

2019 General Service Conference Agenda Items with Background

I. Agenda

A. Review suggestions for the theme of the 2020 General Service Conference.

It's a standing agenda item to choose the theme for the next years conference. They have a list of 88 suggestions that were sent in by the fellowship. FYI, this year's theme is "Our Big Book – 80 Years, 71 Languages"

B. Review presentation/discussion topic ideas for the 2020 General Service Conference.

It's a standing agenda item to choose the presentation topics for the next years conference. They have a list of 84 suggestions that were sent in by the fellowship. FYI, this year's presentations are "Yesterday's World – Our Legacies Begin", "Today's World – Demonstrating Integrity, Anonymity and Service" and "Tomorrow's World – Courage to be Vigilant"

C. Discuss workshop topic ideas for the 2020 General Service Conference.

It's a standing agenda item to choose the workshop topics for the next years conference. They have a list of 79 suggestions that were sent in by the fellowship. FYI, this year's workshops is "Clarity of Purpose - Addressing the Needs of Our Meetings"

D. Review the General Service Conference Evaluation Form, process and 2018 Evaluation Summary.

All conference attendees are asked to fill out an evaluation form. This shows what it will look like this year and how people responded last year. There's a need to verify the ability to fill it out online is working.

E. Discuss report on the Conference Agenda Process from the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

Before the January board weekend, all delegates on a conference committee should have a conference call with the corresponding trustees' committee chair and staff secretary to review the possible agenda items. Discuss if that happened and how it went. This is to give delegates more say in selecting agenda items.

II. Cooperation with the Professional Community

A. Discuss progress on implementation of AAWS LinkedIn page.

Last year it was decided to have a LinkedIn page to better reach professionals. The trustees have hired a consultant to create the page. The page has not yet been created but the consultant gave their findings in January and the committee is to review the consultants questions and recommendations about appearance, style, posting content, implementation and maintenance of a LinkedIn page and how the trustees replied. This is the same consultant who did the communications audit and addresses shortcomings found in our outreach to professionals

Bonus material! --> The communications consultant says "cooperation with the professional community" is unintentionally off-putting — sounds as if A.A. is doing the professional a favor. This agenda item also talks about GSO/GSB having a new communications department

- B. Consider request to remove text "They may help arrange hospitalization" from the pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous in Your Community."**

An Area is requesting this sentence be removed because: "they" is ambiguous, is it individual members or AA as a whole; it could cause someone new considering coming to AA to assume they have to be hospitalized; or that AA will find treatment for them and pay for the cost

- C. Review contents of C.P.C. Kit and Workbook.**

The committee has a kit (a selection of pamphlets, guidelines and other service materials pertinent to CPC work) and a workbook (a unique publication of specific information to help CPC committees) It is a standing agenda item to review these items for possible updating

III. Corrections

- A. Consider request for a review of all corrections related literature in order to make the language more modern and inclusive.**

An Area is suggesting the terms inmate and offender are not just no longer used but are considered offensive and therefore they don't use the book AA in Prison: Inmate to Inmate or the pamphlets Memo to an Inmate Who May Be Alcoholic or It Sure Beats Sitting In a Cell. They are asking for a change to this language to be something more inclusive to remove the barrier to this literature

- B. Consider request that the General Service Office establish and help maintain a database of Correctional Facilities in each service area in the U.S. and Canada and the status of meetings held therein.**

Area 49 suggests GSO keep a database of all the jails, state, provincial, and federal correctional facilities in each area, which ones have AA meetings and which of those have AA volunteers. This is mostly to allow new Corrections Chairs to quickly become effective in carrying the message to facilities where the service is needed. Estimates for this were \$25,000-\$30,000 or \$50,000 - \$60,000 depending on who might be hired to help create the wireframe and database.

- C. Review contents of Corrections Kit and Workbook.**

The committee has a kit (a selection of pamphlets, guidelines and other service materials pertinent to Corrections work) and a workbook (a unique publication of specific information to help Corrections committees) It is a standing agenda item to review these items for possible updating

IV. Finance

- A. Review suggested area contribution for delegate expense for the Conference.**

In 2017, the suggested amount each Area sends to support the cost of their delegate attending the General Service Conference was raised to \$1,800. Should that be changed?

- B. Review the Conference-approved level of \$5,000 for individual bequests to the General Service Board from A.A. members.**

In 2012, the maximum amount an AA member who had passed away could leave to GSO/GSB in their will was raised to \$5,000. Should that be changed?

