VII.

POLICY & ADMISSIONS

AGENDA

Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions
Sunday, April 23, 2023, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Monday, April 24, 2023, 9 a.m. – Noon
Room: TBD

Chair: Andrea H.
Secretary: Jeff W.

Conference Committee Members

Panel 72	Panel 73
Mike B.	Molly E.
Monty C.	Celyne L.
Andrea H.*	Joann M.
Barbara R.**	Kacie N.
	Peter W.

*Chair
**Alternate Chair

- Introductions – Andrea H., Conference committee chairperson.
- Review Conference Committee Composition, Scope, and Procedure – Andrea H., 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 dates for the 2027 General Service Conference.

C. Review progress report on the development of a process using virtual meeting technologies for polling the G.S.C. between meetings.

D. Discuss report on the Equitable Distribution of Workload process.

E. Review report of the GSB Ad-Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada Service Structure.

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.

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2023 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

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

Background notes:

Excerpts from the 2023 trustees' General Service Conference Committee meeting:

The committee also noted the general manager's efforts to gather the requested information about potentially meeting outside of New York City. The committee noted that the information gathered was to provide sample information and not to suggest an actual venue.

The committee felt that the amount of detail from four of the eight regions, would be an adequate amount of information to include in the final Site Selection Report in addition to logistical, financial, and spiritual considerations. The committee expressed appreciation for the efforts to date and requested that the general manager continue development of the site selection report for the committees' review. The committee noted that a final report will be included as background for the 2023 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions.

2022 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions:

> The committee reviewed the G.S.O. general manager's report regarding General Service Conference site selection, noting with appreciation the level of detail regarding specific sites considered. The committee requested that the next site selection report provide detail on the financial, logistical, and spiritual implications of holding the General Service Conference at other locations throughout the eight regions of the U.S./Canada service structure, perhaps in rotation with the New York City metropolitan area.

2021 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions:

> The committee reviewed the G.S.O. general manager's report regarding General Service Conference site selection. The committee agreed with the overall goal of a reduction or containment of total Conference costs, the suitability of sleeping rooms and meeting rooms, and an improvement in the convenience and cost of transportation to and from airports. The committee requested that that future reports include more details on specific sites considered.

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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.

Background:

1. General Manager's report on General Service Conference site selection

2. Advisory Actions regarding General Service Conference site selection

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2023 General Service Conference Site Selection Report

The 2022 Policy Admissions Conference Committee requested that the next site selection report provide detail on the **financial, logistical**, and **spiritual** implications of holding the General Service Conference (GSC) at other locations throughout the eight regions of the U.S./Canada service structure, perhaps in rotation every other year with the New York City metropolitan area.

GSO's Meeting, Events and Travel (METs) team randomly chose two locations within each of the eight regions. When possible, one was chosen in a more metropolitan area and the other more rural area to get a sense of cost comparison and balance with logistics.

Several facilities have either not responded or do not have the capacity to accommodate our specifications. However, we received data from facilities in four of the eight regions: West Central, East Central, Eastern Canada and the Northeast. Although the GSC is not particularly large, the number of breakout rooms necessary is a challenge for many venues to accommodate. Also challenging is that the hotel industry is experiencing severe staffing issues, making it difficult to obtain pricing and proposals. The data gathered within these four regions still provides a strong sample of financial and logistical details to draw conclusions as to the feasibility of hosting a GSC outside the New York City metropolitan area (NYC).

Financial

Appendix A illustrates a comparison of actual expenses from the 2022 GSC to projected costs derived from proposals received. GSO's, CFO in collaboration with the MET's team developed this comparison. Some points and assumptions worthy of mention are as follows:

- **Travel**
  Conference members - Included in this line are 11 GSO Staff, Director of Staff Services, General Manager, GV Publisher and the Grapevine Committee Secretary.

  GSO Support Staff to Conference - 40 other support staff are included in this line ranging from the full MET's team, technology support, directors and department heads and other logistical support from Office Services. This is the average number that have attended and supported the last three in person Conferences.

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GSO Support Staff site visits - 3 site visits throughout the year: 2 would include 2 members from the MET's team and the Conference Coordinator, the 3rd visit would include the General Manager.

The trip to GSO/Stepping Stones was removed in the regional columns.

- **Meals**

Meals for site visits and early arrival during Conference week for support staff to set up. At least 8 staff (MET's, Technology & Office Services).

- **Lodging**

Additional lodging costs are added for site visits and the early arrival of support staff (8). You will also notice an increased amount in the regional columns for "Support Staff During Conference" (40).

- **Other**

Equipment rental would be necessary as these locations are too far to ship our copier and printers. Postage and shipping also reflect increases due to the distance to ship items as well as shipping technical support equipment otherwise carried to hotels within NYC.

This comparison and summary represent our best estimates and assumptions that hosting a GSC within the eight regions would entail. Hosting an actual Conference would be the only way to understand and know the actual needs, so it is likely every assumption has not been considered.

Logistical

Planning the GSC is a year long process. Planning a Conference outside NYC from the GSO would present challenges due to unfamiliarity of the area and the need be on-site for set up planning and workflow. This would require multiple site visits; the financial projections estimate a need for at least 3 site visits but more may be necessary, particularly without experience to draw from. The MET's team and several other staff support from Office Services would have to arrive early to set up the workroom and other areas of the facility.

Shipping from a distance would require more detailed arrangements compared to the services we use to transport our equipment and supplies to local hotels in NYC.

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Although the properties used in this report are for illustration purposes, it is plausible that an actual hotel could be situated on an airport property and would be easily accessible with little or no transportation needed. Transportation between the airport and hotel may be complimentary through shuttle service.

Many locations throughout our structure are not in proximity to major train routes which some participants annually choose as a means of transportation. This would exclude certain areas from the possibility of hosting. Bus service may pose a similar challenge.

Hosting outside NYC would demand all supporting office employees are onsite throughout the duration of the Conference. When held in NYC, many employees go back and forth from their homes and the office.

IT/Tech set up and support would lose the benefits of the close proximity of the office if certain supplies were needed for special circumstances, e.g., extra cables, equipment swaps, etc.

Spiritual

To address spiritual implications of holding a GSC outside NYC, I arranged a dedicated GSO Staff sharing session. The following is a summary of points from the sharing session:

- Planning is more nimble when it's close to the office, e.g., site visits, supplies, etc. Collaboration between Staff assignments and departments would likely be compromised.
- Concerns of the principle of participation being compromised, i.e. non-conference member staff support from various departments not being allowed to travel to participate.
- If we found a less expensive location in our structure, we would have money to spend on other spiritual services.
- The decision to move shouldn't be related to a desire to move the office.
- If part of the motivation is for a better location than NYC, unity on alternate locations is unlikely. Rye is a good example of this. Some liked it and some didn't.
- The Conference would miss out on Stepping Stones and GSO visits during Conference week. Visiting the office during Conference weeks was one of the reasons the early members chose to meet in NYC.
- International observers would miss out on the Fellowships history tied to NYC.
- Similar to international observers, some area delegates would feel left out of the NYC experience and history of the Fellowship.
- The history of the Conference being held in NYC has been a central part of a long history of unity and comradery among area delegates, trustees and staff. I'm concerned that would be difficult to duplicate in other locations.

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- Where money and spirituality mix melds financial, logistical and spiritual. If there are logistical or financial challenges due to hosting within the regions, it will create spiritual difficulties.
- Many past and present delegates share a sentiment that their Conference experience was enhanced by being in NYC and a move away from that would potentially bear a spiritual cost.
- Would the principle of inclusion be challenged? The idea of hosting the GSC within our regional structure in a rotation with NYC would not allow wide area involvement as the GSC specifications limit hotel availability to a limited number of geographic locations.

Archives Research

The Archives Department provided a sample of historical references to this topic:
"*We are now trying to develop some fair method of regional representatives which could bring delegates to New York once a year to sit down in a joint session with our Headquarters people, following which, the Service Conference would make a report to the Groups on the state of the Headquarters and A.A. in general."*
Letter from Bill W. to Fred C., December 1, 1947
"After a lot of thought, I am beginning to think we have an answer – at least a partial one. The conference can't be too big, it can't be too small. It can't ever be a political or governing body. Just a bunch of sane AA's who will sit down and see whether things are going all right in New York and make a report on it. I think that's all we shall ever need."
Letter from Bill W. to Jimmy B., December 11, 1947
"Each Delegate will serve two year term, will always be available for mail or phone consultation with A.A. Headquarters, and will twice attend the General Service Conference which will be held in New York City to coincide with the regular April meeting of the Foundation."
Your Third Legacy pamphlet, pages 7-8
"They [Delegates] will become closely acquainted with each other and with our Headquarters people. They will visit the premises of the Foundation, Grapevine, and Service Headquarters. This should engender mutual confidence. Guesswork and rumor are to be replaced by first-hand knowledge."
Your Third Legacy pamphlet, page 8
<u>Conference Discussions</u>:
In October 1955, the former GSB Policy Committee discussed a suggestion from two delegates, to pursue the "possibility of having alternating sessions of the General Service Conference in cities other than New York." Further, "this would be done in odd years, thereby giving each delegate a chance to visit Headquarters in even years."
Some of the "cons" expressed by the board were:

- "Bringing the necessary staff and personnel from Headquarters to these different cities."

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- "Delegates would lose the benefit of going through the office."
- "This would mean changing the Charter of the Third Legacy."

The proposal was discussed at the 1956 General Service Conference but was tabled for consideration at "some future date."

In 1962 the GSC "rejected a proposal that the 1965 General Service Conference be held in Toronto, Canada." It was the sense of the meeting that the "proposal, in addition to placing a serious burden on GSO manpower and facilities, would deprive 1965 Conference Delegates (particularly those of Panel 15) of the opportunity to become more familiar with GSO's world service operations.

Conference Booking (Catching Up)

In the 2022 report, I explained we would begin catching up in securing dates and venues for the Conference after the necessary pause due to the pandemic. With a pandemic no longer posing a risk to contracting hotels for the Conference, I have brought us up to date and alignment with the Advisory Actions pertaining to Conference booking and have executed contracts with the New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge (Brooklyn Marriott) through 2026. RFP's were sent to several hotels in the NYC area. Similar to the challenges outlined in the regional RFP's, we experienced difficulty locally obtaining accommodation for our specs and receipt of proposals. The dates and locations are as follows:

April 14-20, 2024
April 27-May 3, 2025
April 26-May 2, 2026

Suitability of sleeping and meeting rooms

The Brooklyn Marriott meets our standards and needs to host the Conference in a manner that supports past practice, meeting formats and schedules. It has been assessed for safety, quality, and service.

Summary

The financial data gathered clearly shows it's possible to find venues within our structure that are more cost effective than NYC. That said, if there was a rotational schedule included with hosting a Conference outside NYC, a question to consider may be "would all areas have the option to be included and participate?" Also of note would be consideration of Bill's and others spiritual thoughts on this question to host a GSC outside NYC; "*Just a bunch of sane AA's who will sit down and see whether things are going all right in New York."* Or this thought from Your Third Legacy Pamphlet "*They will visit the premises of the Foundation, Grapevine, and Service Headquarters. This should engender*

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mutual confidence." Logistics certainly have pros and cons also. The pros of venues outside NYC offering the possibility of ease access from airports to hotels and the cons of planning from a distance, no access to office tools during Conference week, unfamiliarity of the area, considerable number of staff traveling and site visits throughout the year taking staff away from other work.

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Appendix A - GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE EXPENSES - GENERAL MANAGER SITE SELECTION REPORT

TYPE OF EXPENSE	2022 BROOKLYN	WEST CENTRAL	EAST CENTRAL	EASTERN CANADA	NORTHEAST
EXPENSES WHICH VARY BY SITE					
Travel					
Conference Members	80,000	91,440	88,860	86,461	87,956
GSO support staff to Conference	9,200	35,200	27,260	19,880	24,480
GSO support staff site visits	0	8,500	7,000	5,500	6,500
Interpreters	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
Appointed Committee Members	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900
Trustees Emeriti	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
Trip to GSO	2,100	0	0	0	0
Subtotal Travel	*102,800*	*146,640*	*134,620*	*123,341*	*130,436*
Meals					
GSO support staff site visits	0	750	750	750	750
GSO support staff setup	0	1,536	1,536	1,536	1,536
Opening Dinner	54,900	19,500	19,500	25,400	21,500
Coffee and Beverage Service	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
Continental Breakfasts	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
All Other Lunches, Dinners, and Breaks	310,900	244,800	190,100	282,200	241,900
Subtotal Meals	*405,800*	*306,586*	*251,886*	*349,886*	*305,686*

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Lodging					
GSO support staff site visits	0	1,590	1,750	2,670	1,890
GSO support staff setup	0	3,816	4,200	6,408	4,536
Conference Members	291,000	171,720	189,000	288,360	204,120
GSO support staff during Conference	15,300	50,880	56,000	85,440	60,480
Interpreters	10,200	7,632	8,400	12,816	9,072
Appointed Committee Members	1,600	3,816	4,200	6,408	4,536
Observer	3,000	1,272	1,400	2,136	1,512
Trustees Emeriti	3,800	2,544	2,800	4,272	3,024
Subtotal Lodging	*324,900*	*243,270*	*267,750*	*408,510*	*289,170*
Other					
Audio Visual	150,700	150,700	150,700	150,700	150,700
Equipment Rental	0	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Postage and Shipping	15,300	17,800	18,300	27,300	17,800
Subtotal Other	*166,000*	*172,500*	*173,000*	*182,000*	*172,500*
SUBTOTAL VARIABLE EXPENSE	**999,500**	**868,996**	**827,256**	**1,063,737**	**897,792**
CONSTANT REGARDLESS OF SITE					
Professional Fees					
Editorial Services	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900
Committee Assignment Software Support	500	500	500	500	500
Photography	4,300	4,300	4,300	4,300	4,300
Two Past Staff to support Conference Assignment	9,800	9,800	9,800	9,800	9,800
Document Translation	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Interpretation	20,700	20,700	20,700	20,700	20,700

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Subtotal Professional Fees	*142,200*	*142,200*	*142,200*	*142,200*	*142,200*
		0	0	0	0
Printing, Postage, and Supplies		0	0	0	0
Supplies	19,200	19,200	19,200	19,200	19,200
Equipment	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700
Printing Final Conference Report	36,300	36,300	36,300	36,300	36,300
Other Printing	5,800	5,800	5,800	5,800	5,800
Subtotal Printing and Supplies	*63,000*	*63,000*	*63,000*	*63,000*	*63,000*
SUBTOTAL CONSTANT EXPENSE	**205,200**	**205,200**	**205,200**	**205,200**	**205,200**
GRAND TOTAL EXPENSE	**1,204,700**	**1,074,196**	**1,032,456**	**1,268,937**	**1,102,992**
Variance to 2022 Actuals		(130,504)	(41,741)	236,482	(165,945)
Conference Members	133	135	135	135	135
Cost Per Conference Member	9,058	7,957	7,648	9,400	8,170
Change from 2022 cost per member		(1,101)	(1,410)	342	(888)

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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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2023 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM B: Review dates for the 2027 General Service Conference.

