

Area Committee Inventory—Interim Final Report

INTRODUCTION

After approval by the Area Committee in spring 2017, Area 8 conducted an Area Committee Inventory on August 5th. Our goals were to: have an open discussion, build cohesion, build on our strengths, identify our areas of concern, and take ownership of ideas on how the Area Committee can ensure the future of the Area.

The use of the term “Interim Final Report” indicates that additional work and discussions need to occur. Inventory and ad-hoc committee participants have completed their work. It is now up to the Area Committee to consider how these findings, considerations and recommendations may be used to strengthen Area 8, so we may better perform the vital work of carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to our current and future members.

This report contains the following sections:

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MEETING PLANNING AND SETTING THE STAGE

A volunteer group of current and past ACM members met to establish our inventory goals, discuss a proposed inventory process, and select discussion topics. We agreed to engage the services of a professional facilitator, well versed in corporate business strategy sessions, to guide the process of preparing for and conducting the inventory. Her background includes over 40 years of sobriety in North County San Diego and facilitating two successful Group Inventories. She volunteered her services to us as part of her A.A. service work. We agreed upon the “World Café” process for conducting collaborative dialogue around questions that matter to our Area. www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf.

We agreed on four principles for guiding the Area Committee Inventory:

- 1) That the Area is not “broken” and we will not undo everything that has made the Area thrive.
- 2) That we need to ensure that we’re not being held back by practices no longer useful and/or preventing new people from getting involved in service.
- 3) That we’ll acknowledge what’s working and what we might want to do differently.
- 4) That we will identify specific actions we might want to take and prioritize these actions, as a group.

THE INVENTORY PROCESS

Throughout the Inventory process, participants were reminded they are free to attend whatever discussions/groups they wished to attend, share whatever they wished, and stay for as long as they felt they were either contributing or learning. In this manner, no one could leave saying “I wish I had the opportunity to talk about this topic” or “I didn’t have a change to say my opinion about “X, Y, or Z”.

Inventory Discussion Topics

Area Standing Committees: Multiple rounds of 30-minute discussions captured ideas and feedback on each of our Standing Committees. To stimulate discussion, potential questions were projected on a screen.

- ✚ What should this committee stop doing?
- ✚ Where should we continue to focus our time and efforts?
- ✚ What new projects/service should the committee take on?
- ✚ What communication will be effective—internally (within the Area Committee) and externally (among our A.A. membership)
- ✚ How can we get more people involved?
- ✚ How can we educate new members about their responsibilities on this committee?
- ✚ What time commitment is expected when serving on this committee?

Area General Service Discussions: These discussion groups captured feedback on the following topics. Although some discussions were geared towards specific general service positions, participants were invited to attend any session of interest.

- ✚ Getting new people interested in general service
- ✚ Best practices for effective Districts
- ✚ Service and my own recovery—is there time for both?
- ✚ How to be an effective trusted servant
- ✚ Communicating effectively
- ✚ Building the Leadership Pipeline
- ✚ ACMs and Assembly Meetings: Are They Meeting our Needs?

Collecting and Prioritizing Discussion Findings

During each discussion, participants’ thoughts, suggestions, and ideas were noted on white boards. After all discussions concluded, report backs from each group identified up to three “priorities” for that topic. Then, using adhesive dots, ALL participants selected his or her highest priority item for each topic. Each participant had an equal say in identifying priorities.

A complete listing of all notes and identified priorities may be found in the Appendix section at the end of this report.

FINDINGS AND PRIORITIES

Area Standing Committees

In this section we identify the responses participants identified of highest priority for nine of our Area Standing Committees.

Accessibilities Committee

- Increase awareness of community needs (11 votes), improve communications from Committee to groups (11 votes), and assessing which meetings are accessible (5 votes).

Agenda Committee

- Set guidelines for sharing at ACMs and Area meetings (15 votes), conduct roundtables to suggest theme proposals for General Service Conferences (5 votes), and reinforce guidelines for bringing items to Area Committee (1 vote).

Archives Committee

- Encourage submission of historical stories on video and website (11 votes), do a 5-minute Archives presentation/elevator pitch at Area Assemblies (11 votes), bring Archives to young people groups (7 votes).

Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)

- Create a handout about AA for sober living representatives (16 votes), CPC to liaison with AA groups and sober livings when there are concerns (11 votes).

Finance Committee

- Create better reports that are simple and interesting (14 votes), provide education tools on contributions, pie charts, current costs, and role of communication (11 votes), revisit GSO sendoff and review line items no longer needed (8 votes).

Grapevine/La Vina Committee

- Reach out to H&I/treatment to populate literature with Grapevine information (14 votes), provide blurb in GSR orientation on GV for use at meetings (11 votes), conduct writer's workshops (9 votes).

Literature Committee

- Visit meetings to assess and assist use of literature (14 votes), highlight one piece of literature at ACMs, and remind all that pamphlets are not just for newcomers (12 votes), share responsibility for transporting literature display (4 votes).

Newsletter Committee

- Enable GSRs to send/read newsletter through e-mail (14 votes), review the mission of the newsletter (8 votes), include newsletter in GSR reports (3 votes).

Policy Committee

- Consider eliminating local structure and Guidelines and use the Service Manual instead (9 votes).

Spanish Translation

- Communicate/attend Hispanic district/committee meetings (6 votes), create area meeting and other schedules for planning (5 votes), create formal responsibilities or statement of purpose (3 votes).

Area General Service Activities

In this section we identify the responses participants identified as highest priority for each of the eight discussions on Area General Service Activities.

GSRs—Service and My Own Recovery—Is there Time for Both?

- Our personal A.A. meetings must be our top priority.
- A time “pie chart” can be useful, with “slices” for spouse, friends, work, personal time, sponsees, meetings, family, and fun.
- Be flexible.
- Have a good Alternate or Co-person to assist you.
- Know when to say “no” and when to say “Yes”. And Keep it Simple.

GSRs—Being an Effective Trusted Servant

- Show up!
- Ask your group for questions/feedback/suggestions.
- Know your group. Efficiency doesn't always equal efficacy.
- Cast a wide net and catch even a minnow.

GSRs—Communicating Effectively with Your Group

- You're not just reporting events. Provide more information on the Area and A.A. (GSO).
- Remind members of the Area website www.Area8aa.org.
- GSR should coordinate with their group's steering committee for time to give the GSR report.
- Make sure the group knows you are the GSR and what a GSR does.

- A template is available for the GSR report to be succinct.
- Hand handouts/fliers of the GSR report for group members can be helpful.
- Practice your report (3 minutes max).
- Have one GSR practice giving a report at the District meeting before everyone leaves.

GSR and DCM—Getting New People Interested

- Discuss how service enhances personal sobriety by being a way to do twelfth step work.
- When sharing our stories, tell how we got involved in General Service.
- Train reps to better communicate e.g., public speaking to attract others.
- Ensure groups are aware that General Service exists; go to unrepresented groups and make announcements.
- Inform people—GSO provides all our literature and services. General service allows us to participate and be a part of A.A. as a whole.
- Call for participation of all group A.A. members to participate in one of the Area's Standing Committees.

DCM—Best Practices for Effective Districts

- Have a good Alternate DCM and train them.
- Reconciling GSO group list with Intergroup/Central office group list is helpful for developing effective group outreach strategies.
- Schedule at least quarterly GSR sharing sessions—group issue resolution ensures the GSR has something to bring to the meeting.
- Invite Standing Committee chairs to DCM meetings for 10-minute shares.

