, in the same way as a physical group, so that they could elect a Representative to the General Services. Some did, some did not. And for those who did, the GSR could certainly attend General Assemblies if it was integrated into a physical area.

In view of the creation of many online groups, and in response to a request from some of them to be integrated into the structure, our Board charged our Structure and General Policy Committee to reflect on the position to be given to these groups within our structure. This committee is working on this issue, and finds that it is very complex. A first report on its work should be presented to our General Service Conference in April 2021.

The members of the committee are wondering in particular how these groups could integrate the structure of the Conference (attachment to a region by the geographical location of the GSR, creation of a virtual region...), but it is very difficult at this time to come up with a clear and satisfactory position for the Fellowship. And the question of members from outside our structure will, of course, be a crucial issue that will be taken into account by our Structure and Policy Committee.

We will be happy to keep you informed of the progress of our reflection.

GREAT BRITAIN/CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION (CER)

Online meetings have been a vital part of my recovery for some years. Living in Turkey (although I got sober in Great Britain) our local group is a part of the Continental European Region (CER). Because of size and, in some areas, the sparsity of English speaking meetings, online meetings have been a part of recovery for some time.

Thus, in 2015 the following question was asked of our Conference:

Would the Fellowship share experience and then make recommendations whether to recognise online groups?

Resulting in the following response:

This Committee shared experience and recommends the recognition of online groups. We request that the General Service Board GB investigate the implications and practicalities of this recommendation. They should also consider how such groups can be incorporated within the structure of AA GB.

The Board to report back to the General Service Conference 2016.

Voting:- unanimous.

Report from the Board to Conference 2016 in response to above.

Online Meetings

This is coming from Conference last year, Committee 1, Question 1:

"This Committee shared experience and recommends the recognition of online groups. We request that the General Service Board GB investigate the implications and practicalities of this recommendation. They should also consider how such groups can be incorporated within the structure of AA GB. The Board to report back to General Service Conference 2016".

I investigated this and I talked to other GSOs, Germany in particular, who have been discussing this for about two years and they said that they are still talking because they are finding it difficult to get it into the structure. What I concluded from that discussion was basically we need to keep it simple. If we are going to do it we need to do the recognition through our existing structure.

Technically we can meet the challenge by amending the Meeting Finder on the Website to show online as a separate meeting type so that they will not get mixed up with the other meetings which are geographically based. Allow autonomy to join Intergroups or not, it's up to the group as long as they follow group meeting guidelines and are self-supporting etc.

We cannot stop them starting up the only thing that is missing is recognition. It's a different way of meeting in the Fellowship and, as I said to you at the beginning, this is about communication, it is about improvement and it's another unique opportunity. I put this proposal to the Board at the last Board meeting and they said come back with a statement which we can present to Conference. Our initial findings are that it is feasible to include an online group on the AAGB Meetings database and thereby recognise that group from a search on the website. This may require some minor changes to the meeting finder function of the website. It is envisaged that the group would register with GSO in the normal way using a pink form or online, ideally it would attach itself to an existing intergroup as is custom for all new groups although this is not mandated by the Fellowship. It is then up to the group/intergroup to facilitate the meetings, appointment officers and arrange pot collections etc. as is done by any group in becoming self-supporting.

Would Conference like to adopt this option to be taken forward by the General Service Board? Conference approved the above with a two-thirds plus majority.

How it works in practical terms...

English speaking meetings in Continental Europe form a separate Region (our structure is Groups / Intergroups / Region / Conference / – we have 15 regions based in Great Britain, and Continental European Region (CER) is our 16th). The area covered is massive (more extensive than the US), but some countries have few or no English-Speaking meetings. Because of this, online meetings

have long been a part of the landscape, and have been recognised by the Region, if not fully accepted until more recently by the broader service structure. Because of the Region's size and the cost of sending officers and representatives of the Intergroups to Regional Assemblies, the Region has been holding at least some of its Regional Assemblies online for a number of years, to reduce both cost and travel time. Whenever possible, it has also held hybrid meetings when holding face-to-face meetings, enabling those that can't travel to attend. This has enabled representations from groups across the whole of the Region.

Also, because of the distances involved and sparsity of meetings in some areas, many groups are not a part of an Intergroup, but the Region does give them a voice at Regional Assemblies as directly affiliated groups. It is one of the Region's objectives to provide access to AA services and support, particularly in isolated and remote areas.

In 2017 the online groups got together and formed the European Online Intergroup to serve them. The Intergroup was accepted as part of CER and allowed online groups to take a more active role in the service structure (one online group attended Regional Assemblies for some years before this as a directly affiliated group, sending a representative to Regional Assemblies).