Background notes:

2022 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions:

The committee reviewed the dates for the 2026 General Service Conference. 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 76th General Service Conference. The committee selected the following dates in order of preference for the 76th General Service Conference: April 26-May 2, 2026; April 19-25, 2026; and May 3-9, 2026. The committee noted that these proposed Conference dates do not conflict with any significant holidays and allow the Fellowship ample time before the Conference to review and discuss agenda items. The committee asked that all Conference members be notified of the final dates for the 76th General Service Conference as soon as they are finalized by G.S.O. management.

Background:

1. List of past GSC dates
2. 2027 calendar with holidays & observances

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List of Conference Dates from 1993 to 2023

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
April 24 – 30, 2022
April 23 – 29, 2023

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2023 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM C: Review progress report on the development of a process using virtual meeting technologies for polling the G.S.C. between meetings.

Background notes:

Excerpts from the January 2023 trustees' General Service Conference meeting:

The committee continued their discussion of a draft plan process for polling the GSC between meetings that makes use of virtual meeting technologies and offered several suggestions to the plan and invited participation from delegate chairpersons. The committee agreed that alternate delegates should be invited by the sitting delegate if the Delegate cannot attend. The committee agreed that the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions would meet prior to the GSC meeting to accept admissions, noting that circumstances involving great emergencies may have their own deadlines.

The committee **agree to forward** the revised draft process plan for polling the GSC between meetings that makes use of virtual meeting technologies to 2023 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions.

2022 Policy/Admissions Committee Consideration

The committee reviewed with appreciation the progress report on the development of a process using virtual meeting technologies for polling the General Service Conference between meetings and looks forward to development of the process.

2021 Advisory Action of the General Service Conference

It was recommended that:

> The trustees' General Service Conference Committee develop a process for polling the General Service Conference between annual meetings that makes use of virtual meeting technologies, in order to enable real-time discussion and debate, broad participation, and greater efficiency than the current process.

Background:

1. Current process for Polling the General Service Conference Between Annual Meetings using email

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2. New Proposed Process for Polling the General Service Conference Between Annual Meetings using virtual meeting technologies

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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."

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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 weeks[4] 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.
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.

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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 position and vote.

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

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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, 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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POLICY/ADDMISSIONS
ITEM C
Doc.2

Videoconference Polling of the General Service Conference between Annual Meetings

When is this Polling Used?

- Great Emergency or taking any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole.
- To support or aide actions by the General Service Board or Related Services involving a matter of principle or basic policy.
- G.S.B. Bylaws Amendment or Certificate of Incorporation are expected, although not legally required, to be submitted to Conference delegates.

How will Polling Happen?

- Videoconference Meeting (Eastern Time):
- Meeting Time and Date - With as much notice as possible, and the least possible conflicts, the Conference Coordinator sets up the videoconference call, keeping in mind that circumstances involving great emergencies may have their own deadlines
- Quorum and Abstentions: The responsibility to vote is incumbent on each Conference member. Alternate delegates should be invited by the sitting delegate if the Delegate cannot attend. The Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions would meet prior to the GSC meeting to accept admissions. Following a rollcall, a quorum of two-thirds of all the Conference members who can attend the videoconference date, abstentions of attendees *will* be counted.
- Notifications about the Poll: Notice of the poll determination will be emailed to all Conference Members. To help guarantee the availability of each Conference member to participate, anyone whose email bounces back will be contacted by telephone.

What References were used to make this?

This polling process between Annual Meetings was based on the following resources: "How the Conference Operates,"[1], General Service Conference Charter, A Resolution, and the Bylaws of the General Service Board.[2] Please refer to the appendices of the A.A. Service Manual for details.

###

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2023 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM D: Discuss report on the Equitable Distribution of Workload process.

Background notes:

2021 Advisory Action of the General Service Conference

It was recommended that:

> The Equitable Distribution of Workload Process, as detailed in the Report from the 2020 Trustees' General Service Conference Committee, be implemented for the 72nd General Service Conference (GSC) on a three-year trial basis, with a progress report to be brought to the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions after each year of the trial.

Committee Consideration from the 2022 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions:

> The committee reviewed the progress report from the Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload regarding year one of the three-year pilot. The committee noted that the plan allowed fifty more Delegates to participate more equitably in the Conference Committee process and appreciated the spiritual aspect of that accomplishment. The committee also noted the workflow, communication, and scoring tool challenges documented in the report, as well as the significant challenges to areas and to the group conscience process caused by moving up the deadline for submitting proposed agenda items to September 15. The committee hopes that whatever can be done to address these challenges will be done over the next two years of the pilot.

Excerpts from the July 2022 trustees' General Service Conference Committee:

> The chair appointed a subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload to include Carolyn W. (chair), Mike L., and Francis G. as members. The committee looks forward to a progress report from the subcommittee at the October 2022 committee meeting.
>
> The subcommittee has discussed their scope, developed a schedule for handling EDW items, improved on EDW resources, and offered recommendations to the EDW workflow including the EDW joint committee meetings.

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Excerpts from the October 2022 trustees' General Service Conference Committee:

> The committee reviewed the progress report from the 2022 Subcommittee on EDW. The subcommittee chairperson highlighted their activities, prioritizing a focus on how to improve year-two in service to the General Service Conference. The subcommittee reviewed the 2022 Conference feedback about the joint committee meeting for EDW items.
>
> The subcommittee recommended using virtual meeting technologies before Conference Week to hold a joint committee meeting to discuss new EDW items. The subcommittee also created a brief summary of the EDW plan as a reference for the General Service Board.
>
> The subcommittee also highlighted a "Sand Box" tool that includes the carry over items from the Conference Committees to support the workload distribution of EDW items. The committee appreciates the work of this Subcommittee and looks forward to a progress report at the January 2023 meeting.

Background:

1. EDW Summary
2. 2022-23 EDW Progress Report
    a. 2022 EDW Interim Report – October
    b. 2022 Addendum to Interim Report - November
    c. 2022 Addendum to the Interim Report – December
    d. 2023 Final progress report - January

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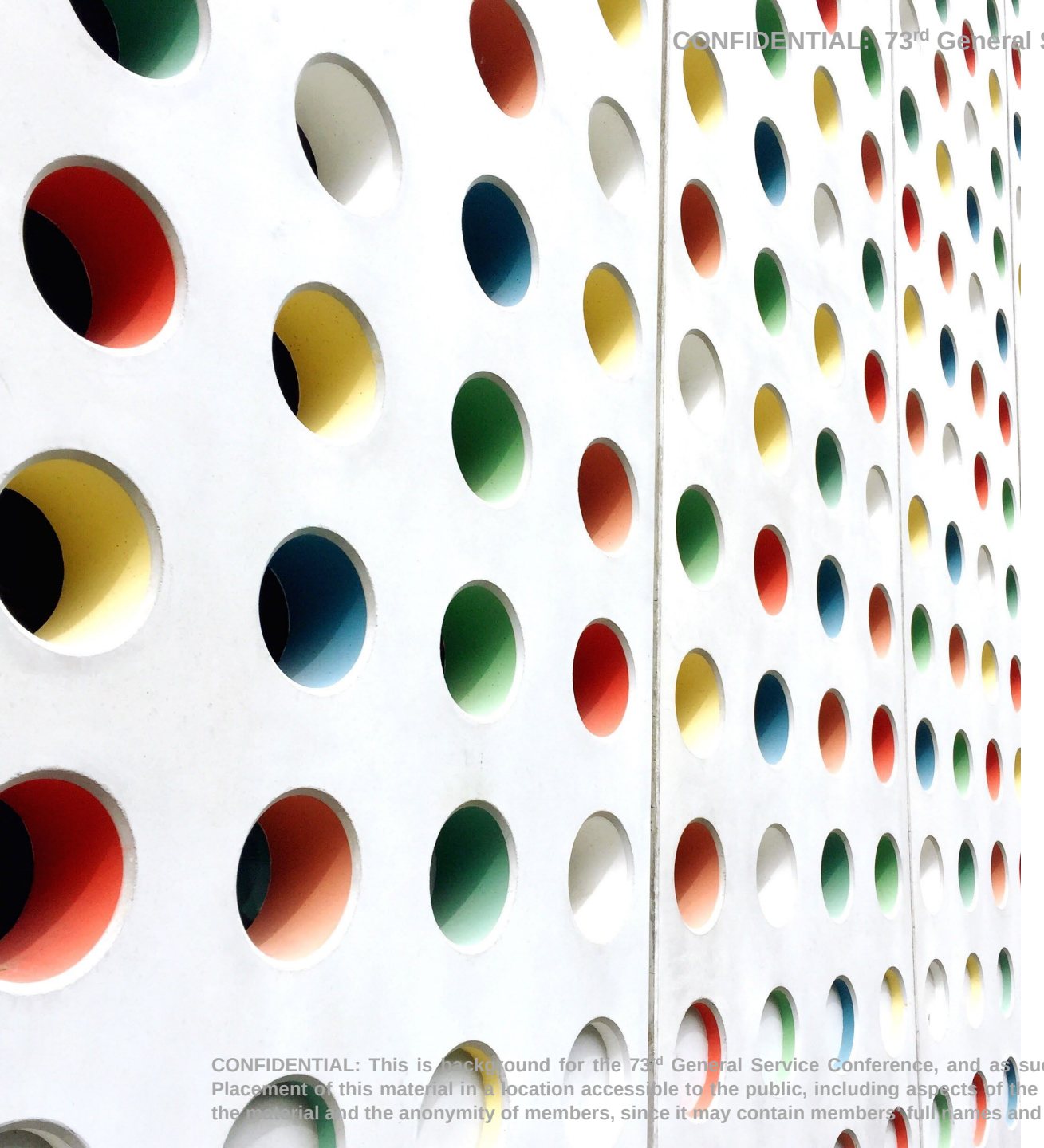

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF WORK (EDW)

3-YEAR PILOT

AS PER THE ADVISORY ACTION AT THE 71ST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE.

YEAR 1 – 2021-2022, 72ND GSC

- **YEAR 2 - 2022-2023, 73RD GSC**

YEAR 3 – 2023-2024 74TH GSC

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*Proposed Agenda Items (PAI)

*the total number of PAIs has increased significantly since the implementation of the PAI submission form

184 PAI (Oct GSB)
Literature (97), GSC (23), AAWS (18), AAGV (22)…

These are reviewed, and most are distributed to an appropriate Committee or Board to determine what action to take.

Options: forward to the GSC, take no action, refer to a Board or a Committee

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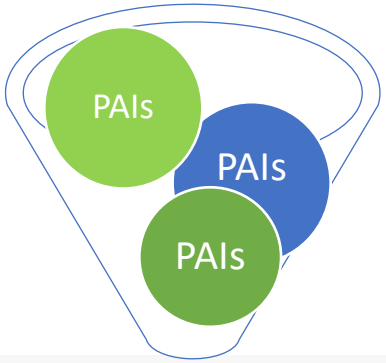
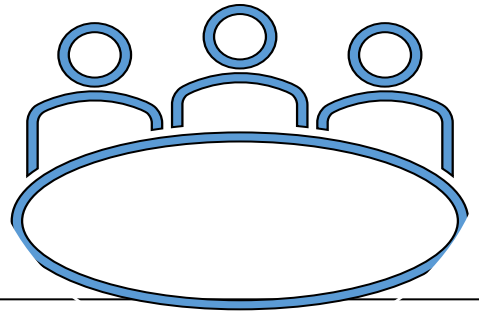
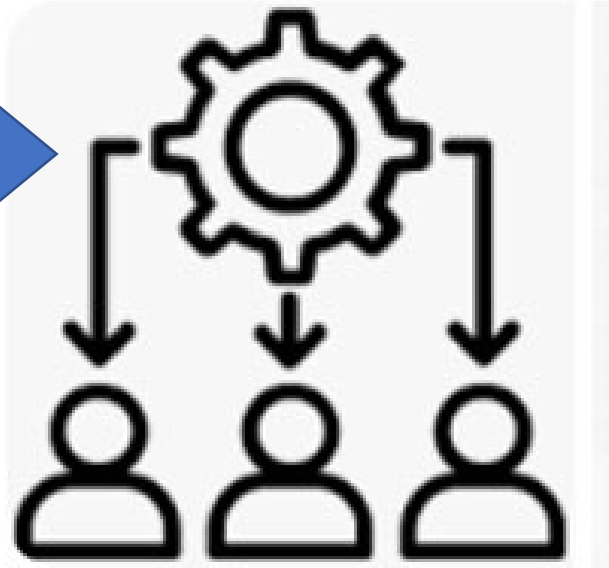


Year 2 EDW



EDW Pilot is a test to see if redistribution works to make conference committee time more effective and balance workloads.

The EDW subcommittee carefully reviewed Evaluation Forms from the 72nd GSC, and the report of the prior subcommittee .



Conference Committees

Based on the submissions some committees would have an impossible workload while others would have very little work.

