FLAGGING SPECIAL TOPICS

Row 1 labels: WRITERS · BOARD · AGENDA COMMITTEE · CONFERENCE COMMITTEES · CONF. CHAIR · CONFERENCE

TRACKING IMPLEMENTATION

Row 2 labels: CONFERENCE ADVISORY ACTION · BOARD CHAIR · 'DIG' · NATIONAL OFFICE · TRUSTEES' COORD & REVIEW COMM. · AFFECTED CONFERENCE COMMITTEES · CONFERENCE

DOCUMENT INTEGRATION PROCESS

ADVISORY ACTION: Conference

SEARCH: Board Chair

CONFERENCE REPORT: confirms that changes are needed to service documents

RESPONSIBLE: Board Chair +/or DIG:

ANALYSE: Impact Analysis: identifies primary and secondary changes needed to service documents

PLAN: Process identification for each document impacted

DO: Assign tasks

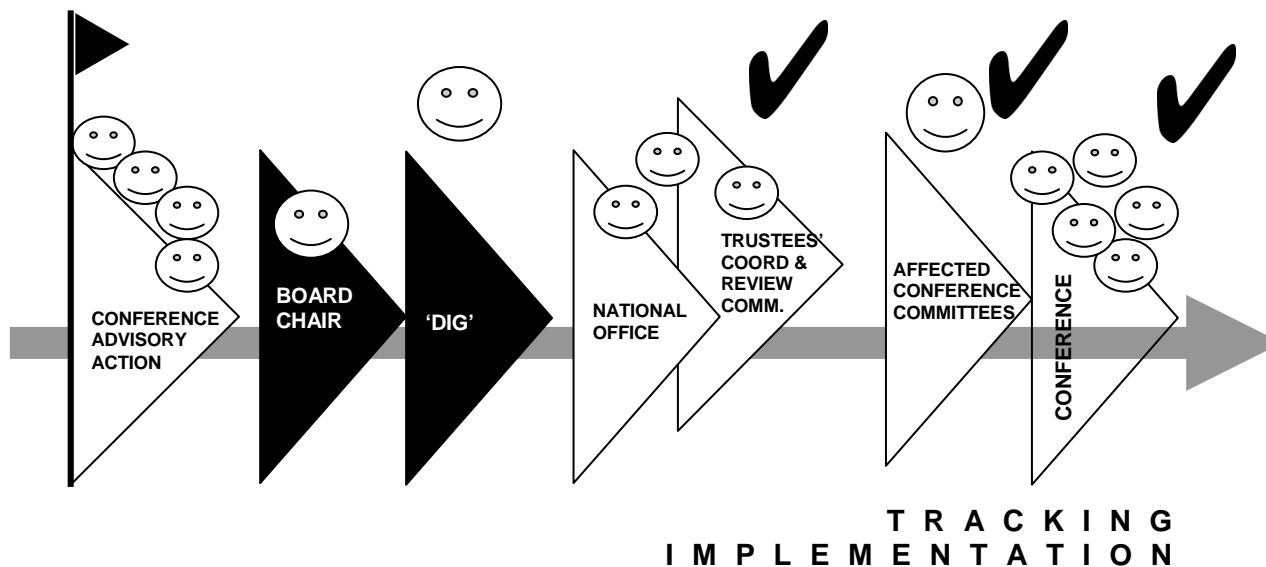FEEDBACK: from all affected

RENEW: collate final drafts

REVIEW: Board, National Office (NOAA) Trustees' Coordination & Review Committee

INSERT: NOAA, where necessary

REPORT: to relevant Conference Committees of next Conference

DISAPPROVAL: All Conference 2/3 disapproval (if any) process for secondary changes.

HOW A CONFERENCE TOPIC IS DEVELOPED

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

What is a Topic?

The annual General Service Conference is the *group conscience* of AA Australia. A Topic is an idea that is sent to the Conference that is intended, directly or indirectly, to help the Fellowship advance its *Primary Purpose* (helping alcoholics to achieve and maintain sobriety).

