



Excerpt from 2014 *Conference Report*

Planning Our Future 1: History and NA Snapshot

As we mentioned in the introduction to this *Conference Report*, we have scheduled a series of sessions focused on the future of a global body in NA. This first session takes place in the risers as a full group. The goal of this session is to give us a historical perspective on the issues related to our service system and the WSC, and to paint a picture of NA today. By the end of the Conference, we hope to share a vision of where we are going. We are starting by talking about where we have been with the issues and where we are now as a Fellowship. We need to make sure the ideas we have about what a world body might look like will serve NA as a whole, and to do that we need to share a picture of what NA looks like today. We also want to learn from our collective history, so we will begin by reviewing some of the history of the service system, seating, and the Conference (where we have been), including background about past attempts to change the service system and the WSC.

Although the challenges with developing something that serves our Fellowship in the future can seem daunting, we have a tremendous opportunity. Over the last 30 years, a multitude of groups have addressed

Where We Have Been

It's no exaggeration to say that we could write a report as long as this *Conference Report* devoted solely to NA's history of seating and service manuals. It's no wonder, given how much time and energy we've spent on these issues over the years, and how many members have been involved in the past, that many of us have learned partial or partisan versions of our service history.

Rather than reinventing this wheel, we offer the following history from the Resolution Group in the 1996 *Conference Agenda Report*. (We have posted the final report from the Resolution Group and

this question of how to improve our services in a variety of ways, and reported back to the Conference in a long series of reports. One of the most common reasons for resistance to change was fear. If we can find a way to set aside our resistance and hear each other, we might leave these discussions with some direction.

For local services, depending on the decisions with Motions 4-6, we have an opportunity to experiment and collect best practices. We may end up with a way or a variety of ways to frame our services—it is simply too early to tell.

For the future of World Services, it is up to us. There is no proposal to endorse or oppose, no frame from the WB—it will be up to us collectively to begin envisioning and creating our future. Clearly these underlying issues do not go away. Change is never easy, but without it we stagnate. We believe that we can learn from the experience of the past to benefit our future.

Each of the five sessions in this Planning Our Future series lays the foundation for the next. Step-by-step, we are hoping to build a vision of what we want our collective future as a conference to look like, and this is the first step in that process.

the Transition Group report on Resolution A and their report to WSC 1998 at <http://www.na.org/?ID=reports-mis> for those of you who are interested in reading up on more of this history.)

History of the Inventory and Resolution Process from the 1996 Resolution Group report

The *N.A. Tree*, the first service manual for NA, was published in 1976. It contained a description of the service structure — or really a vision for a service structure that might develop. The first World Service Conference was held that year in conjunction with the World Convention in Ventura, CA. Over the next several years, other efforts to describe the developing service structure were undertaken in the form of a couple of service manuals, but any agreement on these was short-lived. Things were changing so rapidly in that era of phenomenal growth that any success in definitively nailing down a worldwide structure simply eluded us.

In 1983, one year after the publication of the Basic Text, the conference developed a document called *A Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure*. As the name implied, this was intended to carry us over until we could agree upon a more permanent document. Today, some twelve years later, that *Temporary Working Guide*, or *TWGSS*, as we commonly refer to it, is still the service manual we go by.

A Select Committee was formed in 1983 in conjunction with the printing of the *TWGSS*. This group's charter was to put together a more permanent service manual. This process continued for several years. Other groups were formed as this effort evolved. Finally a product was delivered to the WSC in 1993 called *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous*.

The model for World Services described in the *TWGSS* had by that time become deeply entrenched. There was general agreement among the world services participants that serious structural and communications problems existed, but there was not general agreement about their cause or about any proposed solutions. Frustration was running high, and so was a deep and heartfelt commitment on the part of everyone involved to pull together and resolve these problems.

Rather than simply attempt to adopt the *Guide to Service* in 1993 without substantial consensus regarding the nature of our service structure's problems, the participants in that conference took a very dramatic action. They agreed that the world services inventory was going to be the single primary project of world services. This was extended for another year again in 1994. During this two-year period, a "Composite Group" made up of world level trusted servants surveyed the fellowship regarding the effectiveness of world services. They developed inventory tools for use by various boards and committees in performing their own self-assessment. They then compiled this information and conducted small group sessions at WSC '94 so that the conference could assess its own effectiveness. These results were compiled and turned over to a consulting firm hired to analyze all of the inventory material and make recommendations. [Note: this is not the same consulting firm we now use.]