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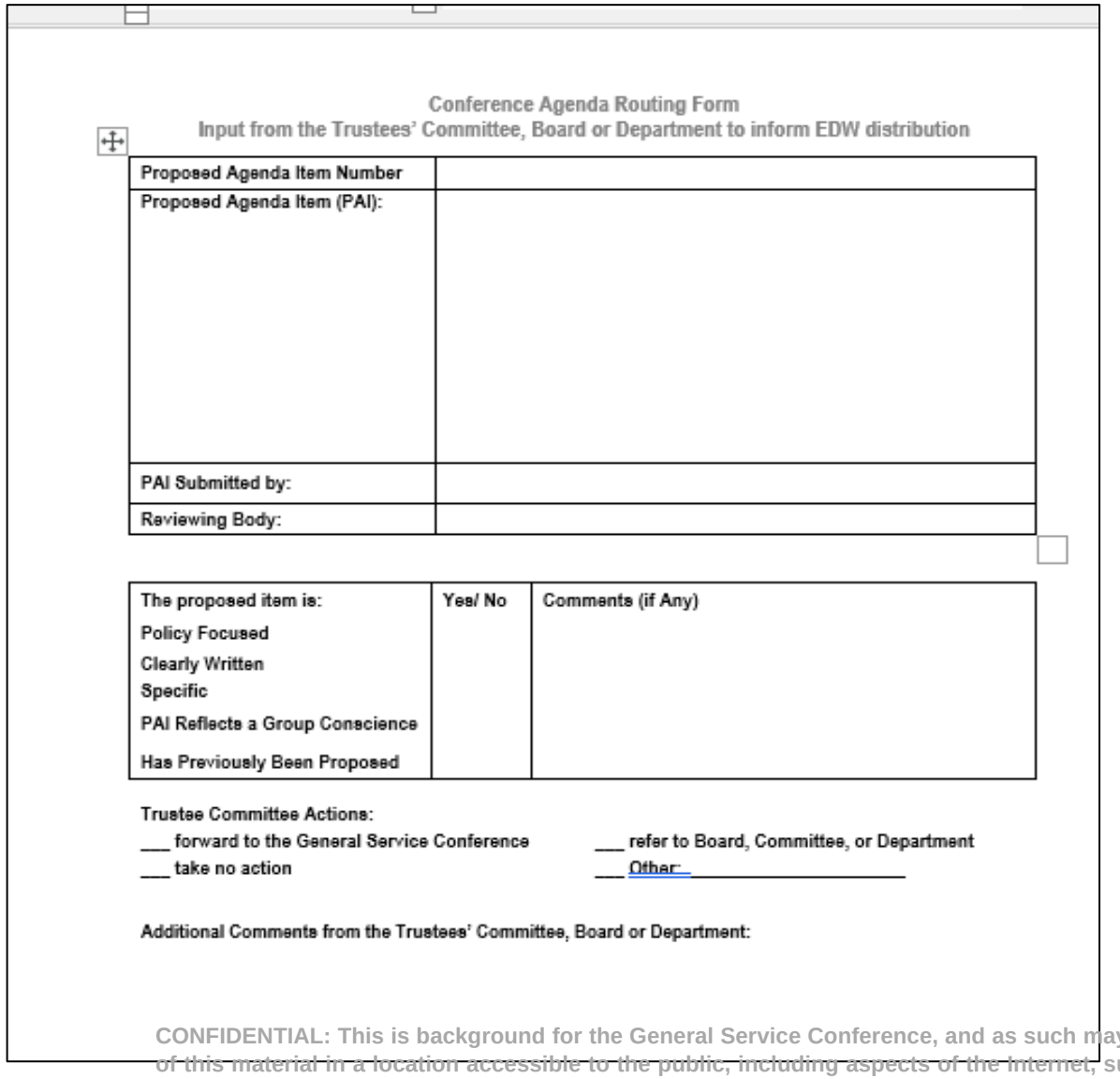
Year 2 EDW – Conference Agenda Routing Form



Conference Agenda Routing Form
Input from the Trustees' Committee, Board or Department to inform EDW distribution

Proposed Agenda Item Number	
Proposed Agenda Item (PAI):	
PAI Submitted by:	
Reviewing Body:	

The proposed item is:	Yes/ No	Comments (if Any)
Policy Focused		
Clearly Written		
Specific		
PAI Reflects a Group Conscience		
Has Previously Been Proposed		

Trustee Committee Actions:
___ forward to the General Service Conference
___ take no action
___ refer to Board, Committee, or Department
___ Other: _____

Additional Comments from the Trustees' Committee, Board or Department:

- Shorter simplified form
- No time estimates
- 2 lower sections completed by trustee committee or board
- Conference Desk fills in upper portions
- Returned to Conference Desk during/right after Oct GSB
- Those forward to the GSC to be provided to the EDW subcommittee for distribution.
- EDW subcommittee will distribute based primarily on balancing workloads for the conference committees.

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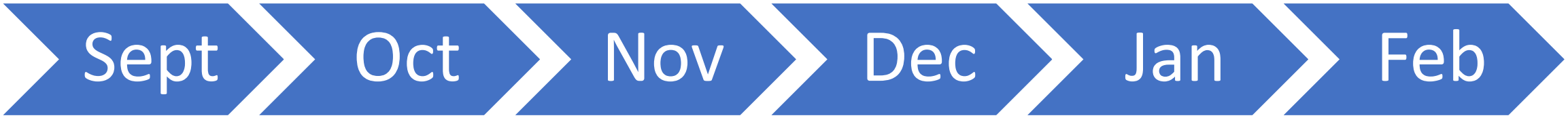
Year 2 Timeline

Progress Reports
Board Slates



Departmental Reports due Sep 30

CSPs and HA's Oct Feedback Call

Start **translating** "To Fwd "PAI Items, Progress Reports, Staff Reports, other available materials

Nov 15 deadline to receive Supplemental Background for PAIs

- Board Chair Report translation
- Election materials translation (TAL/Canada Resumes)

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EDW Subcommittee Next Steps:

- Receive the PAIs forwarded to the GSC (available after the Q4 GSB meeting) and distribute them as per the pilot, and with consideration of the feedback from year one of the pilot
- Forward the distribution recommendation to the GSB (through TCGSC) for approval by the Board.
- Consider lessons from year two of the pilot, and report those to TCGSC along with any recommendations.

The EDW Subcommittee thanks all who took the time to complete the GSC Evaluation Forms and provide specific comments on the EDW process. This feedback is essential.

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POLICY/ADDMISSIONS
Item D
Doc. 2a

Trustees Committee on the General Service Conference Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Work (EDW) Interim Report: Year Two of the Three Year Pilot

Based on the 2021 advisory action, "The Equitable Distribution of Workload Process, as detailed in the Report from the 2020 trustees' General Service Conference Committee, be implemented for the 72nd General Service Conference (GSC) on a three-year trial basis, with a progress report to be brought to the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions after each year of the trial "a sub-committee for the Equitable distribution of workload (EDW) was re-formed at the July General Service Board (GSB) meeting to deliver the 2nd year of this 3 year pilot."

The following is an interim report on the work of the EDW subcommittee to date in year two.

The EDW Subcommittee consists of Carolyn Walsh (Chair), Francis Gilroy, and Mike Lewis. Ex-officio members are Jimmy Dean, Trustees Committee on the General Service Conference (TCGSC) Chair and Linda Chezem, GSB Chair. Staff Secretary is Diana Lewis, GSO Staff on the Conference assignment.

The subcommittee was appointed at the July GSB Meeting and has met 5 times since. Additionally, the subcommittee chair participated in a meeting with the GM GSO, AAWS Chair, and TCGSC Chair regarding translation timelines and processes to ensure that EDW processes are aligned with translation timelines.

The subcommittee began by reviewing the GSC Evaluation Forms from the 72nd GSC with a focus on comments pertaining to the EDW pilot, reviewing the EDW pilot plan approved by the 71st GSC, and established the following priorities:

1) Simplify the EDW process wherever possible in year two.

2) Review and revise the scoring tool used by the trustees' committees to path the PAIs

3) Consider timelines and processes needed to ensure that the EDW process supports actions needed to meet the requirements set forth by the 72nd GSC conference to provide all background in all three languages of the conference on the same date.

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4) Support efforts to streamline/reduce background where possible; and encourage trustees committees to seek opportunities to submit materials as early as possible for translation.

5) Consider the feedback from the 72nd GSC; review the joint meeting purpose and process, and how that is impacted by EDW; propose improvements for the 73rd GSC and attach our recommendations to this interim report.

6) Review and update the distribution tool "sandbox" to reflect the change from the previous scoring tool to the new simplified Conference Agenda Routing (CAR) form.

7) Prepare the sandbox with the known items for the 73rd GSC. These include standing items for the committees and those still in progress from prior GSCs.

8) Adapt the PowerPoint created by the GSO Staff on the Conference assignment for office use to provide a simple reference for the GSB and attach it to this interim report.

Joint Meeting Recommendations

What	Conference Committee	Trustees Committee
Preparation	Read the report from the trustees committee and prepare any questions you may have. Review that background material for the agenda items for the committee and consider any questions you may have for the trustees committee to aid in your deliberations.	Provide a report on their activities since the last GSC and attend the joint meeting prepared for Q&A. Note that not all the activities in the report will relate specifically to Conference Agenda Items. This is an important part of how the Trustees are accountable to the Conference and receive feedback on their work.

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During the joint meeting	Conference Committee Chair is seated with the Trustees Committee Chair. No business is conducted during the joint meeting. Open dialogue, questions and feedback are welcomed.	The joint meeting is chaired by the Trustees Committee Chair. All available members of the trustees committee should attend. This includes Appointed Committee Members (ACMs) and Consultants. Note: Due to the fact that trustees serve on multiple committees, not all trustees will be available for every joint meeting.
Note	*Members of Trustees Committees (as well as Trustees, Directors, Staff etc.) are available during Conference Committee deliberations should there be any questions that arise where additional information or resources may help.*	

<u>EDW Joint Meetings:</u> Based on GSC Evaluation Forms completed, the 72nd GSC felt that the EDW Joint Meeting for committees with assigned items via EDW needed to be reconsidered and improved if it were to be retained.

<u>Committees with NEW EDW AGENDA ITEMS assigned via EDW:</u>

The subcommittee recommends:

- EDW Joint Meeting to be held virtually prior to the GSC
- Participants in the EDW Joint Meeting:
  - -Delegates from all committee that have first year EDW items assigned to them
  - -Trustees from committees the EDW items were reassigned from
  - -Staff support as needed based on the EDW items
  - *-Optional: Trustees from the conference committee's corresponding committee*
- Chair for this session is Chair of TCGSC (or designate)

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72nd GSC Feedback	**EDW Subcommittee Comments**
No need/no questions, not useful because this committee doesn't review the trustees report, trustees have nothing to report on new agenda items since no work has been initiated yet.	The EDW Joint Meeting is intended to be both simple and brief. It is an opportunity to ask any questions that may arise pertaining to the rationale for moving the item to the GSC, or other matters related to the agenda item if so desired.
Unclear purpose, process and expectations regarding the EDW Joint Meeting	At the beginning of the EDW Joint Meeting the following information is to be noted specifically: -overview of the EDW process -review the purpose of joint meetings (in general) -state the purpose of the EDW Joint Meeting
Concerns regarding the confidentiality and effectiveness of the committee process with multiple committees in a shared EDW Joint Meeting	As with all joint meetings, during the EDW joint meeting no business is conducted, or agenda items debated. During their confidential committee session every committee is encouraged to invite any member of the trustees committee for additional information if that is desired (EDW or other items). 72nd GSC feedback that there was not a lot to discuss at the EDW joint meeting; and the logistics, time and planning for meetings informed the decision to recommend a 2nd attempt at a shared EDW Joint Meeting with better clarity and structure, reassess and report back based on feedback from the 73rd GSC.

For Committees with CARRIED OVER EDW Agenda Items still in progress:

(Note: for the 73rd GSC the Conference Committee on Trustees has one carried over literature item)

For the 73rd GSC, the subcommittee recommends:

- The Sunday joint meeting with trustees' Literature Committee and the trustees' Nominating Committee should be separated between the first and last time slot in case additional time is required

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- The trustees' Literature Committee Chairperson coordinate members (or/and appropriate staff support) to attend the joint meeting between trustees' Nominating Committee and Conference Committee on Trustees to ensure that questions are addressed.
- Further analysis and action planning will be required based on the outcomes of 73rd GSC, how many EDW agenda items are carried over/still in progress from prior years. Additional experience with carryover items will better inform the most effective processes. Towards the end of the three-year EDW pilot, recommendations will be made based on broader experiences.

Excerpts 72nd GSC Evaluation Forms

EDW Joint Meetings:

- Complete and total waste of time.
- Committees should not discuss in front of other committees.
- We didn't have any questions with our EDW so it was really just a formality.
- Regarding EDW - this was a very effective means to communicate and hand off responsibilities.
- I was conflicted. Because of EDW, it felt less personal sharing a joint session with several other committees.
- A better approach to EDW joint meeting is needed for the remainder of the pilot. I propose this be done virtually preconference .
- All 6 committees in one room did not seem effective as it shared information between all the committees present in the room.
- It had the feeling of intrusion as though I shouldn't have been present for the other committees' time with the Literature trustees committee.
- Based on our agenda items there was not a great need for questions to be answered for us before going to committee.
- having no questions because we weren't sure what to ask, our committee left immediately after stating we had no questions and that might have been disruptive to the remaining committees
- We were expected to ask questions of the Trustees Committee without first having a committee meeting to determine what those questions might be. Also...it's very bad form to get into committee discussion of particular agenda items in front of the other conference committees. Could affect their discussion, or we could be affected by theirs.
- I know this was new and needed with the new EDW process, but our particular Committee did not have any questions for the Literature Committee. I do understand that others may have needed this, but we did not.
- My committee participated in the new EDW meeting with the Trustees Committee on Literature. I don't think we were clear about the fact that we were to come

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prepared with questions. I think we expected to get additional information from the Trustees Committee.

- I participated in the joint meeting about EDW as a receiving committee with Trustees Literature Committee and it was not very valuable, because we didn't know what to expect, didn't have questions prepared as a committee or individuals, and the EDW items had not been worked on by the Trustees so there wasn't anything for them to report.

Joint Meetings (not EDW):

- Good opportunity to ask non-agenda questions.
- We didn't have any questions so was brief
- I was quite lost, because it seems that there was no preparation...
- Helped to explain some of the questions about the background information.
- Wasn't informed and notified about what to bring to the meeting for input.
- It was a very good meeting but much too short for all the questions we had. I didn't quite know what to expect so I wasn't ready to fully engage with them.
- The report was informative, but the discussion with the Trustee left me with question.
- I had the opportunity to ask harder questions in an environment where there was respect and recognition that my interest in finding a solution was genuine.
- I loved being able to have an actual conversation and being able to ask questions, these opportunities allow members of the committee to feel more comfortable with the trustees vs only letting the Committee Chairs make those relationship.
- I was just confused why we were talking to trustees though not having committee discussions?
- needed more clarity about why we were there and what was expected of us, perhaps that information or reasoning could have been provided earlier

From the archives; Joint Meetings history and purpose

Historically, the joint meetings became more structured as the conference committee system developed. One of the earliest joint meetings might have convened in the late 1950s between the conference and trustees' literature committee.

