

Overview of the A.A. General Service Conference Inventory

This inventory was begun in 2013 and concluded in 2015. For the purposes of this inventory on the General Service Conference, the Twelve Concepts for World Service were utilized rather than the Twelve Steps. For this inventory, the purpose of the Conference and the effectiveness in carrying out the purpose was the focus. The report also contains a copy of the 2013 Keynote Address by George M., General Service Trustee. His address touched on the inventory that was about to take place and reminded those in attendance, the importance of securing the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Although the 2013, 2014 and 2015 Conferences all had a part in addressing issues, there were 14 areas of concern that came up in each of those Conferences. They are as follows:

- 1) Communication and Transparency
- 2) Use of Technology
- 3) Conference Orientation and Preparation
- 4) Information
- 5) Language Equality
- 6) Diversity
- 7) Conference Agenda
- 8) Conference Deadlines
- 9) Conference Theme
- 10) Minority Opinion
- 11) Working Together and Increasing Trust
- 12) Engaging the Fellowship
- 13) Listening for the Group Conscience
- 14) Looking Toward the Future

Much discussion and exchange of ideas regarding these areas of concern followed. Many excellent suggestions were made by each of the inventory committees in regard to improving these areas. It was also noted throughout the discussion that all of the suggestions should apply all the way through the service structure to include Regional/Area, District and individual groups. Once these areas of concern had been addressed, it was time to move on to the inventory itself.

There were 44 questions proposed for the General Service Conference. These questions were split among the following categories: Effectiveness of the Conference/Conference Process Overall, Composition of the Conference, Committee System, Yearlong Process Effectiveness, Conference Preparation, Conference Week Schedule, General Service Board/Corporate Boards (AAWS & AA Grapevine) and Leadership. The questions were as follows:

- 1) Reflecting on Concept One, how well does the Conference ensure that it is the conscience of A.A. as a whole?
- 2) Reflecting on Concept Two, how can we better serve as the actual voice and be an effective conscience for our whole society?
- 3) Reflecting on Concept Three, how can we effectively balance the freedoms and responsibilities that come with the right of decision?
- 4) Reflecting on Concept Four, how effective are we in treating all Conference members as equals (no one regarded as second class)?
- 5) Reflecting on Concept Five, how well does the Conference facilitate the hearing and resolution of minority appeals/report? How could it be improved?

- 6) Does the structure encourage each individual in the Fellowship to feel and act as a member of a “society of alcoholics in action”? If not, how could we improve?
- 7) Does the yearlong Conference process effectively encourage all Conference members to lead (or serve) in the spirit of our upside-down service structure? If not, how can we encourage all Conference members to do so?
- 8) How well is the use of Floor Actions serving us?
- 9) Reflecting on Concept Ten, how well is the authority of the Conference defined?
- 10) How well does the Conference fulfill the General Warranties of Concept Twelve?
- 11) How might any one of the Concepts be revised in essence or wording to more effectively and relevantly guide our leaders?
- 12) Should delegate areas be more consistently based on actual membership numbers?
- 13) Should regional divisions be based on membership numbers, the number of areas contained in each region or some other criteria. Please explain.
- 14) Is the size and structure (proportions of delegate/trustee/staff) of the Conference the most effective for conducting the work of the Fellowship? If not, how could it be made more effective?
- 15) Does the Conference committee system function in accordance with our principles? If not, what changes should we consider regarding: a) structure b) composition c) effectiveness?
- 16) What is the right balance of participation among committee members (delegates, staff) and how can we best achieve that balance?
- 17) Could the committee process be improved to more effectively introduce change in the Fellowship, and if so, how?
- 18) What improvements could be considered to make sure the agenda selection is more effective?
- 19) How well is the message of the Conference theme being carried out throughout the year?
- 20) How well do all Conference members communicate to the Fellowship about why we have a Conference and how the committee system works? How could we improve this communication?
- 21) How can we better communicate that the Conference process is more than one spring week in New York?
- 22) How do the delegates and regional trustees support the yearlong process effectiveness?
- 23) What other suggestions do we have for how to improve the effectiveness of the yearlong process?
- 24) How can we improve the manner in which Conference background material is developed and distributed?
- 25) How well do the delegates balance their preparation for the Conference, especially in keeping with Concept Three and Article Three of the Conference Charter? How could we improve in the practice of our rights and responsibilities under Concept Three and Article Three of the Conference Charter?
- 26) What more could be done to prepare delegates for the Conference?
- 27) How can we improve the way time is allotted during the Conference for reports, presentation/discussion/workshop topics, and thorough discussion of agenda items?
- 28) What Conference activities give participants the most opportunities to be leaders?
- 29) At the Conference, what is the difference between being a leader or being a reporter? Can a person be both at the same time?
- 30) Does the time allotted and the manner in which information is communicated from the trustees and board members allow delegates to adequately understand and/or question their reports? How could this be improved?
- 31) How are leadership and participation affected by late night work sessions?

- 32) Reflecting on Concept Six, how can the Conference ensure that the authority we delegate to the General Service Board is commensurate with the responsibility we have entrusted to them?
- 33) Reflecting on Concept Eight: (a) How well is the General Service Board exercising custodial oversight and how effectively are they serving as the principle planners and administrators of policy and finance? (b) What are the boundaries between oversight vs. delegation? When is each practiced?
- 34) Reflecting on Concept Eleven, does the General Service Board exercise serious care in having the best possible assistance in carrying out their duties? How can this process be improved?
- 35) Does the current role of the board most effectively address the needs of the Fellowship? If not, how should their role be changed?
- 36) Is the current makeup of the board (numbers and proportions) still the most effective? If not, what changes should we consider?
- 37) Should the Fellowship have more direct influence in the selection of Class A trustees, corporate directors, and general service trustees? If yes, how might that be accomplished?
- 38) How could we improve the methods used to solicit trustees and directors to get the most appropriate people interested in the positions?
- 39) Is the selection/election process for trustees and directors effective and impartial/fair? How would you change it?
- 40) What more could be done to insure the General Service Board remains transparent and thorough in their reporting to the Fellowship?
- 41) Reflecting on Concept Nine, are the qualities of leadership, as identified in the leadership essay in the A.A. Service Manual, still the qualities that we should try to encourage in Conference members? If so, how successful are we in encouraging those qualities? If not, what changes should we consider?
- 42) How can we improve the methods of selecting effective leaders and nurturing leadership qualities in our trusted servants?
- 43) What more could be done to ensure broad diversity of representation in our leaders?
- 44) How well is the Third Legacy Procedure serving us? How could it be improved?

Each of those categories contained suggestions for improving the Conference itself. Once each question was dealt with, each year's committee went a step further and made additional recommendations/suggestions on these same 44 questions in hopes of ensuring the effectiveness of the Conference in the future as well.

The reference section of the report outlines the Conference Inventory Plan that was approved at the 2011 General Service Conference. This section gave a detailed description of every aspect of performing a thorough inventory including estimated costs. It also provided a breakdown of the questions that would be addressed with 15 questions addressed in 2013, 15 questions in 2014 and 14 questions in 2015.

Although the complete inventory report is currently unavailable to the general membership in either print form or digital download, a copy is in the Intergroup office and we will be happy to make copies for any interested A.A. member.