The meetings, being online, there are no practical limitations to the groups' point of origin. However, suppose the Intergroup is to have representation at Regional Assemblies (bearing in mind that some will be face-to-face). This must be affordable; which can place some restrictions on where trusted servants can come live. For example, a group with many members in South Africa (SA) could join the Intergroup they would not be able to serve in any capacity at the Regional Assembly, including being a representative of the Intergroup at Region, simply because of the cost of travel. (Note that while the Region tries to provide online access to face-to-face meetings, this is no guarantee due to connectivity issues in some of the locations where Regional Assemblies meet. Because of this for the face to face meetings, we need to send the standard two representatives from our Intergroup. In time this might change, but not yet. We have seen in the past year, of course, a massive surge in numbers meeting online, and indeed our Intergroup and Regional assemblies are currently all held online. For groups, this can create some question as to where their roots are. I have tried to answer this for some groups recently. I will share my thinking with you, and you can make of it what you will.

When I first got sober in Bristol, there was just one Intergroup (called Avon) for the whole area, part of the West Midlands Region. As group numbers rose, the groups decided to split into two Intergroups. The city is divided by the river Avon running east-west through the city, it naturally formed a North and South divide. So the Intergroups were named; with the idea that groups South of the river would join Avon South, and those north of the river would join Avon South. However, the groups had other thoughts about this, and quite a few groups north of the river joined Avon South, and those south of the river joined Avon North. In practical terms, it made no difference at all. The groups were entirely free to exercise their autonomy. So, across the country, we might draw lines on

the map to indicate a region, the groups themselves have no obligation to follow that line. Mostly this occurs around boundaries, but sometimes because of a difference of opinion, we can find the group from one Intergroup in the middle of a different Intergroup's area. I guess we were never too good at colouring within the lines...

When newly formed online groups have asked me "*which Intergroup should we join?*" I have suggested that they look at their origins. If the roots were in a group that was part of an Intergroup, then why not merely join that intergroup, especially if the majority of the attendees are local to the area.

If, however, they simply formed online (as so many online groups within Europe have), why not join the Online Intergroup of CER? There are clear advantages to an online group being part of an online intergroup, in that all the groups will probably be facing similar problems, but for the most part, there is no real difference.

The Online Intergroup is looking into safeguarding policies for such groups, for example, people who are threatening self-harm or suicide. How best to help these poor souls when often we might not even be sure where they might be. They might not have all the answers, but the structure is working well. Of interest to me too, is what the groups think of themselves, especially those with some years of experience. They say: "*We are not online groups; we are groups that meet online; we too seek to fulfil our primary purpose.*"

It is perhaps rather sad that the Forward the 4th edition of the Big Book was changed. Sometime after the second printing, the wording on (page xxiv) changed. The first and second printings read:

"Fundamentally, though, the difference between an electronic meeting and the home group around the corner is only one of format. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.'s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity."

The line "*Fundamentally, though, the difference between an electronic meeting and the home group around the corner is only one of format*" has been removed. Perhaps in the light of what we have learned in the past twelve months, it is time to revisit that decision?

Best wishes with your deliberations. I hope you will be able to share some of the thinking that goes into them. Nigel P. Chair - The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited.

GREECE

Dear friends,

We inform you that in our country pre-pandemic we had an internet group running which had been taking part in General Service Committees with voice and vote.

Today during pandemic all our groups have gone on line skype and zoom.

Two groups have appeared after the pandemic to be as only on line (they had no previous existence) and are now participating at our Service Structure which in Greece is the Intergroup, with voice and vote.

With much heart –felt A.A. gratitude, from Greek GSO

ICELAND

The discussion remains in Iceland what to do regarding surge in online meetings. We have had few online meetings before and we have always listed the meetings on aa.is and we also do that now with all the new meetings. One thing I can add to this is we invite all the online groups like regular groups to participate in the general service meeting in Iceland that will be held in May next year.

IRELAND

Summary: online and physical are recognised as equal. A group with no former affiliation can now be part of the structure as an online meeting so long as it has a contact. All meetings have official AA Ireland email addresses.

Our chronological experience in Ireland for online meetings is as follows:

1. Prior to the pandemic there were no A.A. online meetings in the Irish A.A. structure (or even outside the structure). Information on physical meetings was always on our AA Ireland website and can be found here.
2. When the pandemic hit, two things happened:
 - a) Physical groups migrated to online using their same group name.
 - b) A lot of meetings with no previous physical location or group identity opened up.
3. In response to this, the GSBAA of Ireland guided GSO to set up an additional page on our website which is exclusively for online meetings: See here. Attached as a PDF also.
4. The original web page for physical meetings still also exists because many groups were able to reopen when the government made 12 step programmes an essential service. But groups can very quickly change their information to online if anything happens and their group cannot meet. Check here again and you'll see what I mean.
5. Initially the virtual meetings without a former geographic identity were not part of the online meeting page on our website. But due to the number that had formed they have now been incorporated and are part of the structure.