From a 1958 interoffice memo: (from the conference secretary addressed to the secretary to the trustee's literature committee) outlining a suggestion that "the Literature Committees of Conference and the General Service Board meet together the first day of the annual conference." The reason for the joint meeting was to "establish relationship of trust and understanding since these two committees confer by mail during the year and to give the Conference Committee members a chance to ask questions about the Board committee recommendations."

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From a 1968 communication to the Conference Committee on Trustees: (It reads in part)

"Enclosed is the Agenda of the Joint Meeting of the Trustees' nominating Committee and the Conference Committee on Trustees. The purpose of the joint meeting is to give the Trustees and Delegates a chance to know one another and to discuss items of mutual interest to both committees."

From a 1972 communication: Same content as in the 1968 citation above, with one additional detail, which was, "and to hear the annual report of the Trustees' Nominating committee."

From the minutes of a 2005 GSO Staff meeting: (regarding the purpose of the joint meetings)

The chair of the trustees committee chairs the joint meeting and sits together with the conference committee chair at the head of the table. No business is conducted at a joint meeting. It was suggested that the staff member meet with both chairs to review the purpose of a joint meeting prior to the meeting. Joint meetings are an opportunity for the conference committee members to ask questions about the trustees' report. Conference committee members may have questions for the members of the trustees committee about background material which will help inform committee deliberations.

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POLICY/ADDMISSIONS
ITEM D
DOC. 2b

Equitable Distribution of Work (EDW) Subcommittee
Year Two of the Three Year Pilot
Addendum to the Interim Report to Trustees Committee on the GSC
15 November 2022

The EDW Subcommittee met on November 15, 2022, for the purpose of making its recommendation to the Trustees Committee on the GSC (TCGSC) for the distribution of the Proposed Agenda Items (PAIs) forwarded to the General Service Conference (GSC). If approved by TCGSC this recommendation will be made to the General Service Board for final approval.

The distribution process was informed by:

- The "Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool Plan" approved as a pilot by the 71st GSC
- Recommendations from the year one EDW subcommittee Report

The EDW Subcommittee further considered:

- Workload and time available in each committee to allow for full and thoughtful discussion on each item
- Continuity for items carried over from prior GSCs
- Alignment of same or similar topics within the same committee, if applicable
- Distribution to facilitate a meaningful conference experience for those delegates who are assigned to committees that have a low number of agenda items to discuss

Please see attached the proposed distribution, and graphs reflecting the agenda item volume before and after distribution.

Submitted with gratitude by the EDW Subcommittee.

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Subcommittee Detailed Final EDW Results Year Two

Committee	EDW Recommended	PAI #s	Agenda Item Submissions	Count
Literature	Finance	Group #1 - Discussion Topic (27 PAIs)	The trustee's' Literature Committee reviewed proposed agenda items related to the changes approved by the 2021 General Service Conference to the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and noted the importance and interest of the Advisory Action to the Fellowship. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions PAIs: The trustees' Literature committee agreed to forward to the 2023 Conference Literature Committee all proposed agenda items related to the changes in the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as one grouped item with the suggestion that the Conference Literature Committee consider forwarding the item to the general service areas for wider discussion looking to-ward setting a policy on how and whether to edit A.A. founder's words in our current literature. The agenda item would be discussed by the Fellowship during the 2023-2024 Conference year and considered by the Conference Committee on Literature at the 2024 General Service Conference.	1
Literature	Literature	Group #2 - Discussion Topic (30 PAIs)	The trustee's' Literature Committee agreed to forward to the 2023 Conference Literature committee all new proposed agenda items related to the Plain Language Big Book as one grouped item. The committee also discussed requests from some members regarding access to the draft of the Plain Language Big Book. After legal consultation, the committee agreed to provide a monitored closed reading room for Conference members only during the 2023 General Service Conference, where Conference Literature Committee members will be given first viewing of draft chapters in a controlled environment.	1
Literature	Corrections	Group #3 - Discussion Topic (4PAIs)	SMF 209 and service material - language from the AAWS motion requested/pending	1
Corrections	Corrections	PAI 125	Consider request to add content regarding sponsorship of persons in custody by Outside members of the fellowship be added to existing AA literature.	1
Finance	Finance	PAI 89	Consider request to analyze and change all current resources produced and maintained by AA World Service, AA Grapevine, La Viña and G.S.O. communications to clarify that the General Service Board ("GSB") is the entity which receives the voluntary A.A. contributions.	1

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			These include but are not limited to; Conference Approved Literature, A.A. Guidelines, Service Material, Press Releases, Newsletters, Digital Resources ("Literature"). Ensure all new literature, digital resources and released publications maintain the clarity and consistency of the General Service Board as the recipient of our Voluntary A.A. Contributions ("Contributions").	
Finance	Finance	PAI 154	Consider changing; throughout our literature, service pieces, guidelines, reports and on the aa.org website; any place where it is found to be unclear that our voluntary AA contributions are made payable to the General Service Board although they are sent to the General Service office for processing.	1
Policy & Admissions	Grapevine	PAI 78	Consider request that Alternate Delegates, of the 93 Areas, be given access to the Dashboard and Committee "Eyes Only" Material to ensure fully informed Area representatives arrive a the General Service Conference as fully Informed as possible if circumstances require their attendance.	1
Report and Charter	Report and Charter	PAI 90	Consider request to please consider making these changes to the current Service Manual 2021-2023 (see background for details of changes proposed)	1
Report and Charter	Report and Charter	PAI 54	Consider request to rescind the following Advisory Action of 2018 – Found in the 2018 Final Report: Pages 47-48: In the section "AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD" of The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, a footnote be added to the portion of the Resolution attached as part of the Original Conference Charter and the Current Conference Charter with the following text: Bill uses the term "registered." A.A.W.S. neither monitors nor oversees the activities or practices of any A.A. group. Groups are listed solely for purposes of accurate communications.	1
Treatment & Accessibilities	Treatment & Accessibilities	PAI 29	Consider request to do an organization wide "Accessibilities Inventory" of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure and evaluate what is found in an effort to communicate and improve how we function. Also, that an action plan for improvement to be made from the information gathered.	1
Treatment & Accessibilities	Treatment & Accessibilities	PAI 130	Consider request for the development of pamphlet directed to the alcoholic with learning disabilities, social disorders, developmental disabilities, and cognitive disorders. (Shared experience from those who have found recovery and have also dealt with these types of disabilities and disorders.)	1
CPC	CPC	From Trustees Committee on CPC	The committee discussed the pamphlet "A Member's-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous" and noted some concerns on the relevancy and usefulness of this pamphlet as a C.P.C. tool to communicate to professionals about A.A. The committee noted that some of the text could be offensive to those of varying abilities and may lead to an appearance of A.A. aligning with a specific religious doctrine. The committee	1

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			agreed to forward a suggestion to the 2023 Conference committee on C.P.C. to discuss retiring this pamphlet.	

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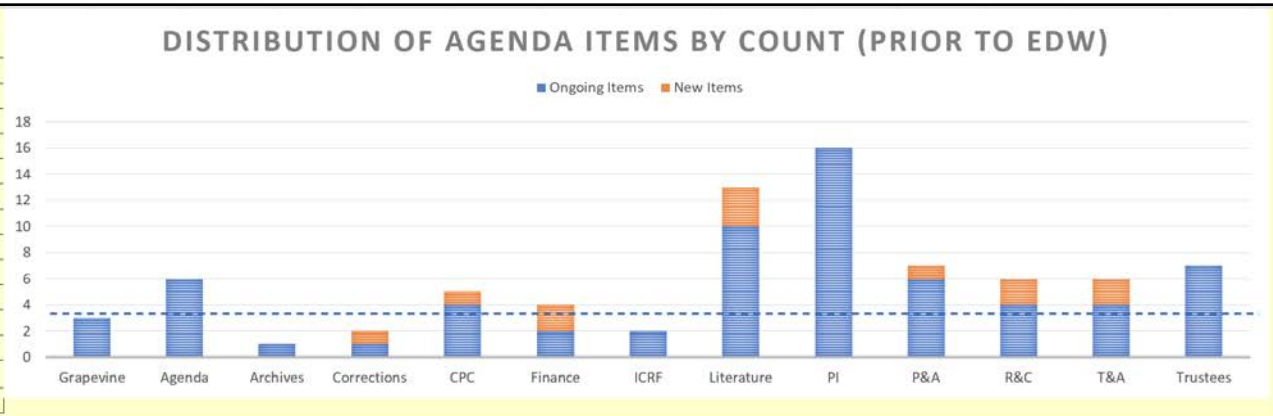
EDW Year Two – Item Distribution Graph (before and after distribution)

Items by Committee	Ongoing Items	New Items
Grapevine	3	0
Agenda	6	0
Archives	1	0
Corrections	1	1
CPC	4	1
Finance	2	2
ICRF	2	0
Literature	10	3
PI	16	0
P&A	6	1
R&C	4	2
T&A	4	2
Trustees	7	0
Average	**5.08**	**0.92**



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Finance	2	3
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PI	16	0
P&A	6	0
R&C	4	2
T&A	4	2
Trustees	7	0
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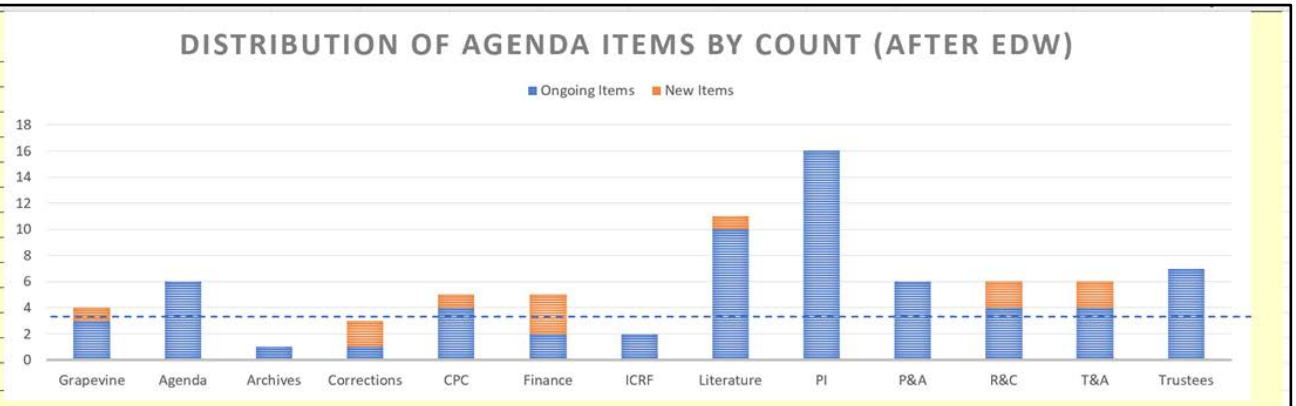

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Equitable Distribution of Work (EDW) Subcommittee
Year Two of the Three Year Pilot
Addendum to the Interim Report to Trustees Committee on the GSC
27 December 2022

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The distribution process was informed by:
-The "Proposed Process for Equitable Distribution of Workload and Scoring Tool Plan" approved as a pilot by the 71st GSC,
-Recommendations from the year one EDW subcommittee Report, and
-Pertinent feedback from the General Service Conference Evaluation form,
-Prior work and discussions of this subcommittee.

The EDW Subcommittee further considered:
-Workload and time available in each committee to allow for full and thoughtful discussion on each item,
-Continuity for items carried over from prior GSCs,
-Alignment of same or similar topics within the same committee, if applicable, and
-Distribution to facilitate a meaningful conference experience for those delegates who are assigned to committees that have a low number of agenda items to discuss.

Please see attached the proposed distribution, and graphs reflecting the agenda item volume before and after distribution.

If implemented as presented, the distribution will provide an opportunity for at least 30 Conference Delegates to more fully and equitably participate in the General Service Conference process.

Submitted with gratitude by the EDW Subcommittee.

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Literature	Corrections	Group #3 - Discussion Topic (4 PAIs)	The AAWS Board reviewed proposed agenda items received related to SMF-209 and noted the interest in and importance of the topic to the Fellowship. The AAWS Board agreed to forward the topic to the 2023 General Service Conference for discussion	1
CPC	CPC	From Trustees Committee on CPC	The committee discussed the pamphlet "A Member's-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous" and noted some concerns on the relevancy and usefulness of this pamphlet as a C.P.C. tool to communicate to professionals about A.A. The committee noted that some of the text could be offensive to those of varying abilities and may lead to an appearance of A.A. aligning with a specific religious doctrine. The committee agreed to forward a suggestion to the 2023 Conference committee on C.P.C. to discuss retiring this pamphlet.	1
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Report and Charter	Report and Charter	From AAWS	Engage in a discussion regarding the public posting of an anonymity-protected version of the Final Conference Report on aa.org.	1
Treatment & Accessibilities	Treatment & Accessibilities	PAI 29	Consider request to do an organization wide "Accessibilities Inventory" of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure and evaluate what is found in an effort to communicate and improve how we function. Also, that an action plan for improvement to be made from the information gathered.	1
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ICRF	2	0
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PI	16	0
P&A	6	1
R&C	4	3
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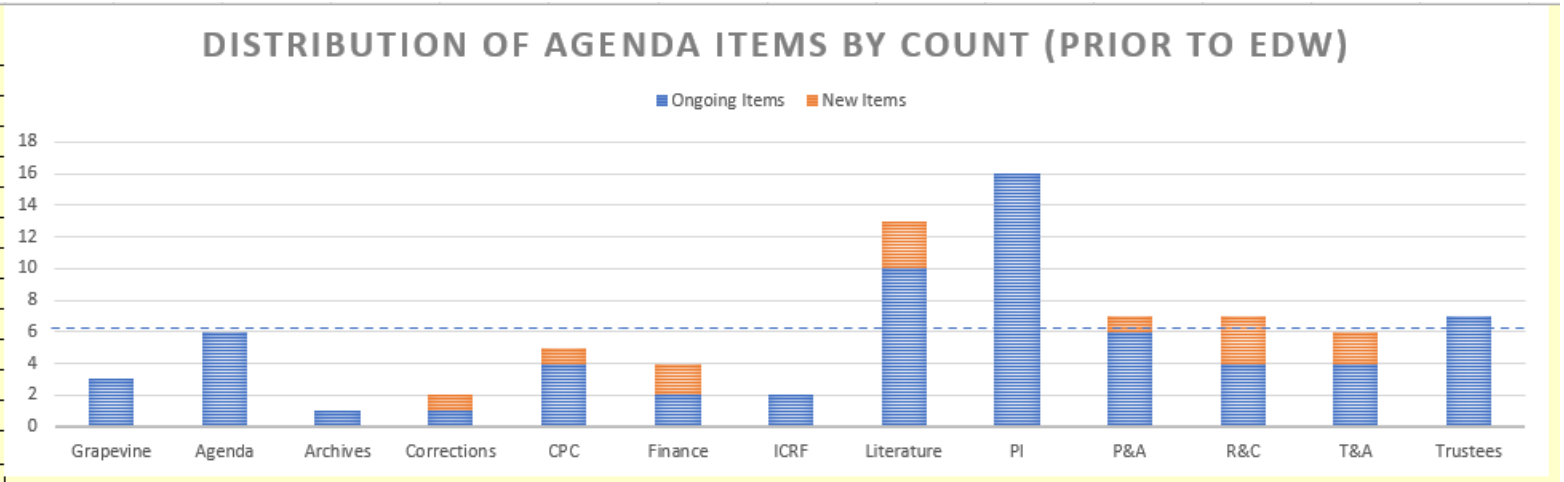
Trustees	7	0
Average	**5.08**	**1.00**