Where do Topics come from?

Most Topics come from the Fellowship at the grass roots. They may come from an individual, Group, District or Area. They may also come from various AA service bodies, such as the *General Service Board*, the *Document Integration Group*, temporary committees or working parties. No member is excluded from submitting a Topic direct to *National Office*. But when Topics originate from just one or a small number of people, benefit is derived from seeking a broader input, from District and Area. This may be difficult or impossible due to distance or other factors ~ take your Topic as far through the suggested refinement process as you can.

Extra information

Section 7 of the *Australian AA Service Manual* includes a flow chart explaining the passage of a Topic through to an Advisory Action of the Conference. There is also a detailed description of the purpose and processes of Conference itself. This is recommended reading for all those participating directly or indirectly in Conference.

Quality of Topics

Many Topics come to Conference as well-defined proposals in clear English, appropriate to AA as a whole. But a significant number have been confused, incomplete, based on errors of fact, ambiguous or related only to an issue that should be sorted out locally . The procedures below may appear time consuming, but much time can be wasted both before and during Conference if the Topics are not well-prepared and thought out.

Submission date

Topics are submitted to the Conference Agenda Committee by a certain date each year, for which there is a standard form available from National Office. National Office notifies Area Delegates of deadline dates at the designated time each year, but Topics can be developed all year. It is best to ensure that contact details are filled in, to help clarify any questions. Only National Office has access to these contacts. Even the Agenda Committee may not access them. Submissions not received by the due date will not go to Conference that year.

What happens then?

The Conference Agenda Committee may reject certain Topics or rearrange or group them together. Conference Committees may recommend changing them again according to their special understanding of current conditions or in light of new perspectives gained at Conference. Any such changes are clearly explained to Conference and are circulated in the Conference Report. Topics

accepted by Conference become Advisory Actions of Conference, most of which are carried out or overseen by the General Service Board (see *Service Manual* Section M-07).

RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. Local sections of AA take care of their own responsibilities. Ask the question: "Is this Topic relevant to AA as a whole?" If your Topic is relevant beyond the local, then proceed.

2. Obtain the appropriate form from your GSR, Area Delegate, the national AA website (*www.aa.org.au)* or National Office *(national.office@aa.org.au).*

3. Read the form carefully so you know what will be expected at submission time.

4. Prepare in full the detail of background and research, with references.

5. Take the Topic to your *Home Group* for discussion, and if suggested, do further background research with *Group* involvement.

6. Plan your time. Topic development takes time. Find out when the *Area Assembly* will meet on Conference Topics. If you are not in an official service position, do your best to be present at any discussions at *District* or *Area* levels.

7. With your *GSR*, take the Topic to your *District* for further discussion. If suggested, undertake further research and make amendments.

8. If the *District* feels that the Topic has merit, have your *GSR* and *DCM* take it to the next *Area Assembly*.

9. If *Area* agrees that the Topic does have merit, the *Area Committee* may arrange for one or more individuals (not necessarily the originator) to prepare a workshop on the Topic for the next *Area Assembly*.

10. After the Workshop, the *Area Assembly* (with the option of going back to all *Groups* in the *Area*), should now be in a position to submit a Topic to Conference that is well-conceived and researched to provide relevant background.

PRESENTATION: FILLING OUT THE FORM

Ideally ~

General:

- Topics are presented on the proper form, and respond carefully to the questions on the form.

- If possible they are submitted electronically

- If not electronic, they are written, typed or photocopied, and expressed very clearly and concisely.

- Contacts are present in case Agenda Committee or National Office need to clarify something.

The wording:

- Topics are clear, concise, and unambiguous: they are written so that they can not be taken more than one way.

- Any examples given to illustrate the Topic are given separately, and not mixed up with the Topic itself (sometimes a Topic has been rejected because people voted against the example, not the Topic).

- If complex, they are divided up so that there is no more than one idea in each subsection. Conference can then vote on these items separately if necessary.