C. **Review the Conference-approved maximum annual contribution of \$5,000 to the General Service Board from an individual A.A. member.**

In 2018, the maximum amount an AA member could give to GSO/GSB annually was raised to \$5,000. Should that be changed?

D. **Review Self-Support Packet.**

It's a standing agenda item to review the list of literature/documents that GSO publishes that are useful to finance committees/treasurers

V. Grapevine

A. **Consider the list of suggested AA Grapevine book topics for 2020 and later.**

The suggested books are: *The Early Days of AA* (stories from members in the 1930s, 40s and 50s about what AA was like then), *Getting Involved in General Service* (inspiring stories of experience), *Surrender and Hope* (Spanish-speaking AA members share how they came to surrender and join AA for a new life)

B. **Consider request to remove the "Alcoholism at Large" section from AA Grapevine.**

Currently AA Grapevine & LaVina have a section each month on the medical, legal and social aspects of alcoholism, with a disclaimer that these are news reports from other cited sources. An Area wants to have this page removed, stating it's an outside issue. This has come up for debate numerous times in the past.

C. **Review progress report on AA Grapevine Workbook revisions.**

This workbook is receiving comprehensive revisions ("by a freelancer who is familiar with the history, procedures and products of AAGV")

D. **Review AA Grapevine Fellowship Feedback Survey and summary.**

They took a survey of current, past and non-subscribers and want the committee's feedback on the results to determine resulting actions. Highlights of findings:

● **Opportunities Identified**

- There is an opportunity to improve perceptions and relevance of Grapevine and La Viña as important personal recovery tools
- There is confusion about how Grapevine and LaViña are funded, clarifying this may increase revenue
- Current content formula could be improved to reach younger members and be more relevant to members with long-term sobriety
- There is a desire for a simpler subscription model and less interest in a stand-alone digital subscription
- Existing digital experience problems are barriers to adoption, these should be prioritized for improvement
- There is an opportunity to learn from La Viña engagement strategies

VI. Literature

A. **Review progress report on the development of the pamphlet for Spanish speaking women in A.A.**

59 stories were submitted for consideration of use in the pamphlet. The process to review and select stories for a draft pamphlet will begin with the July 2019 trustees' Literature Committee meeting.

B. Review progress report on the development of the pamphlet on A.A.'s Three Legacies.

The pamphlet will describe A.A.'s Three Legacies and how they work together, then a section on the history of the Legacies using quotes from Bill W. Then members' stories of experience, strength and hope related to the Legacies. The subcommittee will continue with reviews of the 46 submitted stories for the pamphlet to be forwarded to the July 2019 trustees' Literature Committee meeting

C. Consider requests to develop a Fifth Edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous.

4 different Areas requested this. The 1st edition was published in 1939, the 2nd edition 16 years later in 1955, the 3rd edition 21 years later in 1976, the 4th edition 25 years later in 2001. So we're "in the zone" of when to start again. They also request stories to better reflect our current membership (including 1 Area's request for a "section" of stories from young people)

D. Review progress report regarding updating the video "Your General Service Office, the Grapevine and the General Service Structure."

They're working on the selection of a video production company. Proposals to 6 companies went out - they're trying to do multiple video projects with the company to optimize costs. The video should reflect a contemporary presentation of the General Service and AA Grapevine offices, as well as a current portrayal of the General Service structure

E. Review progress report on the update regarding text on anonymity to the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship."

Proposes adding new language in several places on how sponsors can explain the importance of anonymity

F. Consider the development of a Literature Committee Workbook.

Other committees have workbooks to help guide them, but literature doesn't

G. Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet "Too Young?"

They're talking to a graphic artist/video producer as this may become a video as well as a pamphlet "that would be innovative and attractive to young people." There are 2 target audiences: Tweens and Teenagers and those groups would benefit from different approaches. Nothing ready to present on this until 2020.

H. Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet "Young People and A.A."

Of the new stories submitted, narrowing it down to 10-12 to include in the pamphlet. Develop engaging graphics, and edit the stories into smaller "bite-sized" excerpts to fit into a three-section format: What It Was Like, What Happened, and What It Is Like Now. Use a more dynamic, less text-heavy pamphlet. A draft or progress report will be presented at the July 2019 meeting of the trustees' Literature Committee.

