

NORTHERN ILLINOIS PLANNING PROCEDURES

AREA 20

Procedures for Planning the Big Book Conference

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PROCEDURES FOR PLANNING THE BIG BOOK CONFERENCE

Purpose and Guiding Principles

The annual Big Book Conference is a one-day conference sponsored by the NIA and hosted by a district within the Area. The purpose of this Planning Guide is to provide a checklist of details and conditions occurring in planning an NIA Big Book Conference.

The Area has established this Conference as a service to the Fellowship. Its purpose is to focus on the importance of the Big Book to the members of AA. The Big Book is an important piece of literature describing the program alcoholics use to recover and become useful to their Higher Power, their families, society and themselves. This Conference is intended to bring attention to the Big Book's program of recovery through the many insights learned through years of experience of the conference's participating panel members. In this way, it is hoped that the future of AA is guaranteed for those to come.

The Area Assembly selects the Host District through a bidding process. Rotation of Host Districts is based on a minimum of three years. By bidding to host the conference, a district is indicating its desire and commitment to be the channel of the Area's intentions. A district interested in hosting the Big Book Conference will offer a bid in accordance with this Planning Guide.

The Host District Planning Committee is responsible to:

- Secure a location for the conference and make all necessary arrangements with the facility;
- Select a conference theme;
- Secure a speaker knowledgeable in the history of the Big Book, the panel moderators for the day's activities and a main speaker to share their story;
- Arrange for the taping of all panels and speakers;
- Prepare and distribute a registration flyer and conference program;
- Conduct registration of all attendees;
- Collect and account for all registration fees and other income generated by the conference;
- Provide conference reports to each NIA Area Assembly and NIA Committee Meeting preceding the conference;
- Present three (3) copies of a final report at the first NIA Assembly after the conference along with return of seed money and funds generated over expenses.

The NIA Alternate Chair (or another person appointed by the NIA Chair) is the Area Liaison to the Big Book Conference Planning Committee.

Any changes proposed by the Host District Planning Committee from these conference guidelines must be presented to the NIA Conference Liaison for advice and consent before they are finalized. The NIA Conference Liaison will report to the NIA Committee on any such proposed changes.

No participation by AI-Anon is planned. If the Planning Committee, by group conscience, decides to include AI-Anon participation on a panel, there should be no objection. There should be no AI-Anon participation on the Planning Committee.

Everyone on the Planning Committee, including all subcommittee chairs, should be in attendance at all Big Book Conference Planning Committee meetings. It is suggested that the DCM be a member of the Planning Committee.

Bid Preparation & Presentation

The bid should be prepared and submitted one (1) year prior to the conference at the NIA Summer Assembly. The bid shall include a detailed budget similar to the one described later in this section and such other details concerning the Conference facility (or alternates) as the bidding District can provide, sufficient to allow an informed selection by the Assembly.

All bid presentations at the Assembly will be allowed 10 minutes and must include 150 copies of a written report with all pertinent details and the detailed budget to be distributed to those present before the presentation.

A bid preparation meeting should take place before the Summer Assembly in the year preceding the Conference to allow for facility negotiations and bid preparation. It is suggested that this meeting be held approximately 6 weeks in advance of the Summer Assembly.

The Conference date selected should be coordinated with the NIA Chair so as not to conflict with other Area functions. The months of October or November are suggested.

The District bid committee should select the event facility as early as possible. It should be established at a site accessible within the Host District. If available, three facilities should be contacted for competitive quotes. A location with easy access to main freeways is suggested.

In selecting the location, the following space requirements should be taken into consideration:

- One large meeting room with a seating capacity of 250 to 300 attendees (theater style seating) is needed for the morning and afternoon speaker sessions. Because acoustics have been a problem at previous Big Book Conferences, this should be considered when selecting the facility.
- A second large meeting room with a seating capacity of 125 to 150 attendees (theater style seating) is needed for the panel events. This space is used along with the other large meeting room.
- Secure areas for Archive and Big Book displays are needed.
- Space is required for the display and sale of Conference-approved literature.
- Space for registration is required.
- An area is needed for tape reproduction and display. Typically, two (2) eight-foot long folding tables must be set up.
- A facility that will allow the Committee to make its own coffee and serve snacks is advised.