This has all come about with a lot of trial and error, pain and in some cases outright resistance! It will be discussed at length at our next Conference in early March.

There are some who do not recognise online meetings at all and obviously do not agree that they are part of the structure, in particular meetings that were set up with no former fixed abode. But our GSBAA did decide early on that we had to respond to the crisis outside of Conference which was a whole year away when it all started.

In fellowship: Moira S. WSD Ireland

ITALY

From the Gruppo “Disposti a crescere” (“Willing to grow” group) - Italy 2021. We are happy to be able to share our experience as a group born and raised completely online. Our group started in March 2020 soon after the beginning on the lockdown in Italy. We meet every Friday at 7pm CET via Zoom. From the very beginning we had attendees from many different parts of Italy and Switzerland. In September we held elections for the steering committee and decided to write to our national GSO in order to be listed on the national AA website and be able to contribute with our 7th tradition. What they basically told us is that we cannot be listed anywhere because we are not linked to any physical group. So we cannot participate to the service structure in our country and as a consequence we do not have a right to vote. In the meanwhile our group attendance continues to grow and many members from southern Italy, where AA is sparsely represented and alcoholics have to travel long distances to meet, rely on us to be able to participate to meetings. Thank you very much Cristina, Group Secretary

LATVIA

Did online-only groups participate in your general service structure before the pandemic? Before the pandemic, we had one small online group in Latvian. Member of this group attended our annual General Service Conference, but in the status of the guest/observer. There was an idea to grant the right to vote for this delegate, but this decision hasn't been made til now.

Are they able to participate now? We haven't had the Service Conference since the beginning of the pandemic. But we are planing to held it this Spring or Summer. Now we have very strong online group plus many groups which usually meet in person, but now are online. We think now is the right moment to take online group seriously and grant the right to vote. All the more so because these groups donate to our common needs.

If online-only groups do participate in your service structure, are there any concerns that members from outside of your structure have a voice and/or a vote? As far as I know there are no such a concerns. There are not many Latvian speakers in the world (about 2 million), so, if someone joins Latvian language AA group, we presume it is ok she/he is a part of AA Latvia Fellowship.

NORWAY

The situation you are addressing was discussed at the last board meeting here in Norway. Several online groups have been established during the pandemic

and the problem with how they could fit into the Conference Structure soon came along. So far the issue has been handled in the following way:

First of all the GSO used some time to clarify if this really was a group or just a meeting place. Some just wanted to have the listing at the web page and had not even considered if they were a group or not. Some understood that they were an offspring of an already existing group and then just could be listed as one more meeting in that structure. Eventually some considered themselves to be a group, with regular business meetings, an elected GSR and a unifying group conscience. They were then urged to decide in which district they belonged and the necessity to have a postal address. So far this arrangement has functioned well. We have representation by these groups through the structure, and they contribute to the common welfare, both practically and spiritually. This is, of course, a very new phenomenon, so we will pay close attention and hope to hear from other parts of the AA community on this matter.

All the best – Morten vK, GSO, Norway

PARAGUAY

Good morning and warm greetings from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous of Paraguay.

In response to your request for experience on online-only A.A. groups, we would like to let you know that we do not have virtual groups in Paraguay. A few were created during the pandemic in order to maintain contact among members. However, we have no record of such groups remaining active as independent groups. What we have are groups that offer both virtual and face-to meetings.

Whenever possible, groups are meeting face to face. Therefore, in our service structure, for the time being, we only have members who belong to face-to-face groups.

Without anything else to share at this time, in closing, I would like to wish you happy 24 hours.

Secretary, General Service Office
Alcoholics Anonymous of Paraguay

PORTUGAL

We are now discussing how to integrate the four only-online groups in our service structure. Using our service manual procedure, they formed an “intergroup” (pre-Área set), to start to talk and discuss how they can be active part, with voice and vote of our structure.

If they succeed organizing and preparing themselves, they will be proposed to be part of Portuguese structure in a conference, after being sponsored by an Área during a given period of time (usually 2 years).

Now we are discussing this, and we are very interested in your conclusions and if you can share other countries experience with us. We tried to have more information but didn't had success.

Kind Regards - Porfírio S. Chair, Portuguese GSB

RUSSIA

In Russia we had before pandemic and still have some only online group which are part of AA structure of Russia. These group are part or some districts. In 2016 online groups wanted to organise the Internet Area. They put this idea as a conference topic. But after discussion during conference they changed their mind and resigned this topic because felt the online groups not ready yet to be organized as a area. We don't know do online group member voting anywhere else. It doesn't worry us. We are looking at them as a members face to face group which we can't control as well. In 2013 we had member of online group who use to live in London. Online group recommended him as a ESM delegate and in the conference elected him as a international delegate.

Yours in service Uliana M. WSM delegate Russia.