The results of all this were published in a couple of reports totaling several hundred pages. The material was very revealing, if somewhat overwhelming to absorb. The 1995 World Service Conference distilled from this material a prioritized list of key problems. World Services leadership developed and WSC approved a "Resolution Plan" which called for the formation of this Resolution Group to study the inventory material and make recommendations to continue this process of change in World Services. Accompanying the RG report in the 1996 *CAR* and adopted by the WSC were the NA World Services Vision Statement, the WSC Mission Statement, Resolutions B-G to frame the operations and structure of World Services, and the now-famous Resolution A to deal with the future of the WSC. Resolution A states:

- To approve *in principle* a change in participation at a new WSC to achieve the following objectives:
 - 1. to reduce the total number of representatives;
 - 2. to provide for equal representation from all geographic entities; and,
 - 3. to encourage a consensus-based decision-making process

In 1997, with the approval of *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*, "regional service representatives" became "regional delegates."

In 1998, the Resolution Group presented recommendations for Resolutions B-G that restructured the operations and corporations of World Services. These recommendations were adopted and created what we now know as NA World Services and the World Board. At the same time, this group presented four options for possible solutions to Resolution A, but the Conference was unable to come to consensus on what "a change in participation at a new WSC" looks like.

The new World Board brought the ideas from the Transition Group report back for discussion at WSC 1999 and 2000, with no real movement towards consensus.

In 2000, with the Conference's lack of will to act on Resolution A, the World Board presented motions to change the Conference from an annual to a biennial event, to fund all conference participants (rather than only funding invited international participants in what had become the "Development Forum"), and to approve the "Criteria for Recognition of New Conference Participants." In 2002, *A Guide to World Services in NA* was approved, with a new description of the focus and work between Conferences and consensus-based decision making.

In 2008, the WSC adopted a moratorium on considering seating of regions resulting from a split for two conference cycles. The 2008 CAT material explained: "The conference has discussed its own growth and how to deal with issues related to representation for years without coming to consensus. We all agree that the growth of NA is a positive thing, but we haven't yet come to an agreement about how to reconcile our growth as a fellowship with the need to conduct business effectively at the conference." WSC 2012 supported the continuation of this moratorium for one more cycle.

As a Fellowship, we have wrestled with how to improve our system for decades. We have a pattern of devoting significant resources to the issues, coming to the conclusion that we need to change, developing options, and then balking when we come to the decision point. The issues do not go away, we just keep "kicking the can" to the next group and going through the process again.

The last time a big picture view was taken of our worldwide service body was in the 1990s. Since the RG Report in 1996, we have seated 25 new regions at the WSC. We need to get back to the big picture view; that broad vision allows us to see and acknowledge what best serves our common welfare. We hope that by developing a set of options together, as a whole Conference, we can

create some ideas we are willing to invest in. We've come to the edge a number of times, but we believe we are ready for actual change.

The stresses we feel as a Conference are a result of our growth. How many times have we heard, "It's a process, not an event"? That is no less true for service systems than for personal recovery.

One of the realities for all of the various bodies that have tried to develop criteria for conference recognition is that the criteria end up being aimed at controlling the proliferation of United States regions. This may not be a popular issue to raise, but it is one that we feel must be discussed. With all of the currently seated US regions, is it really possible that the sense and voice of our US members are not already represented at the conference? If a local community chooses to split from an already seated region because of local service needs, is there any reason why they could not continue to attend existing assemblies or participate in existing processes of the seated region for the purpose of voting on the CAR? We do not think so.

While it may be true that establishing criteria will more immediately impact regions in the US, this will not always be the case, as our fellowship grows worldwide. Addressing the issue of criteria will always be uncomfortable for us because it will always seem to immediately impact some NA community more than another. As we focus on our vision and mission, we will keep being confronted with this issue until we address it.