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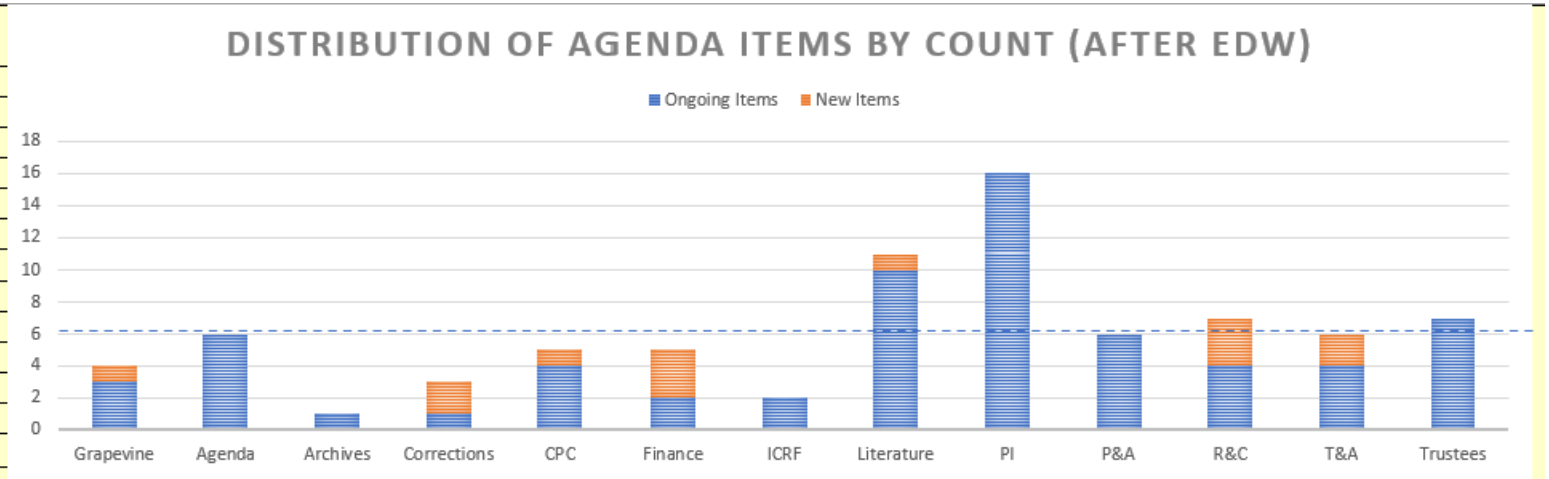

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2022 Trustees General Service Conference Committee
Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Work (EDW)
Progress Report: January 12, 2023

Subcommittee: Carolyn W. Chair; Francis G., Mike L., and Diana L., secretary

This report summarizes year two of the Three-year EDW Pilot and includes the committee's updates from October 2022 and December 2022 (see items D2a and D2b).

From the 2021 Advisory Action:

> "The Equitable Distribution of Workload Process, as detailed in the Report from the 2020 trustees' General Service Conference Committee, be implemented for the 72nd General Service Conference (GSC) on a three-year trial basis, with a progress report to be brought to the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions after each year of the trial."

To implement the 2021 advisory action, an EDW sub-committee was re-formed at the 2022 July General Service Board (GSB) meeting to deliver the 2nd year of this three-year pilot.

The subcommittee was appointed by the trustees' GSCC at their July 2022 meeting and has met eight times since. Additionally, the subcommittee chair participated in a meeting with the GM GSO, AAWS Chair, and TCGSC Chair regarding translation timelines and processes to ensure that EDW processes are aligned with translation timelines.

SECTION 1 – FOLLOW-UP ON TOPICS FROM THE YEAR ONE REPORT

A: **Impact of Advanced Timeline:**

In year two, there was an increase in multiple Proposed Agenda Items (PAIs) submissions on similar topics submitted by A.A. individuals, groups, and entities. Some PAI submissions stated that discussion at the Area level was not possible due to the advance timeline. In other cases, some PAIs received were discussed at an Area level but were not supported by a group conscience and were not submitted by a delegate. While submitting PAIs through an Area's group conscience is not a requirement, the number of PAIs that have not gone through this process has significantly increased during the two years of the pilot.

Several Areas adjusted their assembly scheduling to accommodate the advanced

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timeline and to facilitate an opportunity to gain the broader group conscience of the Area prior to submission. Other Areas have utilized Spring and Summer Assemblies to facilitate discussion.

Two PAIs that were submitted to extend the timeline were not forwarded to the GSC, to allow time for the completion of the 2021 Advisory Action three-year pilot and recommendations prior to making any further changes.

The committee considered effective ways align with the 2022 Advisory Action, "The compilation of all Conference committee background be made available simultaneously in English, French, and Spanish." The committee noted that the Conference Coordinator and the Chair of the Trustees' General Service Conference Committee have not reported any delays to the translation process due to the EDW pilot.

A) Document workflows, tracking and functionality

Year two experienced the following challenges and successes in the EDW processes and workflows; some that are discussed in more detail in the report:

Challenges:

- Seven out of the 184 PAIs were not included to the October/Q4 GSB agendas but were discussed for forwarding at subsequent meetings. This did not affect whether they will be included on the agenda for the 73rd GSC or not.
- Fillable PAI PDF form is cumbersome to use during the overall process. The committee encourages GSO staff to explore and implement an alternative format that streamlines the overall PAI process, including submission, disposition, consideration, and possible translation as Conference background.
- The Conference Agenda Item Routing (CAR) Form is cumbersome to process or use to populate the EDW sandbox tool, which employs the use of a spreadsheet.
- The interpretation of the timing of the Feedback Call between the Conference Committee and the trustees Committee chairperson. It currently occurs in October but some trustees' committees expressed concern that it does not occur in January.
- Interpretation of the input received by delegate committees on the GSC agenda. The subcommittee suggested that a brief summary of roles and responsibilities in accordance with the Concepts and the Conference Charter could be useful.

Successes:

- 96% of submitted PAIs were expeditiously processed by September 30th and

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addressed at the Q4 GSB meeting.

- Three committees (Grapevine, Corrections, and Finance) will participate more fully in the Conference process than they would have otherwise.

- Enhanced ability of five Conference committees to achieve the desired depth and substance of its policy-level discussions by more even allocation of agenda items.

- The committee noted that the current processes in place identified all PAIs, and encouraged Staff Secretaries to continue exploring effective ways to develop a tracking system and verify PAIs.

- The committee noted significant improvements to the overall process timelines compared to year one.

B) Coordination of Communications/Meetings of Trustees' and Conference Committees at and between Annual Meetings of the General Service Conference

Overall processes and communications improved in year two of the pilot, due to the experiences, lessons-learned, and feedback.

Joint Meeting: A significant issue in year one was the shared joint meeting for the committees with items assigned via EDW. Feedback forms from the General Service Conference made clear that the year one approach left some room for improvement. Please review the EDW Subcommittee Interim Report October 2022 for the detailed analysis and EDW subcommittee recommendations.

The use of technology has made it easy for Trustees Committee Chairs to maintain regular contact with their corresponding Conference Committee Chairs and Alternate Chairs throughout the year. While this is very beneficial~~;~~, further review regarding scheduling, time commitments, and consistent communication regarding what to expect (and what is expected) from these meetings may be needed.

PAI input from Delegate Committees: The PAI feedback calls held prior to the Trustees committees/Boards determining which items they will forward to the GSC have also been very effective and beneficial. The feedback from the conference committees has helped inform the trustee committee/board decisions and allowed for more input from delegates regarding those items they do or do not wish to see forwarded to the GSC.

While increased delegate input on the GSC agenda is a very positive thing, the evolution of how this input is provided may have created confusion about where, exactly, the authority and responsibility for the decisions made is held to forward or not forward PAIs

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for the GSC agenda is held. This is a GSB responsibility, as is responding to any questions or concerns from the fellowship regarding which items were or were not forwarded for the agenda. An unintended consequence of the current practice is that some conference committee chairs have been pressured by AA members advocating to get an item onto the agenda. Adding to the confusion is the fact that there are inconsistencies among the trustees committee chairs in regard to how much input the conference committee has on this process. All involved would benefit from an orientation tool that briefly summarizes roles and responsibilities in accordance with the Concepts and the Conference Charter.

C) Simplification of the scoring system

Year two of the EDW pilot saw the implementation of a Conference Agenda items Routing form (CAR form) to consolidate input from the Trustees' Committee, Board or Department and to inform EDW distribution. This form replaces the scoring tool from year one.

The reasons for this change were to simplify the process considering feedback that the year one scoring tool was time consuming to complete and EDW subcommittee feedback that the time estimates were not as useful as initially expected.

SECTION 2 – LESSONS FROM YEAR TWO – NEW CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNTIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

A) PAI forms/processes

It was previously noted in this report that the use of the current PDF document formats is problematic, creating additional work for staff not well suited to compiling and tracking data. GSO staff are encouraged to explore and implement an alternative format that eliminates the need to convert or recreate documents. Options that facilitate tracking, and foster consistency in the PAI submissions are encouraged.

It appears that the earlier submission deadline has resulted in some groups and members not fully engaging in group conscience process at the district or Area level prior to forwarding PAIs. While this is not a requirement, our experience has taught us that PAIs greatly benefit from the input of a cross section of AA members.

It also appears that some members have used the PAI form as more of a "suggestion box" or petition than as a document to reflect the outcome of a group conscience or a tool to submit a proposal for consideration by the GSC. There have always been ideas submitted by individuals and groups without the input of a further group conscience, this is not in itself a problem.

Rather, the current issues are the sheer volume of these items forwarded for consideration

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of the GSC that is time limited and must focus on matters affecting AA as a whole, and the missed opportunity to seek input and group conscience prior to moving an item forward to the GSC. If an Area does not agree that a matter should be forwarded to the GSC it may not be the best use of GSC resources to consider it. An informed group conscience requires hearing varied points of view, ensuring a right of participation of those we serve and those who serve us, and ensuring that the minority voice is heard and given careful consideration.

One action by the trustees' committees and boards in response to the receipt of large volumes of PAIs on a particular topic has been to move the topic forward to the GSC for discussion rather than forwarding (or not forwarding) any individual PAIs. The conference committee can then review the subject overall and determine if they have any Considerations to offer or wish to make any Recommendations. While this is very effective from an agenda perspective, it does not address the administrative workload of receiving, processing, and translating the high volume of individual items.

It was noted that the majority of PAIs were submitted at the deadline, creating a workflow crush that may be avoidable. It is suggested that all conference members be reminded that September 15th is the submission deadline, but submissions may be submitted prior to that date. It is hoped that if more PAIs are moved to their respective area for consideration and benefiting the group conscience and also staggering the submissions based on assembly dates.

Another factor in the late submissions may be the misunderstanding that the final conference report is required prior to submitting any PAIs. The final conference report is an excellent tool and an important resource, but it is also important to note that the outcomes of the GSC (advisory actions, recommendations that did not carry and committee considerations) are made available shortly after the GSC.

B) EDW Pilot processes and roles

In year two the EDW Subcommittee began by reviewing the pilot outline and discussing the best approach to accomplish the work. It was agreed that we would implement process improvements where possible, but that we would also adhere to the substance of the pilot plan as approved by the 71st GSC.

The Conference Coordinator created slides for EDW review and orientation for GSO Staff and employees. This was adapted by the EDW subcommittee and included in our Interim Report October 2022 for use as a quick summary and an easy reference tool for the Trustees.

There were differing views among the trustee committee chairs regarding whether the trustees committee had the options to direct PAIs to a specific committee. Review of the EDW pilot plan affirmed that all PAIs forwarded for the GSC agenda would be distributed

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through EDW. The proposed distribution is subject to the approval of the TCGSC, and final acceptance of the GSB.

The distribution was shared in the EDW Addendum Final of December 2022. The EDW subcommittee further noted that there were both quantitative and qualitative benefits to the distribution.

Quantitative Benefits of Distributing Conference Agenda Items: As a result of distributing agenda items to three committees (Grapevine, Corrections, and Finance), the EDW for year two enhanced the ability for 31 voting members to more fully participate in the Conference process than they would have otherwise. Furthermore, by redistributing the workload from two committees (Literature and Policy & Admissions), the EDW for year two similarly improved the Conference experience of another 22 voting members since they can apportion more time to their remaining agenda items.

Qualitative Benefits of EDW: The EDW subcommittee is confident that allocating agenda items, as suggested, will enhance the five Conference committees' (both distributing and receiving) ability to achieve the desired depth and substance of its policy-level discussions. In addition, by balancing the workload, our valued Staff Secretaries will experience similar benefits when performing their behind-the-scenes activities.

C) Translation processes and timelines

While this is not part of the EDW pilot, it was imperative that the year two EDW subcommittee considered translation requirements, processes and timelines for conference background material and make every possible effort to ensure that the EDW pilot did not cause any avoidable delays. The committee noted the new role of Document Translations Manger was filled, and that a Language Services Department was established in October 2022.