Bonus material! --> There's a new Appointed Committee Member to liaison with young people and help GSO/GSB better meet their needs.

I. Review proposed revision to A.A. World Services' "Policy on Publication of Literature: Updating Pamphlets and Other A.A. Materials."

This item comes from AAWS. Currently, creating new or changing existing literature must get approval from the conference. Our communications audit brought up that many of our pamphlets are outdated and/or not relevant their intended targets. AAWS would like more latitude in making updates, especially to outdated statistics, language, graphics, etc., adding more inclusive language, and selecting formats and translations. There was also a proposal from a past delegate of how delegates could do more to review proposed changes to pamphlets between conferences

J. Consider request to revise the pamphlet “The A.A. Group.”

A group suggested adding "Do you feel safe coming to the group? Are the group's members treated with respect?" to the list of group inventory questions

K. Review progress report regarding the update to the pamphlet “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”

They've developed a simplified script for all Twelve Traditions and now are working on the graphics. The changes won't be available until the July board meeting. The original request was to add language about anonymity on social media to Tradition 11.

L. Review progress report regarding language on safety and A.A. for inclusion in *Living Sober* and “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

It seems the edits involved safety in a sponsorship relationship and not safety in the rooms, which is likely what the original request was asking for. They are seeking clarification

M. Consider revising the Foreword to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* .

Currently, the forward only references the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions and an Area is requesting adding a mention of the Concepts (and where to find them) to help make members aware of them. Changing Bill W's writings is usually not done

N. Consider suggestion to add “Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers” to the end of the open meeting side of the Primary Purpose (blue) card.

The background mentions this language would be consistent with other literature, but also that this was suggested in 2013 and the motion failed (doesn't say why)

O. Consider request to update the pamphlet “The Twelve Steps Illustrated.”

The trustee committee felt that a new version of the pamphlet "The Twelve Steps Illustrated" is warranted to capture a simplified language that reflects the meaning of the Steps more effectively than the current version and to include quality illustrations, but without losing the powerful meaning of our steps/message. They want it to be accessible to individuals with low reading levels

P. Review matrix of A.A. recovery literature.

The matrix shows data for each piece of literature - when it was copywrited, last reviewed, print distribution rates per language for the last several years, and online views and downloads. This allows the Literature committee to see what should be updated/discontinued, etc

VII. Policy/Admissions

A. Review dates for the 2022 General Service Conference.

It's a standing agenda item to choose the week of the future conference 3 years hence (avoiding conflicts with holidays)

B. Review report from G.S.O.'s general manager on General Service Conference site selection.

We have used the same 2 hotels for the past 25+ years for the conference and board weekends. The costs at both are going up, and it costs \$400,000 more to host the GSC in NYC than Rye Town. They sent out Requests For Proposals to 11 hotels in NYC, Westchester County, Long Island, Connecticut and New Jersey and are now in contract negotiations for the 2021 and 2022 Conference venue(s). Doesn't say which hotel/where. In the future they will investigate other cities/states for hosting the GSC
Bonus material! -->There's a newly formed Meetings, Events and Travel Services team to provide support for our major Board and Conference meetings

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

Right now, the General Service Board decides what becomes an agenda item at conference. This proposal effectively gives delegates a minority opinion, allowing delegates to see what items were received but not moved on to the agenda and if they agree or not. The proposal is to add a standing agenda item to each Conference committee to review items that did not make the agenda. The committee can then request an item be reconsidered by the trustee committee if they disagree with the assessment to not make it an agenda item. Consider how much time this may add to the committees at conference

D. Discuss the process of approving qualified representatives from other A.A. service structures to observe the U.S. and Canada General Service Conference.

Sometimes, visitors from AA general service boards of other countries (India and the Ukraine in recent years) have been admitted to our conference as observers to see how we do things. The vote to admit them does not occur until our conference. A change is being proposed so they know they will be admitted before travelling so far.

E. Discuss a request to “develop a procedure to deal with special requests/agenda items.”

Last year, the GSB wanted people from the communications audit team to observe the conference, but it was past the deadline for such requests and there was no official way for getting approval (they came anyway). This is requesting the committee develop a procedure for dealing with things like this, including late breaking agenda items.

