

## **History of the Board-Approval Track (including service pamphlets)**

At world services, we've been getting an increasing number of questions about World Board-approved service material (especially service pamphlets). In particular, people have asked about the history of the board-approval track, wondering how this development and approval process came to be and whether it was voted on by the fellowship. We drafted this report in the hopes that it would answer some of those questions.

### **The Three Approval Tracks**

There are three different types of approval tracks for NA literature and service material: fellowship-approved, conference-approved, and board-approved. *A Guide to World Services in NA* does a good job of describing them, but we'll give a quick summary here. For more information, see *GWSNA*. (You can find a link off of our conference page: [www.na.org/conference](http://www.na.org/conference))

#### *Fellowship-approval Track*

The fellowship-approval track consists of recovery literature and literature dealing with our core principles. This material is sent to the fellowship for review and input, and then "approval" drafts of these texts are included in the *Conference Agenda Report (CAR)* to be voted on as part of old business at the World Service Conference.

#### *Conference-approval Track*

The conference-approved category covers service manuals, pamphlets like IP #28 *Funding NA Services*, and materials like *A Guide to World Services in NA* and *A Guide to Local Services*. The project plans for these texts describe whether or not they will be sent out for review and input. Approval drafts are included in either the CAR or the Conference Approval Track mailing to be voted on at the World Service Conference.

The distinction between fellowship-approved and conference-approved was created through a *Conference Agenda Report* motion in 2000. Prior to that time all service materials were also included in the *CAR*, which was a more extensive and complicated report than it is now. Many groups complained that the *CAR* was overwhelming and the focus didn't feel relevant to them. World services restructured in 1998 and shortly after, in 2000, we proposed a new mailing (the Conference Approval Track) that would contain budget information, project plans, and service materials (the materials that are now labeled "conference approved." The 2000 *CAR* explains the initial proposal this way:

. . . the World Service Conference is moving toward a "consensus-based" and "issues-oriented" conference meeting. While this change is not fully realized yet, the need is

evident for a *Conference Agenda Report (CAR)* that contains issues highly relevant to members and groups. ... This frees up our members and groups to devote their attention to holding meetings and carrying the message of recovery, without having to ratify every decision made on their behalf at every level of service.

The motion passed, and now we have a “Conference Approval Track” mailing in addition to the *Conference Agenda Report*. Some groups choose to review the Conference Approval Track materials along with the *CAR*, but others delegate the decision-making about those service materials.

#### *World Board-approval Track*

The same motion passed in 2000 that created the conference-approval track described board-approved materials. Prior to the creation of the World Board, the Trustees also had the ability to develop and publish bulletins. Similarly, board-approved materials, as described in the language of the motion, include “articles/bulletins concerning service work, NA-related philosophical issues, NA's Twelve Traditions, and NA's Twelve Concepts for Service. Papers for presentation at professional events, when they are published for broad distribution to the fellowship or the general public, are [also] included in this category.”

Board-approved materials are based on experience applying the principles contained in Fellowship- and Conference-approved texts. Service pamphlets, such as “Disruptive and Violent Behavior” or “Principles and Leadership in NA Service” are often developed from input we hear during the Fellowship Issue Discussions or during workshops. Some tools, such as the Area Planning Tool, contain material or information we were already distributing to members of the fellowship upon request.

The World Board, therefore, has had the ability to develop and publish these types of materials since 2000, but until the 2006 World Service Conference, they only exercised this option in creating bulletins. Several motions related to the board-approval track were passed during the new business session of the 2006 WSC, and there have been *CAR* motions related to the World Board-approval track process in the subsequent *Conference Agenda Reports*, 2008 and 2010.

#### *2006 WSC Action Related to the World Board-approval Track*

The *Public Relations Handbook* and Area Planning Tool were included in the Conference Approval Track mailing and voted on at the 2006 World Service Conference. When developing the APT and the other resource material and addenda for the *PRHB*, the board began to think about something like a board-approval track. Though the board already had the capability to produce and distribute service materials, many members were unaware of this ability and the board wanted to have a conversation about it at the conference to see what participants

thought about them beginning to produce and update materials like the Area Planning Tool. They included this paragraph in the cover memo of the Conference Approval Track material:

We plan to have discussions with the conference about what type of approval process this sort of material should require. The current service materials approval process does provide for board-approved materials, but we've never exercised that option before. The Area Planning Tool is an example of one of many service tools that we would like to be able to create and distribute, and this could be an opportunity to begin to develop this option. We will talk more about that possibility at the conference; we want to know what you think.