Building the Leadership Pipeline

- Make the position attractive and available to all. This is a better advertisement and explanation of what the position offers.
- Use mentors and service sponsors.
- Service is Spirituality, the Fourth dimension (Third legacy).
- Announce to GSRs at Area Assemblies that instead of joining an Area Standing Committee, they can choose to be on a District committee. DCMs can make same announcement at District meetings that GSRs can serve on Area Committees. District Committees should mirror those of the Area. We should promote each other.

Effective Communication

- Sending any/all Area Standing Committee members to A.A. meetings to discuss their committees would be helpful.
- Reinforce that General Service is for ALL members.
- Survey group interests.

ACMs and Assembly Meetings: Are They Meeting Our Needs?

- Focus on Tradition Five—Group is a spiritual entity to carry the message.
- Give greater consideration to what do we do and how do we do it. Why are we here?
- Structure content of meetings to steer towards actions we want to inspire in the Fellowship
- Guide the develop of an informed group conscience.

Area Committee Inventory Closing Remarks

Prior to the close of our meeting, attendees were invited to share their most valuable takeaway from participating in this Inventory. These are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not all Areas have Structure & Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Across the board involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective communication with my group as the GSR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I liked the process; it was interesting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respectful participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move your feet, not your gums
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of Area service
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Others think like me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 90% is just showing up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Missed opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideas for GSRs/DCMs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on both sides of GSR process
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry message better after today	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of AA as a whole
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People will show up, even if they aren't sure what it's for.	

POST-INVENTORY FOLLOW-UP

The follow-up from our Area Committee Inventory was conducted using several methods. First, all Committee-related Inventory findings were sent to the current Area Standing Committee Chairs. We asked for a response or plan of action to address ideas and concerns. These were returned to the Inventory Coordinator for compilation.

Second, the inventory discussions resulted in a significant number of findings across multiple areas not specifically related to our Area Standing Committees. Upon review, it was clear there were five distinct areas where additional discussion was needed to create potential action plans or recommendations. These are: "Communications", "Training", "Information Technology", "How We Perform Committee Work", and "Are ACMS & Assemblies Meeting Our Needs." For the first four topics, we established ad-hoc Committees, combining Communication and Training.

The Inventory Coordinator was responsible for summarizing all findings and developing recommendations for the Area Committee related to "Are ACMS and Assemblies Meeting Our Needs"

Area Standing Committees

In this section we once again identify the top three priorities followed by the responses from that committee. Responses were received from the following Committees: Accessibilities, Grapevine/LaVina, Finance, and Literature. NOTE: Some comments below have been edited for space concerns.

Accessibilities

- The top three priorities were: Increase Awareness of Community Needs (11 votes), Improve communications from Committee to groups (11 votes), and Are all meetings accessible (5 votes).
- Response from Renea C., Committee Chair:
 - We are working on increasing awareness of community needs. Will have a table at Roots meeting; set up Accessibility table at Deaf Festival on October 7th. We were able to advise deaf members of ASL interpreted meetings.
 - In the process of identifying if wheelchair accessible meetings are identified correctly on schedules/websites. Currently 1 person is doing this.
 - We are encouraging “Volunteer Wanna-bees” for “Meetings to Go”. There are 135 commitments, but only 12 volunteers show. All members of this committee stress passing out “Meetings to Go” cards to increase awareness of this program.
 - We plan to visit District meetings to increase awareness of our committee, what we do, and what is provided. GSRs are encouraged to bring this back to their groups.

Agenda

- The top three priorities were: Set guidelines for sharing at ACMs and Area meetings (15 votes), Conduct roundtables to suggest theme proposals for General Service Conferences (5 votes), and reinforce guidelines for bringing items to Area Committee (1 vote).
- No response was received. The Top Priority will be discussed later in this report under the category “ACMs and Assemblies—Are They Meeting Our Needs”.

Archives

- The top three priorities were: Submit historical stories on video and website (11 votes), do a 5-minute presentation/elevator pitch at Area Assemblies (11 votes), and bring archives to Young People groups (7 votes).
- No response was received. Discussion on setting sharing guidelines will be discussed later in this report under the category “ACMs and Assemblies-Are They Meeting our Needs”.

Cooperation with the Professional Committee (CPC)

- The top three priorities were: Create a handout about AA for sober living representatives (16 votes), CPC to liaison with AA groups and sober-livings when there are concerns (11 votes)
- No report was received.

Finance

- The top three priorities were: Create better reports that are simple and interesting (14 votes), Provide education tools on contributions, pie charts, current costs, and role of communication (11 votes), and revisit GSO sendoff and review line items no longer needed (8 votes).
- Response from Jerry M, Finance Committee Chair.
- We are working on creating potential new reports both at the Area and GSO level.
- We recently created new piece on how to create a pie chart and collecting examples on 7th tradition language that can be placed in meeting formats.
- Members of this Committee visited District meetings to discuss budget as well as the role of the committee and how the budget is developed.
- A review of line items no longer needed will be performed as the 2019 budget is developed in early 2018.
- Any change to the GSO sendoff must be done in conjunction with a review of the Structure and Guidelines. Progress has been made in this area recently, for example, at the September 2017 Area Assembly.

Grapevine/La Vina*

- The top three priorities were: Reach out to H&I/Treatment to populate literature with Grapevine information (14 votes), provide blurb in GSR orientation on GV for use at meetings (11 votes), and Conduct writers-workshops (9 votes).
- Response from Sandra A, Grapevine Committee Chair. *NOTE TO READERS: This response is very comprehensive and suggested action plans may also be useful for many of our standing committees. Many of these action plans also liaison to GSO, the Area, Districts, Groups, and Members. The complete response has been placed in the Appendix section of this report for future reference.
 - Displaying and maintaining supplies to attract members is ongoing. We now have 3 comprehensive sample boxes of Grapevine and LaVina items available for checkout by DCMs. [See additional details]
 - We plan to host 2 support sessions a year to assist meeting GVR/RLV's with their service position. We plan to write a report or promotional piece for the Area Newsletter.
 - We're preparing a one-page info sheet about the GV and RLV to give to GSRs at new GSR Orientation. A GV table and its available products will be at each ACM.
 - We hold a "writer's workshop" each year. We're looking for ways to increase participation.
 - We are beginning to ask for Committee members to become a liaison with the local H&I Committee to discuss their use of GV, gift subscriptions and other ideas [See additional details]

Literature

- The top three priorities were: Visit meetings and assess & assist use of literature (14 votes), highlight one piece of literature at ACM, remind all that pamphlets are not just for newcomers (12 votes), and share responsibility for transporting literature display (4 votes).
- Response from Karen P., Literature Committee Chair.
 - Committee members agree an assessment is essential and we'll be using a survey to identify the groups that have needs and want assistance. We hope to help group literature representatives (GLR). We're moving forward with an eight-fold pamphlet for GFR that describes basic functions, what to display, where to buy it, and what is and is not conference-approved literature.
 - We welcome the opportunity to discuss an item at ACMs and hope this is included in five -minute Chair report.
 - Transportation of literature is not applicable for Inventory follow up.