F. Consider revising the “Process for Polling the General Service Conference Between Annual Meetings.”

This is a new procedure that was adopted last year to give conference members a way to vote on items between conferences. It was used last year, and it didn't allow for discussion. This proposal suggests instead of having 2 weeks for voting, allow 1 week for "discussion" (electronically) and then 1 week for voting

G. Reconsider the 1986 Advisory Action regarding a simple majority vote by the full Conference.

I thought this was proposing no longer needing a 2/3rds majority to vote something into an Advisory Action. Nope. This is saying in 1986 it was decided that if something didn't receive 2/3rd majority, but it did get a simple majority, the board was to take that as "a strong suggestion" to act on it and that hasn't been happening. Indeed, "it has not been a practice for many years to record the count on each vote at the Conference". The trustees are looking for guidance on how they should react to votes

VIII. Public Information

A. Review 2018 annual reports from the trustees' Public Information Committee regarding aa.org and aagrapevine.org.

Reports the things they added/removed/changed on aa.org. Average # of daily visits to aa.org: 41,793. Grapevine website has been getting 55,000 - 59,000 visitors a month. They are redesigning the aa.org website and launching a new app later this year, but changed the consultant we are using because we didn't like the design

B. Review a report regarding the 2019 Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan.

PI items in the overall media plan: Review A.A. literature for targeted audiences; utilize new media technologies (social and others) to allow raised awareness of AA; provide us with the most effective methods of communication with all who may benefit from A.A.'s message; optimize of A.A.'s online and social media presence to ensure that A.A. stays relevant in today's society as a solution to alcoholism; increase the use of videos for informational topics and to convey our message; An inventory of P.I. materials and services with an eye towards inclusion and acceptance; how can we incorporate information on A.A. into basic education

C. Public Service Announcements (PSAs):

1. Review the distribution and tracking information for the video PSA "Changes."

Thru January 2019, the English "Changes" PSA aired 4,358 times equaling an audience of 36,697,516, the Spanish "Cambios" TV PSA aired 419 times, an audience of 6,104,017 and Canada aired it 367 times, an audience of 1,773,812. The report included lots more info like the donated media value and what channels aired it

2. Review the 2018 Report on the Relevance and Usefulness of Video Public Service Announcements.

The trustees recommend discontinuing "My World" but found all other current PSAs to be relevant and useful

3. Consider request that the video PSA "My World" be discontinued.

Doesn't say why, just that the trustees reviewed it & recommend it be discontinued

4. Consider request to approve the development of a new PSA in video format that utilizes full-face actors (not members of A.A.).

An Area brought this up. They watched PSAs from Australia where full faces were used and they thought they were more impactful because of it. We never use videos with faces of actual AA members because of anonymity. Could it be confusing to viewers to reconcile anonymity and faces being shown?

D. Review draft language addressing anonymity and safety proposed for the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity.”

Propose adding in the Q&A section: "Q. Is it okay to call the proper authorities if I witness inappropriate or even criminal behavior at a meeting? A. Groups strive to provide as safe an environment as possible in which members can focus on sobriety, and, while anonymity is central to that purpose, it is not intended to be a cloak protecting inappropriate or criminal behavior. Calling the proper authorities in such cases is a serious step meant to preserve the safety of members and does not go against any A.A. Traditions."

E. Consider request to update language in the flyer “A.A. at a Glance.”

Propose changing the wording of the last sentence in the section titled “How A.A. Members Maintain Sobriety” from: “Sobriety is maintained through sharing experience, strength and hope at group meetings and through the suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism” to “Sobriety is maintained through sharing experience, strength and hope at group meetings and through the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, which are suggested as a program of recovery.”

F. Review the 2018 trustees’ Public Information Committee progress report on the usefulness and effectiveness of the A.A.W.S. YouTube account.

There are 24 videos up. There's data on the top 10 videos, top traffic sources, top searches and top countries, viewing, age of viewers, etc. Overall, from April-December 2018: 18,903 total views, 2,685 subscribers, 24,057 minutes total watch time, 62% from mobile users

G. Review the 2018 trustees’ Public Information progress report on the use of Google AdWords and Google Grants to carry the A.A. message.

Background only available to Conference Committee at this time

H. Review contents of P.I. Kit and Workbook.

The committee has a kit (a selection of pamphlets, guidelines and other service materials pertinent to PI work) and a workbook (a unique publication of specific information to help PI committees) It is a standing agenda item to review these items for possible updating

IX. Report and Charter

A. Discuss General Service Conference *Final Report*.

No additional background given

B. *The A.A. Service Manual*, 2018 - 2020

- Review progress report from A.A.W.S. Publishing Department on the redesign of *The A.A. Service Manual*.