Simultaneous Translation of Conference Background: As requested at their July 2022 meeting, we received a progress report from the GSO General Manager who noted the Office's process changes to identify all Conference documents requiring translation early and the development of a visibility tool to track progress.

The General Manager noted the adjustments to deadlines to receive materials sooner and expanded on the recent onboarding of a Document Translation Manager to support efforts to distribute Conference Background simultaneous in English, French, and Spanish.

The General Manager noted all the internal coordination received and support provided by the Conference Coordinator including holding "office hours" with Conference

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committee secretaries, setting clear timelines, and creating a visibility tool that clarifies the entire workflow that tracks every document of Conference background.

Additional Items, Developed to Aid/Assist in the Translation Timeline:

- "Volunteering" Alternate Chairs of Trustees' Committees to oversee the extent of background material,
- Ensuring that Conference Background material is concise – yet comprehensive – will reduce volume while increasing usefulness,
- Enforcing timelines and deadlines to receive Area highlights from Panel 73 Delegates that will require translation,
- Developing line-item budgeting to document the cost of translation effort (see Translation Costs, below), and
- Utilizing the "Eyes Only" designation to exempt translation effort for Background items that do not have French- or Spanish-speaking Delegates.

Translations Costs: To increase translation capacity, we developed an in-house Language Services Department composed of a translation manager and two translators. This department is expected to have significant savings by reducing the use of outsourced translators.

SECTION 3 – THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YEAR THREE

- Work toward greater clarity and consistency across the trustees' committees regarding points of contact with the conference committee and/or conference committee chairs.
- What meetings occur and when? Who should attend each meeting? What the roles and responsibilities of the participants? Can the scheduling be done further in advance?
- GSO Staff to consider what the best options are for PAI submission (fillable forms, online forms, or?) and look for opportunities to align new processes with the CAR forms that are completed by the Trustees Committees.
- Consider possible methods to inform and support those submitting PAIs: Video resources? Webinar?
- Shared experience on the value of robust group conscience at the local or area level prior to proposing for the GSC?

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- Is there a need for temporary help to compile the PAIs at the deadline?

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SECTION 4 – QUESTIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON POLICY AND ADMISSIONS REGARDING PAI FORMS

- How and from who should members gain access to the PAI form?
- What is the role of delegates? Is there a need to prevent PAI forms being used as petitions/suggestion box forms? If so, how might this be achieved?
- What can be done to encourage submission prior to the deadline to prevent everything coming in at once?
- Consider character limits per field, and maximum attachment sizes to ease document management and translation and foster similarity in the amount of content attached.
- Should the PAI form ask specifically whether the idea has been discussed at an area assembly and what the outcome of the vote was?
- How heavily should whether the PAI was supported by group conscience factor into decisions to move items onto the GSC agenda or not?

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2023 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

ITEM E: Review report of the GSB Ad-Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada Service Structure.

Background notes:

2022 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions

The committee reviewed the Progress Report from the trustees' Ad Hoc Committee on the Participation of Online Groups in the U.S. and Canada Service Structure and expressed appreciation for the ad hoc committee's work. Given the Fellowship's interest in this topic and a desire for accountability to the Conference, the Conference Policy/Admissions Committee requests a progress report be provided as part of their background material in advance of the 73rd General Service Conference.

2021 Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference

It was recommended that:

The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation by listing groups who request to be listed in Fellowship Connection according to the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This replaces the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as "International Correspondence Meetings."

It was recommended that:

The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.

Background:

1. Report of the GSB Ad Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada Service Structure.

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General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous

2022 PROGRESS REPORT

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON

Participation of Online Groups in the U.S. / Canada Service Structure

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APPENDIX

Progress report from the 2022 Final Conference Report

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CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

Section 1 – Background, History and Current Reporting

BACKGROUND

The sudden onset of the pandemic in 2020, as we all well know, created a brand new (for most) environment for Alcoholics Anonymous groups around the world – the virtual one. Suddenly unable to meet in a face-to-face setting, the quick pivot to available, inexpensive meeting platforms using internet technology by many groups has led to interesting new challenges and has pointed up the need for new ways of thinking regarding the incorporation of this new platform into A.A. life in a manner that respects our Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

Participation in A.A. life up to 2020 had logically relied on geographic structural organization, particularly for general service work. What new opportunities have arisen? What are we missing? What are the challenges? What are the constantly changing emergent concerns? The virtual reality will be with us long past the pandemic, and we need to be looking to the future.

These and many other questions were top of mind for delegates to the 71st General Service Conference in the spring of 2021. Two advisory actions were passed directly pertaining to the topic:

I) *The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as "International Correspondence Meetings."*

II) *The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.*

An office working group was formed to respond to Advisory Action I, regarding the listing of virtual groups. It is important to note that Advisory Action I clearly recognizes online groups, and that the Working Group revised the New Group Form to facilitate that change. It is now called the new group listing guidelines/Form and is available at https://www.aa.org/gso-new-group-listing-guidelines-form

Regarding Advisory Action II, the General Service Board chairperson constituted an ad hoc committee of the GSB to explore the participation of online groups in our U.S./Canada general service structure. The ad hoc reported out to the 72nd General Service Conference. That full report is included as an appendix at the end of this 2022 report, and is also available in the Final Conference Report of the 72nd General Service Conference, available through your District Committee Member, Area Delegate or by emailing conference@aa.org. We are now offering our 2022 progress report, building on the first one in 2021. As well as attending various events pertaining to the topic through the US and Canada, the Committee has focused on communication within the

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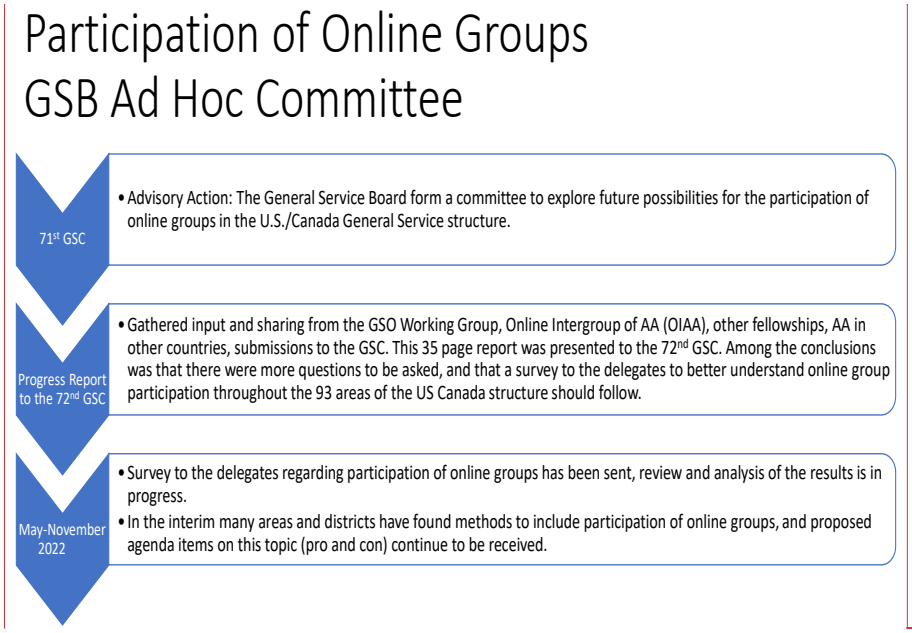
general service structure through the Delegates, as can be seen in the survey results in this progress report. Analysis and work continues.



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Section 2 – Current Database Information

As of December 6, 2022, the GSO database had 883 listings for virtual groups in the U.S./Canada general service structure. Of these 883 groups, 587 of them have a GSR as their primary contact. In April 2022, there were 595 active virtual groups in the database. That is a steady increase in the number of groups

There are currently two virtual districts that are listed in the GSO database: District 20 in Area 48, and District 25 in Area 72. Other areas may be in the process of forming or accepting virtual districts, but only two are currently listed by GSO. Both of the virtual districts have seen a steady increase in the number of virtual groups joining them.

Section 3 – Delegate Survey

A – Survey Data

The ad hoc crafted a series of questions for the Delegates. The initial survey was sent out on September 28/22 and 67 responses were initially received. A reminder notice went out on October 8 and an additional 4 responses were received. Total responses were therefore 71, for a 76.5% return rate.

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A follow up survey was sent out on November 4, seeking additional information about question #6 in order to try and get some clarity about the composition of virtual groups. 51 responses were received.

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B – Survey Questions

The actual survey as distributed follows:

General Service Board Ad Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada Service Structure

Dear Delegates,

Thank you for your help with gathering information regarding online/virtual groups in your Area.

As you likely know, the 71st General Service Conference passed two advisory actions related to the participation of online groups:

"The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as 'International Correspondence Meetings.'"

"The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure."

The Trustee's Committee, created as a result of the second advisory action, gave an interim report at the 72nd Conference, and now, is looking for more information from your Area. This is a check-in with you. We want to know the kinds of experiences and discussions you are having in your Areas. Our objective is to accurately reflect the current state of online/virtual participation of our Groups in the General Service Structure, and we sincerely appreciate your help in doing that.

Please note the following instructions:

- We are looking for **one response** per Area. We realize there are a few surveys being conducted right now, some of which have asked for broad distribution.
- For the purposes of this survey, we are requesting that **Delegates ONLY** fill out and return the survey.
- We encourage you to share as much as you wish. All comment boxes, large and small, allow for responses of 20,000 characters.
- The deadline for returning the survey is **Friday, November 4.**

(Begin Survey)

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CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

1. Area Number
2. In your Area, are both the Area and Districts welcoming participation of online/ virtual groups?
3. What discussions regarding participation of online/virtual groups in your Area /Districts have taken place? Are there discussions underway regarding future participation?
4. Are you aware of any online/virtual groups in your Area that have chosen to not connect to the General Service structure, either by choice or by circumstance?
5. What is your sense of the kinds of online/virtual groups in your Area? For instance, are they mainly new groups? Are they groups that transitioned from live to online/virtual? Do you know if they intend to stay in whatever their current format is?
6. To the best of your knowledge, do online groups in your area have members from multiple districts, from outside of your Area or from other countries?
7. What motions around this subject are underway or have been made/passed in your Area?
8. What is your Area doing as far as participation at District meetings and Area assemblies for online/virtual groups?
9. Has your Area invested in equipment for hybrid service events?
10. What is the cost to facilitate online/virtual group participation in your Area?
11. Are there virtual Districts in your Area?
12. In your Area, have there been any questions or discussions about forming a virtual Area?

Thank you for your participation!

C – Survey Response Overview

The Delegates from 76.5% of 93 areas responded to the survey with great enthusiasm. The conversations received were wide and varied and very well discussed at the area. Several were fascinated with the variety of the responses and both the similarities and differences from area to area.

The complexity of the issues was acknowledged. It was also noted that many of the challenges facing online groups are the same as those of brick & mortar groups, that they are universal challenges for A.A. groups.

Based on the surveys there are many areas that have found viable solutions to issues related to the participation of online groups. Rather than a dilemma needing to be solved, there may simply be a need for collated shared experience.

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It was also shared that areas are figuring it out. Those who haven't had the conversations yet will do so. This is an illustration of how sharing back and forth helps move the process forward.

While unity was recognized it was also noted that in one survey, the delegate answered "Yes, online groups are welcome" but further comments revealed that online groups were not actually being included.

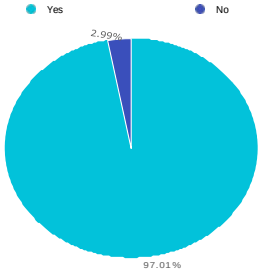
It was shared that there is a desire in the Fellowship for clarity and guidance, a thirst to know "what we're supposed to do." Some are waiting for that answer from the GSC. While the Conference can "generate some rules" it may be preferable to provide guidance through collated shared experience rather than binary answers and finite responses. It was noted the GSC can provide clarity when it comes to processes related to listing groups.

Sample Survey Responses

The following sample responses show the variety of perspectives and experiences throughout the service structure.

QUESTION 2

In your Area, are both the Area and Districts welcoming participation of online/ virtual Groups?



- We're paying attention to inclusive actions so that online folks at the hybrid assembly are truly a part of the business
- There is a Linguistic District that will not allow online / virtual only groups to participate
- They are welcome to participate in-person at Area
- One County currently considering addition of a virtual District
- We were clear as an area that if your virtual group elected you as a GSR, you could participate at our area assemblies with the encouragement to register
- Area and district service events and general service meetings encourage the participation of online groups
- Some of our members who choose to only participate via in-person meetings have not necessarily been so "welcoming" of the online groups
- Though it's not the preferred practice of meetings with many, it's welcomed
- Waiting for the GSB to create the guidelines so we have something to follow
- Our Registrar sends a welcome letter and CCs the DCM to invite the group to fully participate with their voice and vote at both district and area
- They have allowed us to keep A.A.'s hand extended. We also recognize that they are here to stay.

QUESTION 3

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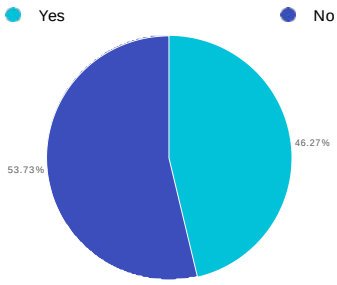
What discussions regarding participation of online/virtual groups in your Area /Districts have taken place? Are there discussions underway regarding future participation?

- We treat them as any other group and looking to GSO for guidance
- Our Area is waiting for information from the Conference that is conclusive and gives adequate direction
- Concerns about members from other countries serving as GSRs (or being the majority of the members) and following the proper process for listing with GSO were discussed
- A virtual forum in addition to the in-person regional forums would be appreciated
- We have had many local discussions generally, without it necessarily resulting in formal motions
- Things start to get a little interesting when we start discussing HOW they should be included
- Some are more tempted to encourage A.A. as a whole to make a unified decision via the Conference
- Curious on a larger scale how a virtual area would work in our general service structure
- We are watching the information coming from the subcommittee on online groups and sharing this information with the Area
- Few online groups that we have now do not want to participate at the District level, Area level, or register with GSO
- How can we fully integrate virtual only groups into the service structure of Area
- Discussions center around whether a virtual group should join the virtual district or the geographic district of their choice
- Area has seemed to embrace online/virtual groups as if they are any other groups
- Our last two election assemblies have been hybrid and two members online were able to stand for Area positions and were chosen to serve
- They are asking how do they fit into the service structure
- Still awaiting clearer guidance from GSO on fitting online groups into the service structure

QUESTION 4

Are you aware of any online/virtual groups in your Area that have chosen to not connect to the General Service structure, either by choice or by circumstance?