2000 Conference Agenda Report

We have worked through conflict as a Fellowship in the past, and that has led to revised literature, the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust*, and the restructuring of World Services. Some of our most difficult struggles have led to our most important accomplishments. Sometimes it feels impossible to move forward but we must, and we will. Together we can get past this place where we feel stuck.

Where We Are Now

Again, we could fill this whole report, and more, painting a picture of the NA Fellowship today. In fact, many of the reports we offer at the Conference provide different snapshots of where we are at present: from fellowship development reports to the videos from zones, from our budget discussions to our PR summary. RDs are often overwhelmed with information about our present. But assembling all of this information into a big picture is a challenge.

This is something the World Board does every cycle. As part of our planning process NAWS

collects and considers data about NA and about the trends in the world at large that could affect NA. We also get a wealth of information from all of you in regional reports, from your calls and emails, and the conversations we have with you when we are traveling.

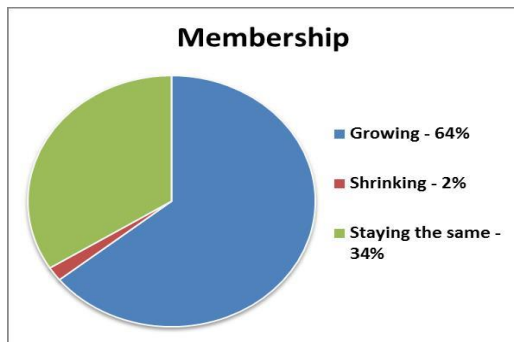
We will spend part of this session highlighting information like the data below to create a snapshot of NA today.

NA Membership

In your reports, you let us know whether membership in your regions was growing, shrinking or staying the same. Sixty-four percent report that they are growing, 34%

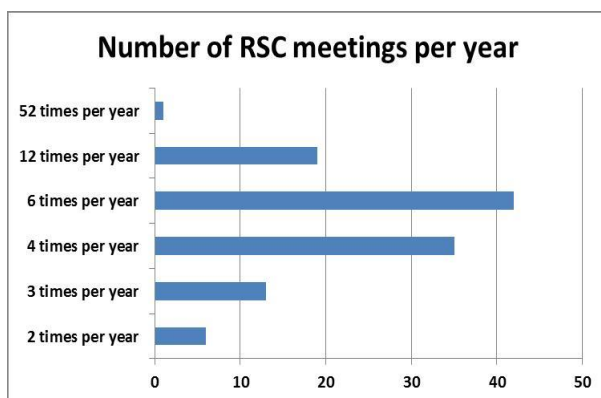
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report they are staying the same, and 2% report they are shrinking.



The good news is that fewer of you are reporting shrinking membership than in 2012—7% in 2012 and 2% in 2014. But that’s the only bit of good news in the comparison: Only 14% of regions in 2012 reported that the size of their membership was staying the same, compared to today’s 34%. And 79% of regions reported growth in 2012, compared to today’s 64%. The figures reflect what we’ve known—that fewer places are reporting growth of the Fellowship. Of the 37 regions that reported static growth, 29 are within the US, which represents 45% of the 65 US regions that submitted reports in general.

Another thing you reported on in your regional reports was how often your RSC meets, and the answers were surprisingly diverse.



We asked for clarification from some of the regions who said they meet more than monthly and here are some of the replies:

Guatemala: They meet face-to-face twice a month, but each meeting has a different purpose. The meeting at the beginning of the month is used to submit reports and to follow up on projects in progress. During the second meeting, they do group support, which is to say that their model utilizes a number of ideas central to the proposed service system.

Nicaragua: This year they have been meeting face-to-face with the RCMs once a month. The service board of the RSC meets face-to-face twice a month.

El Salvador: In El Salvador, geographical distances are short and from the beginning, due to the fact that there was no set structure for H&I, PI, literature, and activities, trusted servants made the commitment to meet face-to-face every Saturday. They have been doing this since 2005.

Clearly, whatever system we use to do our service work in NA needs to be flexible.

There is more information throughout this *Conference Report* that begins to shape a picture of NA today. The NAWS Report section talks about translations, publications, and book distribution including free and subsidized literature. The regional report summaries capture a great deal of data about your regions. The PR section begins to report on the 2013 NAWS Membership Survey. We will use these kind of data in this session to lay the foundation for our collective plan for the future.