The conference discussed and was broadly supportive of the idea that the board would be able to revise and update things like the APT and the *PR Handbook* resource material and chapters without having to wait for conference approval. This seemed like one way to keep some of the potentially rapidly changing information in the handbook current.

The relevant motion about the *PRHB* chapters was amended to include this ability and carried by unanimous consent:

Motion 6: It was M/C by World Board: To adopt Chapters 10–13 of the Public Relations Handbook.

Amendment: It was M/C by World Board: That the motion would include “these chapters would be adaptable or revisable with World Board approval.”

The conference also passed a motion to allow the board to develop and approve *PRHB* addenda and other parts of the handbook, such as the preface and glossary:

Motion 8: It was M/C by World Board: To allow the World Board to approve the resource material used as addenda in the Public Relations Handbook on an ongoing basis.

Amendment: It was M/S/C by Peter H (RD, Greater New York) and Louis H (RD, Chicagoland): That the motion would include “including the preface, the foreword, the appendix, and the glossary.”

Similarly, the Area Planning Tool was approved and the board was given the latitude to revise or adapt the resource:

Motion 9: It was M/C by World Board: To adopt the proposed Area Planning Tool.

Amendment: It was M/S/C Jimmy S (RD, Chesapeake & Potomac) and Ron M (WB) That the motion would include “which would then be adaptable or revisable with World Board approval.”

All of these motions were made by the board, but two of them were revised by delegates to increase the board’s ability to develop materials related to the PR Handbook. This was the ground that led to the motion that gives the board the ability to create service pamphlets. That motion was made by and seconded by delegates, not the board:

Motion 28: It was M/S/C by Greg W (RD, Arizona) and Rick W (RD, Region 51): To allow the World Board to develop and approve service-related information pamphlets and tools for distribution to the fellowship.

So it is that the board-approval process has been in place since the 2000 WSC and was discussed and affirmed or reinforced at the 2006 conference. The board brought up the topic in the Conference Approval Track material for that conference and the WSC enthusiastically forwarded and expanded the idea.

#### *2008 World Service Conference*

The board-approval track continued to be discussed at the two subsequent conferences.

The 2008 Conference Approval Track material contained language defining the three different approval tracks to include in *A Guide to World Services in NA*. That conference also had an entire discussion session devoted to issues related to approval tracks and how do we classify literature. The board explained that

Because this motion [Motion 28 from the 2006 WSC] was made on the floor of the conference, without any accompanying process, the board then had to draft new policy to cover the action of the motion. . . . They found themselves struggling to develop language to distinguish between what we call “conference approved,” “fellowship approved,” and “board approved.” The discussion led them to try to categorize material as either service/informational or recovery literature, but they found that this was a complicated undertaking. (WSC 2008 Conference Record)

At the end of the session, participants were straw-pollled on two questions:

- Do you support a board approval track in some form or another? The majority voted “yes.”
- Would you support a review period in one form or another [of board approval track materials]? The majority voted “yes.”

Initially the language included in the Conference Approval Track that defined the different approval processes, did not include a review period for the World Board-approval track, but these discussions at the conference made it clear that the delegates were in favor of a review period so a friendly amendment was offered:

Motion 23: It was M/C World Board: To adopt the proposed Approval Processes for NA Material as a replacement for the current section for Approval Process for Service Material and amend the Approval Process for Recovery Literature in A Guide to World Services in NA.

Note: The proposed language appears in the Conference Approval Track material except for the paragraph from the “World Board Approved” section which was amended without objection to read as follows:

All service related informational pamphlets, whether Conference Approved or World Board Approved, are easily distinguishable from recovery pamphlets by their appearance and should be used by members, groups, and service committees as a resource rather than being read in an NA Meeting. Before approval and distribution, Service Pamphlets will be sent out to conference participants for a 90-day review and input. Service tools, PR material, bulletins, and other material will continue to be developed and approved by the World Board. The World Board has long been able to approve bulletins but these bulletins only had limited distribution to those who knew that they were available. The advantage of this approval process for informational pamphlets is that material is made readily available, and can be easily changed or pulled from inventory if there are concerns.