- As with in-person meetings, the online meetings are challenged to get and keep GSRs
- One comment has been that the group sees their role as being national /international and the current response from GSO to virtual groups is to frame them in terms of geography or affiliation with existing service structures
- Many groups are confused about the difference between being a "registered group" and having their meeting listed
- Too early to know
- There were some meetings set up by individuals that never participated in General Service

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- Some want absolutely nothing to do with the General Service structure
- Only groups listed with GSO are on our current schedule
- People are unsure of how to proceed. At the 71st Conference, we awaited direction Then we were told it would happen at the 72nd. Didn't happen there, either
- They are not connected because they do not know how to do it. This is the purpose of guidelines

QUESTION 5

What is your sense of the kinds of online/virtual groups in your Area? For instance, are they mainly new groups? Are they groups that transitioned from live to online/virtual? Do you know if they intend to stay in whatever their current format is?

- Some online groups were in-person meetings before the pandemic and have chosen to remain virtual
- Other groups decided to convert to a hybrid platform after the pandemic
- Groups are new with hybrid or virtual platforms and intend to stay that way
- Some do intend to stay with their current virtual-only platform
- There are MANY more than that that are still meeting virtually that have not changed their status
- An online group is formed as an online group and intends to stay online
- An in-person group transitions from in-person meeting to online/virtual and intends to stay online
- An in-person group transitioned online, half of the group wants to remain online while half of the group returns in-person
- Majority intending to stay virtual
- We have many that are not structured and are not interested in becoming part of the General Service Structure
- New groups being developed for the purpose of reaching more people outside the area
- Decided to remain online/virtual
- Plan to stay in their current format
- Have several new virtual groups
- Not aware of any groups that were previously physically meeting that have transitioned to online/virtual only
- A lot of new groups. Some that transitioned from in-person to either online only or Hybrid. They plan to continue this process
- Our area is open to online groups
- Strong resistance to online assemblies
- We have a number of very strong virtual-only groups that began during the pandemic, all of which plan to remain virtual
- Have a few virtual groups that transitioned from live to virtual
- Have out-of-state participation and indicate they wish to continue in a virtual format
- Wanted to stay virtual created and registered a new group
- Will continue to offer virtual/hybrid to support the members from out of the area who are regularly attending the group
- Some groups and meetings seem to want to meet without any connection to the District, Area and AA as a whole

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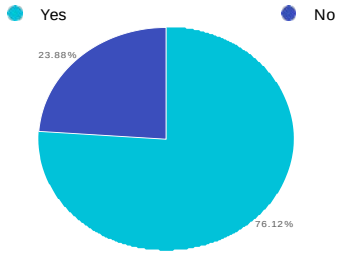
- Seeing a substantial decline in online groups and online groups going dark as we move back to in-person groups
- Some groups have decided to permanently stay as online groups, discontinuing in-person meetings
- Some people with accessibility issues have opted to remain connected online as independent groups
- Some AA members seem to prefer to meet online, whether for convenience or safety or both
- Most intend on staying online
- Most intend to stay in their current format
- There was a natural elimination when face-to-face meetings became available again
- Some face-to-face groups have chosen to remain virtual due to the difficulties of finding trusted servants

QUESTION 6

To the best of your knowledge, do online groups in your area have members from multiple districts, from outside of your Area or from other countries? (See also follow-up questions after Question 12)



- Members of the group include U.S. members and Ireland members (among other countries). The group is trying to figure out where they belong, where they should send their 7th Tradition funds, etc.
- Most of them have members from all over the U.S. and in some cases, other countries. That is primarily due to them sharing meeting codes on social media
- For the groups that have contacted us we encourage them to use the Traditions to guide the group conscience when making the decision on what District and Area to join
- Some with members from multiple Districts, and possibly other Areas
- Many are worldwide attended online groups
- Mainly multiple districts
- Many have members from across the state at the least
- Other states, not necessarily other countries
- One group who has home group members from Italy, CO, and PA
- Have members from other states and multiple districts, no other countries
- Have regular members from around the country and the world
- Some members of Europe participate in our virtual meeting
- GSRs from other Regions (and other provinces) and French-speaking members from everywhere where French is spoken (Canada and Europe)

QUESTION 7

What motions around this subject are underway or have been made/passed in your Area?

- Motion to have a two-year hybrid trial for assemblies
- Motion to separate Website Coordinator as a separate position

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- Ad hoc committee to review this complex Tech. Coord. position
- Currently have an ad hoc investigating the question (maybe hybrid area assemblies e.g.)
- Passed: to include virtual groups that register in our area to have a vote and GSR at the area level
- We passed a motion almost 2 years ago to offer Hybrid Assembly and have been offering it ever since
- The only motion is to provide a means for online/virtual to participate.
- Motion - Should we list meeting times on website for online groups that are not registered with GSO
- Motion to create a technology committee to run the hybrid meetings, rather than volunteers
- We passed a proposal in October 2021 to welcome a virtual district
- Our votes have been roughly 50/50 that the ACMs move to virtual only, rather than hybrid as they are now.
- The Area committee voted in June 2021 to "resume Area meetings and events to in-person beginning with our September Area quarterly meeting; as long as all safety and health requirements are met." We do not offer an online or hybrid option to participate
- We have an ad-hoc committee looking into the feasibility of hybrid assemblies with two-way participation to include all groups in Area
- We voted to continue hybrid meetings through this year
- There's a motion in one district to "force" all groups into a hybrid format
- Area has agreed to make its committee meetings hybrid, but otherwise has not moved beyond listing meetings that districts choose to list
- Develop an Online District
- Motion was made and passed to hold all Area service meetings in a Hybrid format
- Our Area has adopted GSO actions
- We plan to create a separate (virtual) District to bring them together within our area

QUESTION 8

What is your Area doing as far as participation at District meetings and Area assemblies for online/virtual groups?

- Must have group number from GSO in order to participate in the Assembly
- We are hybrid for Assemblies and Area Committee Meetings
- All voting meetings/assemblies at our area level are hybrid
- First hybrid election assembly in November. Eligible members may qualify or vote in either space, but the eight area officers we are electing must be willing and able to attend all future assemblies and area meetings, etc. in person
- The plan is to have hybrid capabilities for our February 2023 Assembly
- We have a virtual component to our business meetings and Delegate pre- and post-Conference reports
- All voting must be in person
- Holding in-person Area Committee Meetings and Assemblies with an online component (or hybrid)
- Leaving the districts to make their own decision
- Some districts are operating hybrid to accommodate online/virtual groups
- Hybrid if they have an online group
- We are holding our area committee meetings and assemblies hybrid for now

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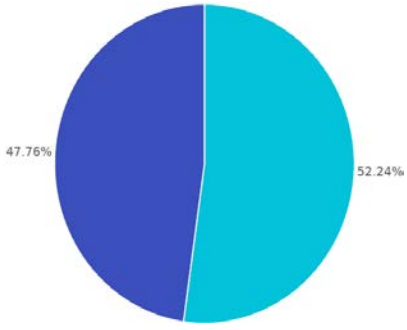
- Area meetings are hybrid. Many Districts are also either online or hybrid
- Currently looking into devices for the committees to use at Area Assembly to allow participation on Service Committees that meet during the assembly for those who attend virtually
- We are now offering participation by virtual as well as in person
- Districts are taking various approaches to include groups, but the Area is not
- Added an additional assembly each year that is virtual
- Voted not to have any online or hybrid District or Area meetings
- Most district meetings remain virtual, and area meetings and assemblies are hybrid
- Hold all our Area service meetings in a hybrid format
- Our Area Committee Meetings are hybrid. Our Assemblies have been virtual since the start of the pandemic
- Our quarterly Area events are now all hybrid. We have ad hoc committee defining hybrid events to eventually incorporate into Area handbook

QUESTION 9

Has your Area invested in equipment for hybrid service events?



- Have invested in the equipment
- Purchased zoom account
- Technology purchases for hybrid capability
- Relying heavily on tech 12 for assemblies

- Purchased four identical laptops with cameras so all cables could be inter-changeable, with warranty protection and carrying cases
- May need to purchase a portable soundproof booth for assembly interpretation
- Two districts have invested in some equip-ment
- We will be voting on funding additional equipment
- Zoom subscription
- Purchased a new laptop and some other type of equipment
- Purchased cameras
- Spent $3800 to have the ability to hold the assembly meetings in a hybrid format.
- Around $7.5k CDN

QUESTION 10

What is the cost to facilitate online/virtual group participation in your Area?

- $1,000 per year
- We're currently$4,600 over our $5,000 budget for the year
- Approximately $150 - $200 per quarter
- Hotspot -$500 initial fees and purchase, $50 per month to use
- Onetime hardware purchases (laptops with cameras, wi-fi routers, cables, carrying cases, etc.): approx. $4000
- Hotspot data plan (multiple devices): currently $235/month

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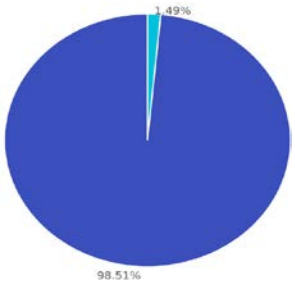
- Travel reimbursement for tech committee members: average $345/month
- Equipment for the hybrid meetings was approximated $2,500 - laptop, two-way
- Mixer/interface, Shure microphones, mic cables, $700 360degree camera, $700 iPhone for wi-fi hotspot. Four tables for committee use - $900. Zoom account ($250)
- Price of zoom to approximately $1000 per quarter
- Zoom license, a MiFi, an investment of maybe $1600
- Less than 20 dollars a month. Zoom subscription
- Zoom account which cost us roughly $40 a month
- Zoom account (around $150 annually)
- Zoom account each month equaling approximately $17
- Equipment and services, it is up to around $4000
- Spent under $2500 for all the equipment
- The budget is $2900
- Cost of making our assemblies fully hybrid was approximately $1,500
- Spent less than $2000
- Tech 12 runs at about $2,500 per assembly
- Have a budget of $3000 for the year for doing Zoom and hybrid
- $150.00 for zoom account
- $500-$1,500 per year
- Approximately $2000 per assembly
- Cost to purchase equipment was approximately $1,500 – cost is $150 per year for a zoom subscription
- $1000 per year
- For a group of less than 100 people: +/- $200; for a group of more than 100 people: +/- $800
- $500, more or less
- Estimates are in the $20,000 to $30,000 region

QUESTION 11

Are there virtual Districts in your Area?

(The majority of the answers were no comment – below are some of the comments)



- I do not sense that that is an interest at this time
- Mixed feelings about the need or desire in our area
- Not come up as a formal motion at any point yet
- Not yet but some are discussing
- Possibility was studied and not retained
- Asked the body of area if they wanted a district or area for virtual. Very little participation discussing developing one

QUESTION 12

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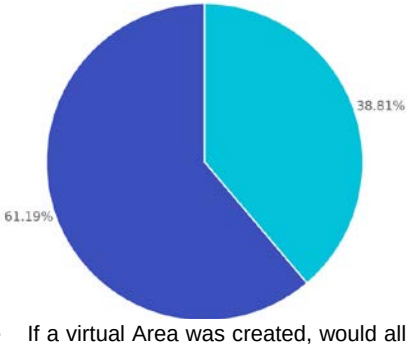
In your Area, have there been any questions or discussions about forming a virtual Area?



- Discussed a separate conference. No definitive action
- Majority of our area was in favor of participation of virtual groups but had mixed feelings about a virtual area being the best answer
- There have been questions about the process for forming a virtual district or Area
- How much a virtual Area still potentially be limited?
- If a virtual Area was created, would all virtual groups be forced into it? Or only those virtual groups that choose to join it?
- Is a virtual service structure of its own (with its own GSC and GSO) possible?
- What about groups with international participation?
- Where does hybrid fit in?
- Ad hoc committee now studying this topic
- Discussed the logistics of this with regard to U.S. Canada being GSO's purview
- Discussions to see what GSO is going to do about a virtual area
- Received many questions regarding a virtual Area
- During my Conference report backs, some discussion was had regarding a virtual area. Many comments indicate this would be a good idea
- More of a question of what is GSO doing and the Ad Hoc subcommittee on Online groups
- Discussed about whether or not we need another Area
- Tons of discussions - creating even more divisiveness of thoughts and groups
- Have already discussed this without further details from GSO, pending
- The issue was raised at one assembly, but there was no final suggestion/ recommendation reached. The general consensus seemed to favor having online groups be a part of the General Service Structure in the geographic location in which the majority of the members lived.

Follow-up Questions:

Sent as a separate survey, to clarify Question 6 responses concerning make-up of online groups

QUESTION 1

Area Number

QUESTION 2

Do online/virtual groups in your Area have members from multiple Districts?

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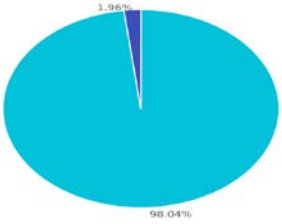

- Yes, there are members from multiple districts
- I will say yes because that's what I understand but I have not personally polled any groups
- Membership in virtual groups seems to be independent of physical location
- Members from different areas and at least at one point international
- Some do and some do not
- But anchor in one district they choose
- People can login from anywhere, they are not all in the same districts
- I know that one group does, and the plan is for the GSR to attend the registered District meeting Zoom, right now the GSR & Alt attend and are in the local district. I believe the same is true for another, but it has been a long time since I attended that one. Not sure about others

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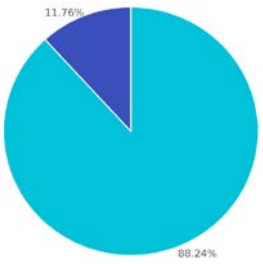
QUESTION 3

Do online/virtual groups in your Area have members from outside of your Area?