They are looking into modifications to the physical format (change binding so it lays open), design (fonts, tabs, bigger margins for taking notes), organization of content (write with GSRs as the intended audience, more logical flow, highlight changes from last edition) and tone of content (present service in positive light, build trust, tone of offering "suggestions") Rough draft in fall 2019

C. Discuss A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)

Conference committee members sent directories for review

X. Treatment and Accessibilities

A. Consider revising the pamphlet “Bridging the Gap” to include related corrections activities.

A suggestion to change the title and other edits to indicate BTG is for people coming from correctional facilities as well as from treatment. Background includes past discussions about this - some areas combine BTG to be treatment & corrections and others keep them separate

B. Consider adding a story from an A.A. member who is deaf to the pamphlet “Access to A.A.: Members Share on Overcoming Barriers.”

Only Conference Committee members have access to the proposed new story

C. Consider updating the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic – Never too Late.”

Suggestions for updates: get more recent stories, replacing ones that reference the Depression and WWII; include information about online meetings; add information about A.A. Grapevine and its website

D. Discuss the concept of posting anonymity-protected interviews on aa.org with military professionals about their experience with A.A.

The suggestion is to create audio recordings. Stories would be for current/potential AA members and for professionals as CPC/PI use. Interview military professionals as friends of A.A. Ask their experience with the Fellowship, and how they overcame challenges working with A.A. A list of interview questions for both chaplains and medical professionals were created and reviewed by the committee

Bonus Material! --> There's a new subcommittee to improve carrying the A.A. message to/improve cooperation with the Armed Services & veterans

E. Review draft of proposed Remote Communities Kit.

Review the proposed list of literature/service materials/publications

F. Review contents of Treatment Committee Kit and Workbook.

The committee has a kit (a selection of pamphlets, guidelines and other service materials pertinent to treatment work) and a workbook (a unique publication of specific information to help treatment committees) It is a standing agenda item to review these items for possible updating

G. Review contents of Accessibilities Kit and Workbook.

The committee has a kit (a selection of pamphlets, guidelines and other service materials pertinent to accessibilities work) and a workbook (a unique publication of specific information to help accessibility committees) It is a standing agenda item to review these items for possible updating

XI. Trustees

A. Review resumes of candidates for:

1. Northeast Regional Trustee
2. Southwest Regional Trustee

3. Trustee-at-Large/Canada

1-3 - Only Conference Committee members have access to the resumes

B. Review slates of trustees and officers of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.

C. Review slate of directors of A.A. World Services, Inc.

D. Review slate of directors of AA Grapevine, Inc.

B-D - Lists the recommended slates of people to be voted on

E. Review draft procedures for partial or complete reorganization of the General Service Board.

A reorganization is not considered necessary at this time, but the trustees' Committee on Nominating was asked to develop the procedures. To my non-legal eye, I would describe this less as "restructuring" and more it's how to remove and replace every single Class A and B trustee & nontrustee directors

XII. Archives

A. Consider request to add the 1940s home movie of the co-founders and their wives to the video "Markings on the Journey."

This 1940s film was taken in the gardens at Stepping Stones (the home of Bill and Lois) and was donated to the GSO Archives in 2017 through legal transfer. It is a rare home movie, about two minutes long. As far as is known, it's the only moving image of the co-founders and their wives that exists. Only Conference Committee members get to see where in the existing video this new footage is added.

B. Review Archives Workbook.

The committee has a workbook (a unique publication of specific information to help archive committees) It is a standing agenda item to review this for possible updating

XIII. International Conventions/Regional Forums

A. Discuss an anonymity-protected photograph of the flag ceremony to be taken at the 2020 International Convention.

An anonymity protected photo has been taken at each International Convention since the first International Convention in 1950 and they would like to do it again

B. Consider a broadcast of the 2020 International Convention Opening Flag Ceremony, similar to the anonymity-protected delayed Internet broadcast of the 2015 International Convention Opening Flag Ceremony.

They did some form of this in 2005, 2010 and 2015. Viewership went up each time, from 1,760 to 13,790 to 448,165. In 2005 the video was up for 48 hours and required a password, 2010 similar amount of time but no password, 2015 13 days no password

C. Discuss ways to encourage interest in Regional Forums and attract first-time attendees.

This is a standing agenda item