Intent: To create a new section for GWSNA that reflects current practice and creates policy for the approval of service material by the World Board adopted at WSC 2006.

The motion carried by voice vote, and is now reflected in the sections of GWSNA that describe the three different approval tracks.

A couple of other motions at WSC 2008 were related to the service pamphlets. One was included in the *CAR*, but failed on the floor of the conference:

Motion 12: M/S/F Laura Z (RD New Jersey)/David M (RD Greater New York): To require that all NA Service pamphlets intended for group and individual use be included in the Conference Agenda Report for approval.

Intent: To give the approval of service related pamphlets intended for group and individual use to the World Service Conference.

That motion failed by standing vote: 33 in favor/ 62 opposed/ 1 abstaining/ 4 present but not voting

The other was a new business motion that was discussed but never introduced into business presumably because a straw poll of conference participants showed overwhelming opposition.

Motion 64: David M (RD South Florida): Amend Motion 23 by inserting into the WB Approved Section on page 50 in the 3rd paragraph of the CAT. The paragraph as revised would read:

All service related informational pamphlets, whether Conference Approved or World Board Approved, are easily distinguishable from recovery pamphlets by their appearance and should be used by members, groups, and service committees as a resource rather than being read in an NA meeting. The World Board has long been able to approve bulletins, but these bulletins only had limited distribution to those who knew that they were available. Any such material shall 1st be posted on the Conference participant Bulletin board, password protected for 90 days that RD's and World Board members have access to. The drafts with any revisions would then be sent out to the fellowship for an additional 90 days for review and input. This approval process would also apply to any Public Relations Addenda Material and Revisions. The advantage of this approval process for informational pamphlets is that material is made readily available, and can be easily changed or pulled from inventory if there are concerns.

Intent: To give Regional Delegates, RSCs, and the Fellowship a chance to give input on proposed literature projects by the World Board.

Straw poll on Motion 64: Overwhelming opposition.

In summary, the World Board-approval track was affirmed by conference action in 2006. It was discussed again in 2008 and the conference approved language describing the three tracks, including a friendly amendment adding a 90-day review period for service pamphlets.

#### *WSC 2010*

At the 2010 conference, there was another *CAR* motion related to the approval tracks—to include a 180-day fellowship review for material in all of the approval tracks. Again, the motion was introduced for decision and it failed.

Motion #14 It was M/F New Jersey Region / Jabril S (RD Northern New York): To require a 180-day review and input period for Fellowship Approved, Conference Approved, or World Board Approved material.

Intent: To create a new review and input requirement for Conference Approved material and World Board Approved Service tools, PR material, bulletins, and other material and to extend the existing review and input period for Fellowship Approved material and World Board Approved Service Pamphlets.

Aside from this motion, however, service pamphlets and the board approval process were not central to conference discussions.

Since the 2006 motion “to allow the World Board to develop and approve service-related information pamphlets and tools” the board has created and published a number of service pamphlets on topics ranging from holding business meetings at groups to how groups can deal with issues surrounding disruptive behavior or medication to leadership and trusted servant positions. Many of these service pamphlets stem directly from Issue Discussion Topics such as Atmosphere of Recovery and Leadership or from workshop input on topics such as medication issues in meetings. The World Board-approval track allows information on current issues or discussions to be put into usable form for the fellowship relatively quickly. The service pamphlets can all be downloaded from the na.org website: <http://www.na.org/?ID=service-material-svc-pamphlets>. During the 2010-2012 cycle we expect to release one more SP on the topic of social media. That service pamphlet will get reviewed by delegates before it is published in final form.

In general response to these resources has been positive. As we began this essay explaining, we have received questions lately about how the process came about. We’ve put together this history to answer those questions and to illustrate that the board-approval process has been a topic at several conferences and been touched on in several *CARs* and the process seems to have widespread support.