After the Area Assembly approves a bid, a written contract should be signed with the facility.

The Conference should be self-supporting. The detailed budget similar to the example that appears later in this document should be based on minimum 250 registrations experienced at past conferences. All participants (except the Big Book and main speakers) and volunteers must register. If the Conference Planning Committee determines that lunch will be made available on site to the attendees of the Conference, a per person charge sufficient to meet the cost of lunch should be collected from those attendees opting to eat lunch on site. While it may be necessary to pay travel related expenses for the main speaker, **no travel expenses will be paid to panel members.** All committee members need to be aware of this, especially the Program Committee. The \$2,500 seed money is to be returned to the NIA along with any and all other funds generated after expenses.

A copy of the NIA's sales tax exemption letter should be obtained by request through the NIA Liaison working with the NIA Treasurer.

Insurance requirements for use of the facility are now covered under the NIA Insurance Liability Policy. The NIA Liaison should be provided a copy of the Facility Contract when signed, to secure a Certificate of Insurance for the event. The NIA Treasurer is responsible for securing the Certificate of Insurance.

Establishment of Conference Committee

An initial planning meeting to elect members of the Conference Planning Committee should be scheduled. Anyone interested in being a member of the Planning Committee should read these guidelines. The Big Book Conference Planning Guide may be obtained from the Area Alternate Chair (NIA Liaison) who will provide the first twenty-five (25) copies. This document is available on the NIA Website (www.aa-nia.org).

The first meeting should take place before the Winter Assembly, and the following positions are to be elected:

- Chair and Co-Chair
- Secretary and Alternate
- Treasurer and Alternate
- Program Chair and Alternate.

In January, Chairs and Alternates should be elected for the following activities:

- Public Information
- Printing
- Registration
- Literature
- Refreshments
- Greeters & Facility

The NIA Alternate Chair (or another person appointed by the NIA Chair) is automatically a member of the Conference Planning Committee and acts as NIA's representative.

AA conference-approved literature and tapes provided by the taping vendor can be sold. No trinkets or any other items are to be sold or given out at the conference.

The decision as to the date, time and location for Conference Planning Committee meetings shall be made by the Conference Chair and should take into consideration the needs of the committee members. It is recommended that these meetings be held on Sundays to facilitate attendance by the NIA liaison and others from outside the Host District as required.

The Conference Chair at each NIA Committee Meeting and Area Assembly will make a report on the progress of the conference. A written report will be made available to the NIA Secretary at this time.

As problems occur, the NIA Liaison will make notes and submit revised guideline changes for approval at the appropriate NIA Committee Meeting or Assembly. It is important to note that the Conference Committee makes decisions; independent actions by subcommittees are to be taken only after the Conference Committee has reviewed the subcommittee's proposal and has given its approval.

Conference Committee Responsibilities

Conference Chair and Alternate

- Conduct election of committee chairs.
- Call committee meetings (dates, locations and times).

- Prepare conference budget.
- Monitor all committee and subcommittee planning and progress.
- Establish a conference theme with the committee.
- Present required reports to the NIA Committee and Area Assemblies.
- Present a final report at the NIA Winter Committee Meeting and NIA Spring Assembly.

Secretary and Alternate

- Keep all meeting minutes and distribute them to members of the committee.
- Maintain a record of all committee members' names, positions, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Prepare and make available a Committee Roster containing this information to committee members.
- Provide copies of the minutes of the Committee's meetings to members of the NIA Officers' Committee.

Treasurer and Alternate

- Open a Conference post office box if the Host District post office box is not otherwise available.
- Open a Conference checking account if the Host District account is not otherwise available.
- Coordinate with Registration the mail pick up, extracting checks and making deposits.
- Pay bills.
- Assume responsibility for all donation cans on the day of the conference.
- Prepare a financial report similar to the example included later in this section for each Planning Committee meeting showing seed money, registration income and all expenses compared to budget.
- Assist at Registration Table at the conference.
- Return seed money to the Area Treasurer within 45 days of the Conference.