- Zoom has reunited many members of my home group who have moved away from the area
- A few, but not many
- I again have heard that this is probable but have not personally investigated
- Membership seems to be drawn by the topic of the virtual group, the time held, and the members in attendance
- One group has a GSR who lives in Texas
- Yes, these groups have members from around the U.S. and Canada. It is also common for members who have relocated from the original district/area to stay connected with the group and its members. One online group has an annual in-person picnic to allow its members to meet; members fly in from around the U.S. to attend.
- Members from different areas and at least at one point international
- But anchor in the area and district the operator lives
- Yes, there are groups near other areas that have members from outside the area. This includes both virtual groups and physical groups. For example, there are several groups from Illinois that have asked to participate in Area 24 structure. Those groups participate in District 10 in Dubuque, Iowa
- Some do and some do not
- Yes, some regular attendees are from other Areas, but do not hold or want to hold office

QUESTION 4

Do online/virtual groups in your Area have members from outside of your Country?

- Unknown, but I assume so
- I don't know
- There are two very large meetings that have hundreds of people attending virtually from around the world
- Some virtual groups have members in Mexico and Europe
- The numbers are small but yes, they do have regular members attending from other countries besides the U.S. and Canada
- I did hear that a group had some members who joined that were from other countries
- Some virtual groups have members in Mexico and Europe
- Not at the moment, but there is nothing to stop it in the future
- Members from different areas and at least at one point international
- Don't know

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- None that I am aware of
- I am forced to enter an answer here, but the truth is I honestly don't know :)
- Not that I know of
- Not consistent/not core members
- Not yet
- I am aware of one group that meets this description. I am unsure if there are more. Additionally, a different twist on the question: there are some A.A. members in this Area who consider their home group to be a virtual group that is in another country
- Only one does but that group is linked / registered to Online Intergroup ONLY
- Australia

Section 4 – Regional Forums Workshops and Presentations

Through our Regional Forums (the virtual Forums in 2021 as well as the Regional Forums in 2022), opportunities were provided for interactive sessions on topics of concern and interest in the various Regions. And of course, some of those topics included the current state of online groups. Reports from the workshops and presentations brought up some specific ideas and themes, including:

- A perceived need for guidelines from GSO regarding guidelines for hybrid and virtual meetings, as well as for virtual/online newcomers
- Finding unusual approaches to service work as an online group
- Concerns from members whose home groups are meeting online that there is a perception that "people on Zoom are not really there"
- Interesting perceptions on how online might affect certain current meeting /group structures
- A question about how we use the technology to bring people together who wouldn't be able to otherwise, without just tacking onto geographic structure
- Further guidelines and information regarding anonymity available to newcomers
- A comment that virtual/online newcomers are chomping at the bit to serve, and let's show them how
- Sharing regarding the "nuts and bolts" of how to set up and use formats such as online and hybrid meetings, as well as how to adhere to Traditions (7th and 11th, for instance, among others)
- Concerns about what happens as brick-and-mortar meetings start up again, and the longevity of virtual/online, and costs involved with hybrid
- It was noted a few times that there are some online/virtual meetings that are reluctant to share their information publicly and are distributing spreadsheet lists of virtual meetings
- Primary purpose remains the same no matter what kind of meeting, so perhaps we should stop differentiating

The workshop attendance and discussions tended to reflect the perspectives of members who are actively involved with virtual groups. A consideration going forward might be programming full Forum workshops on the topic so all in attendance can both hear and share experiences.

Section 5 – International Perspectives from World Service Meeting

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CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

The World Service Meeting held virtually October 1-6/22 provided a vital opportunity to continue international discussions that had been started at the 2020 World Service Meeting regarding online and virtual meetings. The WSM is not a policy making body, but rather is a global sharing session that is one of the ways worldwide A.A. unity is maintained. The theme, "Carrying the Message of A.A. in the Digital Age," allowed for the creation of workshop and presentation topics which gave a snapshot of where the world is right now in terms of incorporating groups into their service structures.

Much as in 2020, internationally, various structures are in various stages of discussions about online/virtual groups. In many places, there is a great deal of engagement and some movement forward. In others, there are still questions about the place of online groups or meetings within their structure.

It is important to note that the ways the members communicate, and the manner in which structures have organized themselves, varies greatly from structure to structure. In the U.S./Canada structure, virtual groups are recognized, and then it is up to the local level to determine the way that groups will be incorporated. That is not necessarily the case around the world.

In one workshop focused on integration of virtual groups into the General Service Conference structure, there were a series of interesting observations. Among them:

- For many countries, online groups are listed in order for alcoholics who want to attend can find them, but at this time listing the groups does not necessarily mean they have been accepted into the service structure in that country or region
- Many European countries reported that they have incorporated online groups into their structures with full participation with both voice and vote
- In some countries, online groups have no voice and no vote, and in some countries, online groups may take part at the local or intergroup level but not at the Conference. In some smaller structures, groups participate at the Conference directly and again some include online groups with a voice and a vote, and some do not
- Some countries do not recognize online groups at all while some countries felt it was important to have a vision for acknowledging online groups as part of A.A. in their country
- Some countries only include geographically based online groups in their structure with a voice and a vote but not international online groups. Online groups need to join a structure if they want to participate

Some opportunities to aid in A.A.'s growth, among them (and unique to the WSM discussion):

- Reaching alcoholics in remote areas – in one instance a vibrant online group led to a physical meeting and the development of an online district
- An influx of young people through online groups
- Gives members around the world an opportunity to connect and share just as we do here at the WSM with speakers and members from around the world
- Able to start meetings in areas and countries where there are not meetings currently

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- Potential cost savings by having service meetings online so more could be available for Twelve Step efforts of all kinds

Some concerns about virtual groups were expressed including:

- Some feel online groups lack the spiritual impact of talking with each other after the meeting that is typical in physical meetings
- A perceived lack of interest in service in online groups as well as a lack of service opportunities
- Concern about privacy and confidentiality
- Seventh Tradition contributions
- Concerns that online A.A. groups may erode personal contact or service activity
- Online meetings where people sleep or just socialize, that don't seem to be A.A.

Much as we have heard in the U.S./Canada, there were comments regarding the development of guidelines, as a useful and important tool.

Of the countries that are actively examining how best to incorporate groups into the service structure, many are in the same place as we are (committees examining the best way for their structures to approach the challenge), and at least one - Australia - has started the process to set up a virtual Area. South Africa is looking at creating a virtual Area. Other countries are in the process of developing what we would consider to be virtual Districts, although in their structural language it is referred to as an Area – Portugal is an example of that. In Ireland, newly formed groups are asked to identify with one of the geographic areas in their structure.

The question still remains regarding those groups which have no geographic "tether" and how to preserve unity throughout the process of determining what is best for all of A.A. One delegate expressed concern about young groups engaging in a global structure through an international entity and what that might mean.

There are still more questions than answers, but as the Delegate from Poland said, in the keynote address, quoting our co-founder Bill W.: "Our Twelve Steps probably won't change. Our Twelve Traditions? Not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for service – let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever. "

Section 6 – Proposed Agenda Items submitted pertaining to Online Groups

PAI 83:

Reviewed by the Trustees' General Conference Committee and not forwarded to Conference as a separate agenda item.

"That Zoom or hybrid groups not be included in the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Some of the points made in the submission:

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- *Attendees cannot know whether the others present at the meeting are sober.*
- *Online groups are not able to build unity – they cannot feel the group spirituality or fellowship if they are not face-to-face.*
- *Online platforms restrict ability to welcome newcomers resulting in less 12th Step work.*
- *Reduced service by member of online groups.*
- *Potential recording by attendees raises anonymity concerns.*

PAI 181 and ADDITIONAL AREA APPLICATION:

Reviewed by the Trustees' General Conference Committee and Trustees' Ad Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada General Service Structure not forwarded to Conference as a separate agenda item

"To create a Delegate Area for Online Groups."

This proposal was 96 pages in total, was prepared by a group of approximately 20 people from 15 groups throughout the U.S./Canada General Service Structure after considerable effort on the submitters' part in gathering information from online groups.

Some of the points made in the submission:

- *Online groups have existed for over 25 years, but still lack access to the service structure if the existing structures do not accommodate online participation. They are existing outside the current Service Structure.*
- *An Online Area would "restore the full Right of Representation to online groups."*
- *The exclusion of an online delegate affects the Conference's ability to be fully informed.*
- *This Area would bridge the gap for members excluded by accessibility barriers including members who are elderly or in residential treatment, people unable to get to meetings because of inclement weather, the voices of diverse minorities and groups unable to afford the costs associated with physical meeting space.*
- *The submission of the Additional Delegate Area Application for Online Groups is the culmination of the effort to learn if online groups have an expressed widespread need for general service participation.*

The extensive and very thorough PAI attachments included poll and survey results collected over an 18-month period through a series of meetings, town halls and other research. The background provided many examples of the depth and variety of service work online groups are currently providing, and a clear desire to have a stronger voice. It also included a completed application for a new Delegate Area. The application was supported by fifteen groups from throughout the U.S./Canada structure.

The proposing group/committee is continuing to conduct electronic surveys.

Section 7 – Suggestions Going Forward

More Shared Experience Needed Regarding Online Groups

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While Conference-Approved literature needs to go through the Conference process to be updated, service material has fulfilled the important role of providing shared experience to groups and members when there is a need for timely sharing of information. However, the magnitude of change A.A. has gone through in the last few years has sometimes outpaced our ability to collect shared experience, especially in areas related to online groups. It is clear from the survey responses, sharing at workshops, and correspondence from A.A. members and groups, that there is a desire for more information regarding online groups. Below are links to materials currently available on the aa.org website, in the Group Handbook, and in service kits that have information related to online groups.

Anonymity Online and Digital Media

A.A. Guidelines on the Internet MG-18

GSO New Group Listing Guidelines/Form

Is Your Group Linked to A.A. as a Whole?

Frequently Asked Questions on Practicing the Seventh Tradition at Virtual Meetings

Serving All Alcoholics: Making the A.A. Message Accessible

While they offer helpful information, more shared experience needs to be gathered from online groups on their practices and procedures, the challenges they've faced and the solutions they've found so that it can be integrated into these service pieces. Sharing from one group to another, one GSR to another, one DCM to another, and one district to another will do a great deal to fill the need.

In addition to the resources above, many intergroups and central offices, districts, and areas have guides on their websites that can be helpful to online groups.

As you might expect, the Online Intergroup of A.A - OIAA (https://aa-intergroup.org/) offers a number of resources for online groups including: an introduction to A.A. online; a presentation on Safety and Security Settings for online groups; a link to a Zoom Security Guide, a Google doc that is regularly updated; information on anonymity, accessibilities, and service opportunities available to groups and members through a number of OIAA committees and by becoming an Intergroup Rep.

The Technology in A.A. Forum (https://tiaa-forum.org/) is for A.A. members (and non-members who support A.A. services) to share about using technology for accomplishing the primary purpose of A.A. There is a guide to hybrid meeting considerations created to help groups think through the challenges of holding hybrid meetings. Information is available on hybrid set-ups for A.A. meetings, service assemblies, and other events This includes lists of the equipment needed, ways to optimize participation, and information on conducting voting procedures at hybrid events. There are also threads on ways to welcome newcomers at online meetings as well as shared experience on safety and anonymity online. Members are also able to pose questions to the TIAA community.

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In addition to updating existing service material, new FAQs, guidelines, and other sources of shared experience could be developed. Here are some topics related to online groups that may want to be explored.

While the 71st General Service Conference passed an advisory action in 2021 recommending "that the U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation by listing groups who request to be listed in Fellowship Connection according to the group's preferred district and area" many members of online meetings are still not aware that they can be listed with GSO or how they might get connected with a geographic district or even a virtual district. A service piece using infographics, an FAQ and/or short video could be great tools for reaching out to online meetings not currently in the service structure to explain the process and their options. Communications conveying the benefits of participating in general service are needed for brick & mortar meetings as well as online groups but short term there may be a greater need and opportunity among online meetings and their members.

Online groups who do understand that they can be listed by GSO often have other questions. Common questions heard by the office are: "How do we choose what district to join if we are not tied to a specific geography?" "What do we do if our district or area is unable to accommodate our need to participate online?" "What kind of permission would we need to join a district in another area?" "Are virtual districts accepting groups from outside of their area?" "What if our members are from other countries?" While there are rarely simple answers to these questions a good beginning is to find out what other groups have done.

Similar questions come from groups who are divided over whether to return to meeting in-person, adopt a hybrid format, or continue meeting exclusively online. If they cannot agree on a common format, groups ask if they should split into several individual groups or form an umbrella group with individual meetings. Groups that split ask who gets to keep the name? And who gets to keep whatever money exists. One group shared their experience of being at odds about who could get to keep the treasury until one member said, "Well, who needs it more?" There's no underestimating the value of shared experience.

A need we continue to hear about is for shared experience on the practices and procedures of online groups. One area of focus could be descriptions of new service positions needed for online groups such as "Tech Chair" and "Troll Patrol." Other more traditional positions have been adapted to fit online groups. For example, a literature chair for an online group won't be setting books out on a table or filling a literature rack but instead may be providing digital resources or links to literature using a glide app. Members are also exploring what Grapevine Reps and La Viña Reps can do at online groups to bring the magazines to life. Some online groups have "newcomer chairs" to encourage more interaction with those who are new. "Fellowship Chairs" have

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considered how that experience of going to the diner after the meeting can be translated to the virtual world.

When it comes to group safety, practices and procedures for online groups continue to evolve. Providing links in service pieces to frequently updated materials about security settings could also be helpful for online groups.

It might also be helpful to gather shared experience on ways that online groups have used their particular expertise in working with district and area service committees to:

- Bring online meetings to treatment facilities, correctional facilities, nursing homes, and rehabilitation centers
- Reach out and connect with remote communities
- Help members who are homebound or have mobility issues
- Offer more options for the Hard of Hearing, Blind members, and Deaf members
- Use simultaneous interpretation to offer meetings in more languages
- Provide meetings for immunocompromised members
- Offer meetings 24/7 for A.A.s who are shift workers, new parents, or caregivers.
- Make meetings accessible to those who have lost their driving privileges

Lastly, it would be helpful to collect shared experiences from districts and areas who are holding assemblies or other events in a hybrid format. What considerations went into the decision to try a hybrid format? What have the challenges been? Has it led to greater participation of online groups? What were the costs? Some survey responses touched on this, but more sharing would be helpful.

Section 8 – The Ongoing Conversation

There are still, as there were with the first progress report, more questions than answers. However, the shape of the questions continues to evolve and change. It is apparent that many conversations are happening at Area, District and Group levels, and that there is a need and an appetite for continued shared experience. There are voices that we continue to need to seek out and hear from in this still-evolving picture and process. It is a remarkable one to be a part of.

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