Newsletter

- The top three priorities were: Enable GSRs to send/read newsletter through e-mail (14 votes), review the mission of the newsletter (8 votes), and use newsletter for GSR reports (3 votes).
- Response: No response was received. The topic of the newsletter is discussed later in this report under "Communication" and "ACMs and Assemblies—Are They Meeting Our Needs".

Policy

- The only identified priority was: Consider eliminating local Structure & guidelines and use the Service Manual instead (9 votes)
- No response was received.

Spanish Translation

- The top three priorities were: Communicate/attend Hispanic district/committee meetings (6 votes), create area meeting and other schedules for planning (5 votes), and create formal responsibilities (Statement of Purpose) (3 votes).
- No response was received.

Ad-Hoc Committee Structure and Considerations

A report from each of the post-inventory ad-hoc Committees is below. These may include specific suggestions that require review, prioritization, and action plans to ensure the Area capitalizes on the work by all members of our ad-hoc Committees. Sections include “Communication and Training”, “Information Technology”, and “How We Perform Committee Work”.

Part One – Communication and Training

Multiple modalities of communication

- Who: All are involved
 - Phone call
 - Text / Online Chat
 - Email

Communication Considerations

- Verbal communication should always be a paramount form, judged as relevant depending on time consideration / immediacy - face to face because you can use your voice and intonation to convey meaning.
- We have a wide audience in AA. You need to know your audience.
- Identify which modality works best for the person with whom you are communicating. If your District, Committee or body of servants/volunteers keeps a registry, keeping track of the primary and/or secondary preferred modality of communication would be helpful/suggested.
- Simplify the number of links in any line of communication

Development & Use of a Registry:

- If your District, Committee or body of servants/volunteers keeps a registry, keeping track of the primary and/or secondary preferred modality of communication would be helpful/suggested.
- Could this help simplify the links in our communication chains?
 - Possibly support a monthly or quarterly email from our Delegate to our body of current GSRs.
 - Suggested Actions:
 - What: Training our members w/ Excel and Airtable
 - Possible IT Workshop
 - Create a website video
 - Coordinate w/ YPAA
 - Who: DCM's, Committee Chairs, Area Registrar

Development & Upkeep of an Email Contact List

- Keep an easy to access (copy/paste) list of currently active committee members, GSRs, officers and past officers, etc.
- To expedite email communications, a simple contact list can help populate cc and bcc.
 - Suggested Action:
 - What: Training our members with Word, Excel, Airtable, Google Suite
 - Creating group, district, committee Google accounts
 - How to create and use contact lists
 - Engage anonymity with CC and BCC
 - Who: All

Receiving, Relaying & Filtering Communications

- Know when to alter the message that you have received or suggest alternative method of communication relative to your audience.
- Be mindful, however, that interpretation and compressing something can allow for misunderstanding.
- Does your communication include instructions? Be clear and concise.
- Be mindful that All DCMs or standing committee chairs and officers do not have equal skills.
- Include Due Dates in emails... specify date/times of needed responses
- Being specific in Email Subject Highlights
 - Suggested Action
 - What: Create a list of applicable themes
 - Who: DCM's and Chairs
 - Be sure to communicate the spirit and message behind each theme
 - Identifying themes that can be used in the subject line to help receivers to better engage filter, categorize and more effectively digest and disseminate
 - Ask myself before I send:
 - Will this communication end with the user?
 - Will this communication be passed on?

- Will this communication require a response?
- Utilizing a diversified “star” system when receiving emails:
 - Suggested Action:
 - What: Create a website video showcasing the process
 - Who: IT Committee and YPAA
 - Adjusting email settings to include 3-4 types of stars or flags; Each star would signify a certain type of communication and potential follow up action
 - i.e. (Can be set in most email settings):
 - Gold Star = Review Later
 - Green Star = Helpful Information for filing/storage
 - Red Star = Needs to be passed on
 - Banner w/ Exclamation Point = Immediate actions outside of digital communication
- Hyperlink Education:
 - Suggested Action:
 - What: Create a website video showcasing the process
 - Who: IT Committee and YPAA
 - How to embed hyperlinks and use them creatively throughout communications to better inform and direct users

Creating Templates:

- A template helps remind and support awareness of what needs to be included in all messages that need to be relayed.
 - Suggested Action
 - What: Create & distribute GSR Report Template(s)
 - Who: DCMs and GSRs.
 - What: Create and distribute DCM Report Template(s)
 - Who: Area Chair, DCMs

Encourage Sharing Sessions at All Levels and gatherings on “What Makes Effective Communication to that specific body or Committee:

- Suggested Action
 - What: Incorporate sharing sessions on the topic periodically
 - Who:
 - Delegate to ACM; to Assembly
 - Area Chair to ACM; to Assembly
 - DCMs to GSRs
 - GSRs to home group business meeting
- Follow up:
 - Be sure all incoming Chairs, DCMs and Committee Leaders are familiar with our SMF-111 – How to Conduct a Sharing Session.

Develop Skills Training For:

- Effective Summarizing Techniques
- Effective Outlining Techniques
- Time Management Tools & Skills / Prioritization techniques
 - On Board Check List
 - 1st week To-do list
 - 1st month To-do list
 - 1st year To-do list
 - Suggested Action:
 - What: Develop and explore workshops on effective administrative skills
 - Who: All
- How to manage effective file storage
 - How to ensure healthy transfer of past committee files in rotation

Connecting with New Service Members

- Educate, train and support our GSRs to act as mentors or as service sponsor to their homegroup members with regards to the work of our committees.
 - Who: ALL
- Support our committees and districts in developing a volunteer member position to act as liaison to new members.
 - Who:
 - Standing Committee Chairs to new committee members
 - Area Chairs to new ACM members
 - DCMs to new GSRs
 - GSRs to new homegroup members
 - Be sure there is written communication on what the committees do
 - They need to know how the committee's work fits into the big picture
 - A summary one-page sheet for any of our membership
 - What do you do?
 - How do you do it?
 - Define, for each committee, what a general role is for a volunteer. Be sure to tell them they are not committed; they can come and go as they want.

Summary of Trainings to Create

- Committee Service Work Job Fair (Unity Day?)
- Committee liaison positions within each committee—someone to mentor a new committee member; Committee Volunteer Coordinator (see above)
- Create a list of the committee's duties and general overview
- Space to create a new DCM liaison (see above)
- Have a list of available Service Sponsors, and what service positions s/he has done
- 4-Area Standing Committee Sharing Sessions
 - Budgeting
 - What Makes an Effective Committee Chair
 - How to Run an Effective Meeting
 - Gaining Volunteers
- Suggested Action:
 - What:
 - Coordinate with 4-Area Area Chairs
 - Possible coordinate a sharing session via ZOOM to identify the potential
 - Report back to Area Committee Chairs
 - Who: Area Chairs

Reporting

- Suggested Action
 - What: Encourage that our Area Secretary immediately publish a bulleted document/summary of what can be reported from ACM to our Area Officers, DCMs, and Standing Committee Chairs.
 - Who: Area Secretary
- Be mindful of length vs. content. Is my report helpful and informative? Avoid "administrative" details...# of attending, where, when, time the meeting started, etc.
- DCM: Carve out time in your agenda's (periodically) to educate on the topic(s) of:
 - Developing a GSR report
 - Can you District Agenda act as the backbone to a GSR report?
 - Delivering informative and enthusiastic reports—Successful methods and things to avoid.