The background:

- A brief description gives enough information for Conference to fully understand the background. How did the Topic originate?
- Background information is ideally in electronic form, as well as the whole submission.

The AA purpose

- The purpose of the Topic is clear and explained: in what way is AA as a whole likely to benefit from this? (Conference deals with issues for AA as a whole, not local ones).
- The Topic supports the AA Legacies (Recovery, Unity, Service) and likewise is within the spirit of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts.

The cost

- Any significant costs are noted and if possible, estimated.

Who has endorsed this Topic?

- A very brief indication is given of the Topic's journey and who has endorsed it.
- This is stated in anonymous terms, i.e. 'individual', 'Group', 'District', 'Area': no specifics.

Service document impacts

- Mention this if it is obvious in advance that the Topic will mean changes to AA publications such as the General Service Manual and the AA Guidelines.

EXAMPLES FROM PAST TOPICS

(the Submission Form has changed over time, causing differences in headings)

TOPIC #007/2000

1)   That Conference instructs the General Service Office *[now National Office]* **to produce guidelines for groups on opening bank accounts.**

2)   That Conference instructs the General Service Office to investigate procedures for claiming money in dormant bank accounts originally opened by AA groups.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?:

Small groups have experienced problems with accessing funds held in bank accounts requiring two signatories, when one of the signatories is no longer a group member and a replacement cannot be found.

Many groups close down without closing bank accounts or are unable to access funds for varying reasons.

WHAT DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC LED TO IT'S SUBMISSION?:

Simply personal experience.

> ***OUTCOME OF TOPIC:***

While this Topic is almost too briefly expressed and a little terse (aggressive), it is extremely clear, and the two parts are cleanly separated. It is not clear who is endorsing it. Part 1) is not clearly related to AA as a whole, but could assist some Groups locally as a service item. Part 2) does affect AA as a whole, as we understand thousands of bank accounts opened by Group members lie neglected and dormant all over Australia – good AA money that could be working for carrying the message. The Topic went first to the Conference *Finance Committee.*

The Conference *later accepted the recommendation of that Committee that for*

*Part 1), no Guideline be produced, but instead, some basic information be given in the new "*Group Donation Plans" *pamphlet that was then under development.*

Part 2), was supported by both the Committee and Conference*, and went on to pass a new Advisory Action:*

ADVISORY ACTION #007/2000
*"*Conference *resolved that the General Service Office should investigate procedures for claiming money in dormant bank accounts originally opened by AA Groups".*

This was done but was unsuccessful as they were not named 'AA'.

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TOPIC #011/2000

Could a pamphlet and possibly a video or booklet be made specifically for women's prisons? Most of the literature in National Office stock is directed to men's prisons.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THIS TOPIC?

Our Group donates literature to a women's prison as payment for rent for meeting venue. It would be great to have a booklet, pamphlet or video to send to prison that specifically targets female inmates.

WHAT DISCUSSION LED TO ITS SUBMISSION?

A recent television programme called "Doing Time" made it apparent that alcohol is a major problem and a contributing factor to their imprisonment and decline in standards of living and life.

[Other sections of the form were not filled out]

> *OUTCOME OF TOPIC:*
>
> *Advisory Action #011/2000: "*Conference *resolved that* <u>*material specific to women in prisons*</u> *be made available and that an investigation of local and overseas resources be made to facilitate that".*
>
> *This was researched by the Trustees' Treatment and Correctional Facilities Committee of the General Service Board, using input from our World Service Delegates and GSO New York contacts. As no suitable material was found to exist, the Board went ahead and produced a* <u>*booklet*</u> *based on adapting the existing* "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell*" for men, and adding new stories from Australian women.*
>
> *The final product* "How Did I End Up Here?" *was approved as Advisory Action #024/2004, and is now available.*
>
> *This is a nice example of an AA need fulfilled – a gap in the Service literature. It actually had two questions for Conference: 1) Need for literature for women in prison? (yes/no). and 2) What kind of literature? (pamphlet – booklet – video).*