

## **Local Service Toolbox Project Report to the Fellowship – March 2021**

Hello from your World Board,

This report contains an update about the Local Service Toolbox Project, and an overview of the next steps we are taking. We have held a number of web meetings, webinars, and other discussions since the 2020 World Service Conference to begin gathering material for the project. We also posted a survey online in four languages from the end of October to the end of December 2020. The survey sought experience on a range of topics that we propose covering in the service tools that the project will be developing. The survey was completed by 205 members, 13 groups, and 11 service bodies or events. Responses were received in five languages from 27 countries, plus two that identified as global groups. Within the US we received responses from 35 states, as well as Puerto Rico and Washington, DC.

We are moving forward with the project by focusing on two main areas: Virtual meetings best practices, and how virtual meetings are connecting to the wider world of NA, including NA service delivery.

### **Virtual Meetings Best Practices**

The responses to the survey questions, along with the locally developed tools we have already received and posted at [www.na.org/virtual](http://www.na.org/virtual), have enabled us to create a draft outline of a virtual meetings best practices tool. This is posted on the project webpage here [www.na.org/toolbox](http://www.na.org/toolbox). We are seeking your thoughts and ideas in response to this draft, and will post revised versions as it develops. These will be dated so we can all keep up to date with the latest version. We welcome your input at any time!

### **Virtual Meetings and How They are Connecting to NA Service Delivery and the Wider NA Community**

The second focus of the project is more complicated for a number of reasons. Virtual meetings may have members from around the world but NA's system of service delivery is largely geographically determined. The question of how to connect virtual meetings to service delivery is something that most of NA seems to still be puzzling through.

Our perspective is that NA in many places is in a fluid state as the pandemic has caused shut-downs, and the ability to meet in person is inconsistent and frequently changing. Our current situation is new territory for all of us, and the landscape will likely change again. No individual or entity has all the answers to the questions that many of us are asking, and there may not even be answers to all of our challenges right now. With that in mind, we are reminded of this from the Second Tradition chapter in *Guiding Principles*:

“Our experience shows us that NA is strong enough to withstand our growing pains.”

We want to continue discussing how virtual meetings are connecting to NA by listening to what is happening in your communities and by sharing what we are seeing and hearing. With that approach in mind, we are seeking experience on three main topics.

#### Recognizing virtual meetings as NA groups

One of the topics we would like to ask you about is whether you believe virtual meetings should be recognized as NA groups. Some of you have been asking for this conversation and decision for some

time now. We believe the time has come to frame this discussion for the World Service Conference next year.

The approach we have taken at NA World Services is to provide information about web- and phone-based meetings on the meeting search page on na.org, and on the NA Meeting Search app, but not to register them as groups until we receive direction from the Fellowship on whether that is an appropriate course of action. We want to be sure whatever steps we take are deliberate and careful and reflect the conscience of the Fellowship. Until a change in policy happens we will continue to list online meetings, but not register them as groups.

We are seeing a range of different approaches in different parts of NA. Some service bodies consider virtual groups to be full participants, while others do not. *The Group Booklet* lists six points that identify an NA group, and we would like to ask members of the Fellowship whether they believe virtual meetings meet the criteria to be NA groups. Here are those six points:

1. All members of a group are drug addicts, and all drug addicts are eligible for membership.
2. As a group, they are self-supporting.
3. As a group, their single goal is to help drug addicts recover through application of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.
4. As a group, they have no affiliation outside Narcotics Anonymous.
5. As a group, they express no opinion on outside issues.
6. As a group, their public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

We have included a question about this topic in the survey posted on the project webpage.

#### Connecting virtual groups to the service system

Registering virtual groups is only one small part of a bigger conversation about how they fit within a service system that is almost entirely organized along geographical lines. We are hearing about a variety of approaches, including connecting to regions or zones, and forming a virtual group support forum. It seems to us that this is an issue that many in NA are still figuring out. And undoubtedly, much will change in terms of the virtual landscape of NA when shutdown orders are lifted in more places and the pandemic begins to subside. Because of all of these factors, it seems premature to begin outlining resources or service tools related to this second project focus. We plan to continue collecting information, and have included a question on this topic in the survey.

#### Virtual groups and NA service delivery

Part of connecting with our service system is the opportunity to participate in NA services outside of what a single group provides in its recovery meetings. We are asking two questions about this topic in the survey.

### **Next Steps**

We intend to continue hosting smaller discussion groups with experienced members to discuss the best practices draft and the questions related to at greater depth. This is very much a work in progress. The webinars and discussions we are all having together contribute towards the ultimate aim of the project – to develop tools that will serve local communities in their efforts to better carry the message.

### Upcoming Webinars – March and May

March 13<sup>th</sup> at 11am Pacific time: The focus for this meeting will be on how virtual groups are connecting with each other and the broader NA community. We are inviting a few panelists to share their experience of connecting with other virtual meetings and participating in NA services.

The focus of the webinar tentatively scheduled for May is to be determined.

Details of all NAWS webinars can be found here [www.na.org/webinar](http://www.na.org/webinar). If you have questions to ask, or resources to share, please email [toolbox@na.org](mailto:toolbox@na.org).

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

In service.

World Board