Methods for Generating Interest and Passion in General Service

- District Hosted Officers "Responsibility Fairs"
- During Assembly: "Meet Your Officers"
 - Suggested Action for Both Above
 - What: Carve out time during Area Assembly
 - Who: Agenda Committee
- Encourage our Committees to do Group reach-out. Work with DCMs/GSRs on developing a roster of possible meetings. Committee Chairs are encouraged to visit other Districts:

- Who: Committee Chairs, DCMs, and GSRs.
- DCM encourages GSRs that when they find someone interested in General service, to have the member contact them directly.
 - Who: DCMs and GSRs
- Invite members who are not GSRs to attend District meetings.
 - Who: DCMs and GSRs
- Encourage all our members to better “practice” their rotation out of a service position, i.e. as a committee member rotates, they ought to find/garner a volunteer to stand for the position in their wake.
 - “Out Going Check List”
 - Last year To-do list
 - Last month To-do list
 - Last week to-do list
 - Who: DCMs and GSRs.

GSR Orientation School

- First half = orientation; second half = “school”
 - Learning skills to help as GSR
 - How to carry a motion (Simple intro to Relaxed Roberts Rules)
 - How to host a Sharing Session
 - A.A. structure
 - Effective use of emails and calendars (Detailing a Communication Process)
 - Service Manual—How to use it
 - Applying the Concepts in Service Work
- Give DCMs homework to take back to District meetings in coordination with the GSR curriculum. Ask for participatory follow up. Invite GSRs to the ACM to share experience practicing their skills.
- Develop a circulating GSR Workshop amongst 3-4 Districts.
- Area-Hosted Service manual Book Study
 - North County Central Office
 - South County
 - East County
 - Etc.
- During the Assembly, break out into:
 - DCM Sharing Sessions
 - GSR Sharing Sessions
- **NOTE:** All the Above GSR Orientation/School is under development by Alternate Delegate (Panel 68)

Training Materials

- Area-sponsored GSR Welcome Packet and Curriculum support material
 - Under development by Alternate Delegate (Panel 68)
- Area Website “Featured Video” Section
 - Suggested Action
 - What: Spearhead this as a website project for new website committee
 - Who: Web Servant, Web Committee, IT Committee
 - Additional Training Materials

Part Two—Training and Communication

- How well are we training others of resources available to them and how these can be utilized? Barely/Poorly
 - Resources
 - Archives
 - Website
 - DCMs encourage GSRs that “effective websites” be added to “favorites” or “Bookmarks” on their computers.
 - DCMs: add discussion of the website to their meeting agenda
 - Distribute AA Website(s) Flyer
 - Who: DCMs and GSRs
 - Committees
 - Distributing member-friendly roster

- Who: Committee Chairs
- How can we use mentors, service sponsors, or other volunteer “trainers” to identify and facilitate additional training opportunities? Does the Area need to commit additional resources and personnel to training?
 - Coordinating our ACM attendees to the NAATW to bring back and host workshops based on what was learned
 - Creating videos for our website (referenced above)
 - For All of the Above: Who: IT Committee, Website Committee, Area Chair
 - Create a survey of who has certain skills; identify who can help train: These include: Word, Excel, Publisher, QuickBooks (Paid Special Worker), Outlook, Google Suites, Airtable, Public speaking & reporting skills, note taking, how to create a survey monkey, Service sponsorship (what qualifications; what positions have you served).
 - Who: Area Chair
- Knowing that Communication is an exchange of information and ideas, how can we better receive feedback from our audience on their needs or ideas? What could we get from this?
 - Use of surveys—online or print
 - Possibly live during an assembly, or ACM or District meeting
 - Create surveys for our GSRs to share with their group members
 - How to better serve groups
 - How to better connect with group members
 - How to better serve as GSR
 - Challenge Committee Chairs to create surveys with questions:
 - How to better connect
 - How to better serve
 - What isn’t working
 - What is missing
 - Suggested Action:
 - What: Conduct live demonstration of Survey Monkey at ACM
 - Who: Area Chair, IT Chair
- How can we increase our own awareness of what the Fellowship in our community needs?
 - Education of our Three Legacies
 - Promotion success in use of sharing sessions
 - GSRs to groups
 - DCMs to Districts
 - Chairs to Committees
 - ACM
 - Who: ALL
- Are we continuing to make the work that we do sound attractive to others?
 - Take time to consider the new person in the room
 - Careful to use names without titles
 - Careful to use acronyms
 - Promote communication and feedback during ACM
 - Roundtable discussions
 - Who: ALL

Information Technology Ad-Hoc Committee

This mission of this ad-hoc Committee was to collaborate with the IT Committee and focus on broad items that are applicable throughout the Area. The goal was to identify ideas and opportunities to improve or expand the use of information technology to better carry AA's message to our membership. The findings below summarize the discussions and present goals for our Area.

- How do we increase confidence in our Area's website and Webmaster to ensure the website is fully utilized?
- How can we better reconcile GSO's Group list with Intergroup/Central Office group lists for developing effective group outreach programs?
- Explore the feasibility of posting written materials or videos on the history of AA in San Diego and Imperial County on our Area's website.
- Explore expanding District 19's GSR registration process across the Area and linking this content in our Communication efforts.
- Assess the opportunities in expanding IT learnings into applicable Committees, including Finance, Newsletter, Literature, Archives, and Grapevine/LaVina.
- Assess the feasibility of "Google Translate" to assist the Spanish Translation-Written Committee.
- Review potential opportunities for Districts to e-mail members, post reports, minutes, and other information.
- Identify how to prioritize learnings from other Areas, GSO, or the National Technology Workshop to support our Area.
- Explore opportunities for local Technology Workshops for DCMs, GSRs, and members, highlighting utilization of Area and GSO websites.
- Assess feasibility of digital means of contributions, e.g. Venmo, Square, PayPal, etc. Should there be guidelines for groups? Issues with security, access, etc.
- Assess issues and feasibility if the Area should develop a YouTube page

How We Perform Committee Work Ad-Hoc Committee Report

Our Area Inventory included discussions on many of our Area's Standing Committees. This ad-hoc Committee built upon these findings and offers the following recommendations for consideration by the Area Committee. In addition, several Area Service Committees submitted ideas for inclusion.

- Increase collaboration by having members of the standing committees liaise with other standing committees with which they have common work.
- Have a skit at each assembly that includes two or three committees.
- At DCM/Committee Training Workshop, ask DCMs to familiarize themselves with all the committees and ask GSRs what committees they might be interested in.
- Tell GSRs to "Just Do It!"
- Create a one-page information/description of work for each committee for new GSRs.
- Have the Area Newsletter run a one-page article on each committee.
- Create standing committee web pages to allow committees to post their structure and guidelines and calls for volunteers for 12-Step work and projects.
- Conduct a structure and guidelines review for each committee.
- Literature Committee to hold a regularly-scheduled Movie Night and invite new volunteers for their service work. (The movies are educational about service.)
- Create a buddy system so people can discover general service together.
- Ask GSRs to make announcements at meetings for volunteers that are needed for specific committee work.
- Committee Chairs should contact new DCMs at the beginning of the year to let them know their committees are available for a visit to the district's meeting. Encourage date setting early in the year so planning can be completed.
- At Area Committee Meeting, allow time for sharing or collaboration with committees for sharing and brainstorming for solutions to committee problems.
- Ask committees to give 1-2-minute reports at the assembly. The reports should be written and made available for download and printing on the area's website.
- Increase participation by holding a "Sponsor Day". Each member is requested to bring a sponsee to assembly.
- Increase membership by asking members to commit to personally invite others to attend the committee meetings.
- What is our path for committees to help groups deal with issues resulting from actions outside of the group? Perhaps hold an event and ask local sober-living homes to send a liaison
- New Service Position: Group Service Sponsor (GSS) could be a group elected or volunteer position that would be a liaison between all Standing Committees and its group. This could be all inclusive of Intergroup, H&I or area specific. The basic function of the GSS could be to inform / announce to its members a description (purpose) of committees, opportunities by committee invitation (recruitment for new committee members) and/or requests for (event or task specific) volunteers. Group service commitments would remain within the scope of the Group Secretary or Group Commitment Coordinator. Perhaps this new GSS entity may also be formed as a Standing Committee of its own.
- Information Technology Suggestion: Group Service Sponsor (GSS) In addition to this committee's efforts to formulate and strategize it would also allow for the Chairperson's contact information to be added to the roster allowing for an easy (one click) way for committee to communicate their requests. I can easily envision a wide spread effort carrying the message "Spirit of Love & Service" throughout our community
- Create one page of the website devoted to listing Service Volunteer Opportunities.
- Post Committee Info on the web page related to a committee on the area's website. Example: For the Literature Committee, post "Message/Tip to GSRs".
- Create attractions to the area website with surveys, contests, anonymous blog newsletter, and Archives quizzes and anecdotes.
- Create a complaint button on our website.
- Create space on the website for sharing experience on the Traditions and Concepts. For January - Concept I and Tradition One; February Concept II and Tradition Two.
- Area Chair: Assign second-year DCMs and Committee Chairs as "buddies" to those in their first year. Insert a roundtable discussion to the January ACM Agenda for new DCMS and Committee Chairs to speak to their "buddies".
- Create a standardized communication for GSRs to convey to their group, the Standing Committees' purpose, work and need for volunteers.
- Amend the "Blind Pick" form, with GSR skills and interest information. GSRs can then select the committee to which they can contribute or learn something they want to learn. Ask each Standing Committee Chair to list the skills they need for the work of their committee, or the topics and areas of interests with which members will be engaged. Conduct a regular check with each committee to see if there is a need to change the listing of skills.

- Repurpose the rotating-out ACM members who did not stand for or were not elected as an Area Officer by urging them to continue serving the Area on a Committee. We are losing a lot of service experience.

Committee-specific Suggestions

- LaVina Chair for Grapevine/LaVina Committee: in thinking about gaining specific skills needed on our Committees, the LaVina Chair would be filled by someone who speaks Spanish
- Policy Committee: Streamline the process for getting a flyer approved by the Policy Committee. When returning notification of approval to the sender, copy the Translation Committee stating it is ready for translation. There should also be a request to send the translated document, along with the English version, to the flyer's originator,
- Grapevine/LaVina: Change committee guidelines to include GVRs in voting membership. The Committee Chair would remain the only one who votes at the ACM or Assembly on behalf of the Committee.
- Accessibilities Committee: Ask for a call for volunteers who have knowledge and experience in literacy. Hold a discussion to see if there is a need for "reading" sponsors.
- Policy Committee: Review the Service materials available on aa.org to see if there is any information that would be of use to the work of the Area.
- Literature Committee: may wish to contact CPC and offer to take or share the video "Hope: Alcoholics at treatment centers. Committee to hold a regularly scheduled Movie Night and invite new volunteers for their service work. The movies are educational and are about Service.

ACMs and Assembly Meetings: Are They Meeting Our Needs?

Findings and Considerations

Comments and findings informing this section came from both Standing Committee Discussions and Area General Service Discussions. A copy of all statements is included in the Appendix section of this report.

A review of the candid comments may be categorized into five areas.

- ✚ Setting the Tone and Goal of our Area Committee meetings and Assemblies
- ✚ Agenda, including the topics presented and discussed
- ✚ Use of meeting time
- ✚ Participation by attendees
- ✚ Building the leadership pipeline

Setting the Tone of Area Committee Meetings and Assemblies

1. To remind attendees of the purpose of the Area Assembly and why we are here, I suggest each meeting begin with someone reading "A.A.'s Legacy of Service," by Bill W., rather than the Declaration of Unity. A copy of this document is in the Appendix of this report. I believe it sets a better tone that the "Declaration of Unity" currently used.
2. Each new GSR, DCM, Area Officer, Area Standing Committee Chair and Area Committee members should also receive copies of: 1) "Leadership in A.A.: Ever a Vital Need" from the A.A. Grapevine; 2) Selected passages from the A.A. Service Manual, including the Purpose of the Area, and 3) a current copy of our Area 8 Structure & Guidelines. Copies of each of these are in the Appendix of this report.
3. Those developing agendas, conducting or participating at the ACMs and assemblies must keep in mind what we're hoping to accomplish. In this context, I mean providing information to our DCMs or GSRs they can take back to the districts and/or groups. This means we need to focus our agendas, discussions, reports, and decisions on "what key points do we want communicated to the fellowship?" We need to emphasize these and give them subtle or not so subtle guidance on these key points, questions, and issues.

ACM and Assembly Agendas Including Topics Presented and Discussed

1. It's important to remember two of the stated purposes of the Area Assembly (ACM) are to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers (12 Step work) *and* to provide communication and encourage unity in the Area. These require discussions and exchange of ideas among participants. A meeting dominated by reports defeats this purpose. I suggest we assess the benefits of setting aside some time at each meeting for DCM to DCM discussions (perhaps moderated with notes taken) on problems, successes or other issues. Time for discussions to promote understanding on other topics important to GSO, the Area, or groups may also be useful and cause attendees to feel the meeting was personally valuable to them and their respective groups.
2. For both ACMs and assemblies, I suggest we structure content that leads group members to actions desired in service, as clearly stated at the Inventory. I suggest we critically analyze each item typically on the agendas and assess its value. For example, I do not see any value in reading Traditions or Steps. This consumes time and those in service are already familiar with these. Communication to our membership, through our service structure is the ultimate goal. For every item on the agenda, we should consider a) what is its purpose; b) to

what audience is this information directed; c) how can we summarize the key points/facts to make it easier to communicate to the fellowship.

3. Our current methods for reports from the DCMs, Committee Chairs, and Liaison Committees at the ACM add little value. We are not communicating in a way that is helpful to the Fellowship. We encourage electronic submission of reports, but we don't receive minutes until weeks later, often after the information is outdated. I suggest revisiting who reports, the purpose of the report, and how the information is reported. Here is one example: The Literature or Grapevine Committee may want to inform the fellowship of the publication of a new book or pamphlet or an upcoming workshop. The Finance Committee might have a new method of reporting GSO or Area contributions. The Area Registrar may have updated the database or have new information from GSO DCMs may wish to share with group. Perhaps these could be submitted at the start, middle, or end of each month and summarized on a two-page handout. These could be distributed at the ACM, as well as posted on the Area's website. This timely information is now summarized and presented in a manner more easily accessible for sharing with the fellowship.
4. We spend a significant time of each meeting on reports from Area Officers. While these are often interesting, we should review how this communication supports our 12-step work. It may be more useful to take another approach. More personal stories should be brief, or perhaps submitted to the Newsletter or posted on the website.
 - a. The **Delegate's** report could primarily focus on news from GSO and clearly identify key tidbits or takeaways we'd like DCMs to share with GSRs or group members, or Area Standing Committee Chairs to share with the committee.
 - b. The **Alternate Delegate** could review additional activities that have or will occur within GSO, the Region or otherwise outside of the Area. Like the Delegate, the Alternate Delegate could clearly identify those points which should be shared with those interested.
 - c. The **Chair's** report should focus on what's happened within the Area during the past months, what's coming up, discuss where the Area is headed, or any other information that could/should be shared across the fellowship.
 - d. The **Alternate Chair**, perhaps, could be the person that reviews all events that are coming up. This should NOT be done from the floor by anyone who wants to. I'm suggesting this change as to provide consistency. Multiple individuals making announcements on upcoming events creates disorganization, wastes time, and is not consistent with this information being captured by the DCMs so they can report back to the GSRs and groups.
 - e. **The goal is to motivate interest and involvement.** Again, we need to provide takeaways that can be shared with the fellowship. This is all part of improving our communication and engaging our trusted servants.
5. I suggest we consider changing the placement of agenda items. I suggest placing Old business at the beginning of the meeting. Too many leave at the break, or lunch at Assemblies. Then place "New Business" after "Old Business". Reports and open discussion would follow.
6. In Inventory discussions about our Agenda committee, several important points were identified: Discussion topics should be early on the assembly agendas to allow for more group participation and discussion. The Chair/Agenda committee must prioritize discussion topics. Specific quotes include *"Chair should direct movement and opportunities."* And avoid *"I must hear myself 10 times saying the same thing."* *The goal is maintaining participation and interest, so attendees remain until the end of the meeting. What are we doing to keep them there?"*
7. At both ACMs and Assemblies, setting aside time for open discussion is wanted and needed. We can offer a general topic, or solicit topics prior to the meeting. We need to listen to the needs of our DCMs, or GSRs, and committees in such a forum. We want all to feel they are wanted and needed at our meetings, that their opinions matter, and that their service is appreciated. We currently do very little of this.

Use of Meeting Time

It was very evident from the Area Committee Inventory that there is concern and frustration with time management at both the ACMs and Assemblies. I offer the following suggestions for your consideration.

1. As members arrive at the ACM, have them sign-in at the Registrar's table, located near the entrance. We waste a significant amount of time with "roll call" at the meeting. This time can be better purposed. It will also allow the Registrar a chance to update his/her records.
2. At the same table, display the most current Calendar of Events. If they have changes, these can be made at that time.
3. It's imperative to establish and enforce allotted times for each agenda item. The Area Chair must have or acquire skills in managing these times, including discussion time and repetition of comments from multiple people. We should implement the consistent use of a timer.

4. It's important we demonstrate knowledge of and respect for the development of a group conscience. This is not only necessary to manage the meetings, but to show others how this is done. I suggest a training session on this topic at the beginning of the year for Area officers, DCMs, and Standing Committee Chairs.

Building the Leadership Pipeline

The Inventory captured several participant suggestions on building our leadership pipeline. In addition, I offer the following considerations.

1. Identify, create, and offer new opportunities for greater participation in Area events, Standing Committees, and activities. This is especially true for those who are **not** GSRs. We should not limit our ability to do our work based on old ideas, such as outdated Structure & Guidelines.
2. Set an example. This can be done in many ways, including asking for help when needed; seeking education on unfamiliar topics, then sharing the learnings; seeking new ideas or methods from other Areas; encouraging and supporting attendance at PRAASA, along with providing guidance on how individuals can get the most benefit from attending; conducting more discussions at Assemblies to identify those who are developing interest in general service.
3. Ensure that standing committees increase interaction with district and even individual groups. This will take guidance and purpose in order to be successful. At the same time, the Area must ensure that all of its committees are visible, actively participating, and discussing their activities at Assemblies and workshops.
4. Make a commitment to strongly support the action plans developed by the Inventory ad-hoc committees on Training, Communication, Information Technology, and How We Perform Committee work. These create new opportunities and challenges for the area officers. But the payoff will be there, including in helping to build the leadership pipeline.

Area Committee Inventory Summary

Like a personal inventory, nothing changes or improves until we commit to addressing that which we identify. This Inventory presents significant opportunities across all service levels of the Area, including GSRs, DCMs, Area Officers, Area Committee Chairs and group members.

We discussed methods to improve our training and communicating programs to better prepare our trusted servants for the roles they may have today or in the future. Our effectiveness is essential for our survival.

We identified how the expanded use of technology may increase our effectiveness in reaching out to others and link us to other Areas and our counterparts at the General Service Office.

We identified specific actions our Area Standing Committees may take to reach new members, increase the visibility of what they do, support our Districts, and enhance the Committee's valuable contributions to our members.

We offer ideas and concrete suggestions on methods to enhance the value of our Area Committee meetings or Assemblies and empower participants with information, and tools to share that information, with the groups, Districts, or Committees they represent.

Lastly, the Inventory emphasized the need we have to collaborate across the organization to share our ideas and successes with all of those in Area 8 General Service and those whose lives we touch. As we do this, we will experience personal growth, enhance our own sobriety, and be examples for those who follow in our footsteps.

APPENDICES

Appendix I. General Service References.

Appendix I includes well-known and respected references. 1) "A.A.'s Legacy of Service", by Bill W. in our A.A. Service manual; 2) "Leadership in A.A.: Ever a Vital Need" from the A.A. Grapevine; 3) Selected passages from the A.A. Service Manual, including the Purpose of the Area, as stated in our Structure & Guidelines. Frequent reading of these passages at Area Committee Meetings and Area Assemblies ensures we remain focused on our purpose as an Area Committee.

A.A.'s Legacy of Service Written by Bill W in 1951. From our A.A. Service Manual, page S1

"Our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship."

Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need

"True as it was in the beginning, it is even more so today with AA membership tripled to over a million." [First printed in the April 1959 Grapevine]

NO SOCIETY can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and AA can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we AAs sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without any leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of "principles before personalities" around to such a point that there would be no "personality" in leadership whatever. This would imply rather faceless automatons trying to please everybody, regardless.

At other times, we are quite as apt to demand that AA's leaders must necessarily be people of the most sterling judgment, morals, and inspiration; big doers, prime examples to all, and practically infallible.

Real leadership, of course, has to function in between these entirely imaginary poles. In AA, certainly, no leader is faceless neither is any leader perfect. Fortunately, our Society is blessed with any amount of *real* leadership--the active people of today and the potential leaders for tomorrow, as each new generation of able members swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example." in effect, we are saying to them, "Act for us, but don't boss us."

A leader in AA service is therefore a guy (or a gal) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgment of his own--well, he really isn't a leader at all.

Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can obtain, sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

A politico is an individual who is forever trying to "get the people what they want." A statesman is an individual who can carefully discriminate when and when not to do this. He recognizes that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand against the storm--using its every ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

Nothing, however, can be more fatal to leadership than opposition for opposition's sake. It never can be "Let's have it our way or no way at all." This sort of opposition is often powered by a visionless pride or a gripe that makes us want to block something or somebody. Then there is the opposition that casts its vote saying, "No, we don't like it." No real reasons are ever given. This won't do. When called upon, leadership must always give its reasons, and good ones.

Then, too, a leader must realize that even very prideful or angry people can sometimes be dead right, when the calm and the more humble are quite mistaken.

These points are practical illustrations of the kinds of careful discrimination and soul-searching that true leadership must always try to exercise.

Another qualification for leadership is give-and-take--the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us all-or-nothing

drunks. Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by *a series of improving compromises*. We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then, it is truly necessary to stick flat-footed to one's conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situations for keen timing and a most careful discrimination as to which course to take.

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.

Then we have those whom we like to call our "destructive" critics. They power-drive, they are politickers, they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumors, gossip, and general scuttlebutt to gain their ends--all for the good of AA, of course! Well, in AA at least, we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest, of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending entirely on how we relate ourselves to them.

To begin with, we ought to listen very carefully to what they say. Sometimes, they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole truth, the half-truth, or even no truth at all can equally hurt us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they've got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we'd better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong, regardless. If it's nonsense, we can ignore them. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen, and we can try to forget the whole business. We can think of few better means of self-survey, of developing genuine patience, than the workouts these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members can afford us. This is always a large order, and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must needs keep trying.

Now comes that all-important attribute of vision. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some might feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy, because we AAs are constantly telling ourselves, "One day at a time." But that valued maxim really refers to our emotional lives and means only that we are not to repine over the past nor wishfully fantasy or daydream about our future.

As individuals and as a fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the whole job of planning for tomorrow onto a kind Providence. God has endowed us human beings with considerable capability for foresight, and He evidently expects us to use it. Therefore, we must needs distinguish between wishful dreaming for a happy tomorrow and today's use of our powers of thoughtful estimate—estimate of the kind which we trust will bring future progress rather than unforeseen woe.

"Act for us, but don't boss us."

Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence--a sound virtue if ever there was one. Of course, we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part. But even so, this will be far better than to refuse to think at all.

The making of estimates has several aspects. We look at past and present experience to see what we think it means. From this, we derive a tentative idea or policy. Looking first at the nearby future, we ask how our idea or policy might work. Following this estimate, we ask how our policies and ideas might work under the several differing conditions that could arise in the longer future. If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on--always experimentally, when that is possible. Somewhat later, we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is, or may soon be, working out.

At about this stage, we may have to take a critical decision. Maybe we have a policy or plan that still looks fine and is apparently doing well. Nevertheless, we ought to ponder very carefully what its longtime effect will be. Will today's nearby advantages boomerang into large liabilities for tomorrow? The temptation will almost always be to seize the nearby benefits and quite forget about the harmful precedents or consequences that we may be setting in motion.

These are no fancy theories. We have found that we must use these principles of estimate constantly, especially at world-service levels where the stakes are high. In public relations, for example, we must estimate the reaction of both AA groups and the general public, both short-term and long-term. The same thing goes for our literature. Our finances have to be estimated and budgeted. We must think about our service needs as they relate to general economic conditions, group capability, and willingness to contribute. On many such problems, we must very often try to think many months and even years ahead.

As a matter of fact, all of AA's Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future. Years ago, we slowly evolved an idea about AA being self-supporting. There had been trouble here and there about "outside gifts." Then, still more trouble developed. Consequently, we began to devise a policy of "no outside gifts." We began to suspect that large sums would tend to make us irresponsible and could divert us from our primary aim. Finally, we saw that for the long pull outside money could ruin us utterly. At this point, what had been just an idea or general policy hardened firmly down into an AA Tradition. We saw that we must sacrifice the quick, nearby advantage for long-term safety.

We went through this same process on anonymity. A few public breaks had looked good. But then the vision came that many such breaks could finally raise havoc among us. So, it went: first a gleam in the eye, then an experimental policy, then a firm policy, and finally a deep conviction--a vision for tomorrow. Such is our process of estimating the future. Our responsible world leadership must be especially and constantly proficient in this vital activity. This is an ability much to be desired, especially among our trustees, and I think most of them should be chosen on the basis that they have already proved their aptness for foresight in business or professional careers.

"Attributes of leadership can make. . .the difference between life and death."

We shall continually need many of these same attributes, insofar as they can be had, among our leaders of AA services at all levels. The principles of leadership will be just about the same, no matter what the size of the operation.

This discussion on leadership may look, at first glance, like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of AA member. But this is not really so. We are simply recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at finance or foresight. And it is even less likely that a fine banker could be much of a musical success. When, therefore, we talk about AA leadership, we declare only that we ought to select that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find, making sure that we land that talent, whatever it is, in the spot where it will do us the most good,

While this article was first thought of in connection with our world-service leadership, it is quite possible that many of its suggestions can be useful to everyone who takes an active part in our Society.

Nowhere could this be more true than in the area of Twelfth Step work itself--something at which nearly all of us most eagerly work. Every sponsor is necessarily a leader. The stakes are huge. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospect, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example. . .well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death.

Thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in each and all of its great affairs!

Bill W.

Our A.A. Service Manual Describes the Area Committee and Its Members

In Chapter Five of our Service Manual, it discusses The Area Committee. It contains important concepts here that we should all keep in mind in our service positions. They address the purpose of the Area Committee, duties of the Chairperson, and "Suggestions on Chairing Area Assembly Meetings". The partial passages below may be useful:

"Perhaps more than any other group of people in A.A., the area committee is responsible for the health of the Conference structure and thus for growth and harmony in the A.A. Fellowship. If the G.S.R.s are lax, if there is a lack of harmony in a district, if there are difficulties in public information or some other service area, the committee member knows it and can turn to the full for help.

An active committee deals with all kinds of service problems: Is experience being shared among groups? Is the A.A. MESSAGE GETTING INTO HOSPITALS, PRISONS, JAILS AND REHABILITATION CENTERS? Are news media and professionals who deal with suffering alcoholics well informed about A.A.? Are new groups and Loners being visited and helped?" p. S44.

In describing the duties of the **Chairperson**, it states:

The chairperson is responsible for the smooth running of area assemblies, consulting with the committee before setting the date and time, making sure that all groups are notified, consulting with officers and committee members on the program, and chairing the assembly meetings. The chairperson, more than any other officer, keeps the delegate informed about what is going on in the area, and makes sure that committee members are aware of what goes on in world service." p. S44.

Perhaps even more pertinent to us as we review findings from the Area Committee Inventory, are the "Suggestions on Chairing Assembly Meetings". *"Much depends on the chairperson's ability to conduct a smoothly functioning meeting. These suggestions should be helpful:*

- *Keep the issues clear. If a motion is offered, be sure it is stated clearly and distinctly so that all know what they are voting for or against.*
- *Stick close to Third Legacy Procedure for elections; discourage departures from it.*
- *On simple matters, a majority vote is enough—even a "sense of the meeting" can take the place of a vote at times. In such a case, the chair asks: "Is it the sense of the meeting that...?" If there are no "nays", it is apparent there is accord.*
- *Meetings may be fairly informal, but the attention of the entire meeting should be on one subject at a time, without the disruptive influence of private conversations.*
- *An assembly makes its own rules, and the chairperson should be sure that all members are aware of current suggested procedures in the manual. If members want to make a change in the rules, it should be done before a vote is taken, or before an election is conducted."* p.45.

The **Area Delegate** has responsibilities and ties to the area committee as identified in Chapter Six—The Delegate, in the section on Duties. I am highlighting several of these:

- *Provide leadership in solving local problems involving the A.A. traditions*
- *Work closely with committee members and officers, sharing experience throughout the year. After G.S.R.s and committee members have reported on the Conference, learn from these A.A.s how groups and members have reacted.*
- *Assume added responsibility if the area chair and alternate chair are unable to serve. Or, if an area committee is not functioning effectively, the delegate may take an active role in remedying the situation.*

Our Area 8 Structure & Guidelines Describes the Purpose of the Area

PURPOSE OF THE AREA ASSEMBLY

- A. To carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- B. To support the General Service Conference and its members in its role as provider of A.A. world services, and as guardian of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and 12 Concepts of World Service.
- C. To elect and support a delegate to the General Service Conference.
- D. To provide communication and encourage unity within the Area.
- E. To assist in the development and communication of an informed group conscience.

It is important that we are intimately familiar with each of these references and incorporate their learnings in all aspects of our service to our Fellowship, especially in the role we each have on the Area Committee.

Appendix II: All Statements Related to ACMs and Assembly Meetings—Are They Meeting Our Needs?

The comments below provide an important, informative look at how we, as the Area Committee, are meeting the needs of Area Committee members. These collective comments often were not ranked as the most important, but collectively they speak volumes.

From Agenda Committee Discussions: Prioritize discussion topics. Place topic discussions at beginning of each Assembly instead of end of day. There will be more group participation and discussion. Please—set some guidelines for sharing at Assemblies and enforce these. Area Chair should direct movement and opportunities. Avoid “I must hear myself” ten times saying the same thing. The goal is maintaining participation and interest to remain until the end of the meeting. What has been done to keep them there? Maybe roundtable discussions with topics.

From Literature Committee Discussions: Have a two-minute slot at each ACM to highlight one piece of literature, reminding all that pamphlets are not just for newcomers.

Additional Comments:

- Meeting Focus: Set a statement—“Why We Are Here”. How does a “steering committee act when all we do is hear reports? Do we develop an informed group conscience? Focus on Tradition Five—group is a spiritual entity to carry the message; refocus on this tradition when we derail off “Why We Are Here”.
- Meeting Content: Do we structure content that leads group members to actions desired in Service? Standing Committees need to make reports for GSRs at Assemblies. Should we have an AA meeting before the Assembly?
- Use of Meeting Time: Use a time for those who share/participate in discussions/decisions. Try alternative methods for District/Standing Committee reports instead of at the ACM. For Assemblies, we lose GSRs after lunch; Business is in PM. Structure the agenda to consider that. Should we go to two meetings?

From Building the Leadership Pipeline Discussions:

- Make the position attractive; make it available to all; better advertisement/explanation.
- Use mentors and service sponsors. Have a “Buddy” to help get started as DCM/Standing Committee Chair.
- Implement use of a Training Day. Make the assemble a meditative experience; increase understanding of Concepts; Ninth Concept; skill building.
- Announce to GSRs at Area Assemblies that instead of joining an Area committee, they can choose to be on a District Committee. DCMs can make same announcement at District meetings that GSRs can service on Area Standing Committees—Promote each other!

Appendix III Area Standing Committee Follow-Up Grapevine/La Vina—Complete Comments

- Further promotion?
 - a. Work on displaying and maintaining supplies to attract our members at Area events is perennial. To reach out further, an effort has been undertaken to increase our supplies so that we have 3 comprehensive sample boxes of Grapevine and LaVina items that can be checked out from our committee at the ACM by DCM's for a period of 2 months. The purpose is to make these “Grapevine to Go” boxes available to District GVR's to display at District meetings and interested GSR's to bring home to their groups to display there. Items may be sold from the box and when returned, the funds are collected, and the products refreshed and made available to another District for check out. This is to capture the attention of GSR's who have never seen a Grapevine in their group and would like to inform their group about The Grapevine and LaVina and assist in developing the service positions of GVR/RLV.
 - b. Promoting the GVR/RLV position of service with GSR/RSG's is one of the best ways for our committee to develop continuous support for the Grapevine/ LaVina and broaden the subscriber base. We plan to host 2 Support Sessions a year to assist GVR's/RLV's with their service position. Visiting Districts and talking to GSR's

about how to support The Grapevine has begun to produce a GVR/RLV population and has added involved members and resources to our committee. The GV/LV Chair or Alt. Chair will write a report or promotional piece for the Area Newsletter, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis.

- Discuss about the Grapevine in our own share
Each committee member shared that they discuss the Grapevine in our shares. We read the magazine and share how it enhances our recovery. We use an article for topic of discussion. We have something of worth to share with newcomers and those we sponsor. We share what we learn by expanding our step work through reading the magazines and books.
- Discuss Grapevine during AA announcements.
Unless there is a GVR/RLV on duty we announce Grapevine events and products and encourage our members to subscribe. We do this especially when visiting other groups.
- Include blurb in GSR orientation for GSRs to announce during meetings. We are putting together a one-page info sheet about The Grapevine, and the other side will be in Spanish about LaVina to give to GSR's and RLV's at Orientation. It should be ready for the January Area Assembly.
- At Assemblies, announce the GV table and its available products.
Our Committee recommends that the Chairperson Alt Chairperson or Past Delegate at every Area Assembly make a 10 second announcement drawing the Assembly's attention to the Grapevine table: its free materials, and special items for sale.
- Promotional flyer for GV
Annually updated, the "Grapevine Today" and "La Vina Hoy" is a professional and informative flyer for our fellowship and we always have a good supply of them at our table for the taking.
- Encourage DCMs to announce GV/La Vina at each monthly GSR meeting
Each District is encouraged to have a District GV Rep. The GV Rep is given a few minutes in the agenda to report on what is current with The Grapevine. We recommend that DCM's go to the Website aagrapevine.org to the GVR resources tab and print out or share digitally the monthly newsletter with their GSR's.
- Share at group level what GV has done for your personal recovery
GV/LV committee members are consistently sharing in our groups about the benefit of reading the stories and how it has deepened our personal recovery. It may take a newly assigned committee member some time to subscribe, receive and begin reading, but once that happens we have a dedicated supporter.
- Hold workshops, inform GSRs
We hold a writer's Workshop every year. We wish more members would participate. As mentioned previously we are holding workshops for GVR's and RLV's as an investment in widening the support for The Grapevine in the Home Group and attracting members into General Service.
- Reach out to H&I/ treatment/corrections to populate lit. supply with GVs
We have begun to ask for a GV committee member to become a liaison between the H&I Committee and our committee to get the scope of how many subscriptions the H&I Committee buys with its budget, how many gift subscriptions get funneled to them, where their greatest need is with Grapevine and LaVina publications and suggest ways on how our committee can assist with meeting that need.
- Encourage writing from AC members as contributors. Be a leader by example.
The Grapevine/LaVina ACM report every month highlights the current editorial theme and encourages all ACM members to contribute their stories on the special topic. We have printed out the editorial calendar for those who wish to carry it to their District meetings and in turn encourage the GSR's to contribute in writing or recording. The editorial calendar link can also be found at aagrapevine.org on the homepage under "Share."