Program Committee

- The Program Committee shall select panel titles and time slots. The panel titles and time slots will be given to panel moderators who will select their own panel participants.
- All Panel Moderators should be selected from within NIA with the exception of one from the nearest delegate area to the Host District. All Moderators should come from districts outside of the Host District and cover all parts of the Area as far as feasible to help assure maximum attendee participation from all parts of the Area.
- First, contact the Moderators in person or by telephone. Second, follow up with a thank you letter, containing a reminder of the panel subject to be presented and the time slot.
- Encourage the Moderators to select panel members who have studied and lived by the Big Book, and who can communicate in the Language of the Heart about the Fellowship and the AA program. No material other than AA publications is to be used by Panel Members.
- Please communicate often and clearly to each panel Moderator that there is no reimbursement for being a moderator or panel member and that registration at the Conference is required of the moderator and the panel members. Making this clear up front avoids hard feelings later on. It is suggested that the paid registration be the

panel moderators' and panel members' confirmation of their participation in the Conference.

- Ask the panel Moderators to return the first names and last initial of each panel member along with their Home Group so that this information can be included in the final flyer and program. Give a specific due date so that the Printing Committee's deadlines can be met.
- Invite the Area Chairman to the Conference to make brief opening remarks.
- Set up the taping of all panels and speakers. Several companies provide this service at no cost to the Conference. They do sell tapes and CD's of each panel and the final speaker. They also provide a complete set of tapes enclosed in a case. They may also have other tapes for sale of AA speakers.
- Arrange for Spanish translation as needed.

Public Information Committee

- An "Early-Bird" Flyer should be printed in time to be included in the packets for the NIA Spring Conference. Coordination of this should be through the NIA liaison who also serves on the Spring Conference Committee. This flyer should include a registration coupon.
- A final flyer, which should include all the panel moderators' first names and last initials, home towns, and their panel titles, should be distributed at all NIA Committee Meetings and Area Assemblies. Flyers should be distributed as early and as often as possible. Flyers should be sent to the Delegates of Areas 19 and 21 for distribution to Chicago and Southern Illinois groups. They should be sent to the nearest Delegate Area to the Host District outside of Illinois.
- Consult with Printing and Program Chairs for timing and coordination of printing, as well as color coordination.

Printing Committee

- Coordinate the printing of the flyers and program with the appropriate committees. The flyer should be on 8 1/2 x 11 stock.
- Get comparison quotes from several printers.
- Establish deadlines for information to be turned in by other (e.g., Program) committees.
- It has become traditional to print the program in a format based on the familiar Big Book jacket cover.
- An electronic file copy of the flyers should be forwarded to the NIA Chair, the NIA Alternate Delegate, the NIA Alternate Chair, the NIA Web Administrator and the Concepts Editor.

Registration Committee

- Keep a running record of registrations.
- Prepare registration packages with nametags and programs.
- Staff Registration Table at the Conference. Please note that many people register for the Conference on the day of.

Literature Committee

- Coordinate with the NIA Literature and Grapevine Committees for display of materials that can be purchased. **This must be A.A. material only.**
- Provide space and tables for displays.

- Plan a Big Book display. Several individuals have extensive collections of old and new Big Books. The Big Book exists in more than 40 different languages, Braille, tapes, CD;s, large print, etc.
- Have Big Books on sale.

Refreshments Committee

- Make coffee, soda and water available throughout the day.
- Have donuts, fruit etc. during the registration period.
- Coordinate having donation cans available at these snack tables with the Conference Treasurer.
- If the Conference Planning Committee determines that lunch will be made available on site to the attendees of the Conference, make such arrangements as necessary.

Greeters & Facility Committee

- The chairman works with the facility to arrange for set up and clean up and to handle any needs that develop throughout the day.
- Provide a list of local, easy access restaurants for lunch to all attendees.
- Provide for Conference attendees' needs.
- Have enough greeters at registration table for assistance.

Special Needs

The Host District Special Needs Chair shall coordinate with the Area Special Needs Coordinator. If the Host District does not have a Special Needs Chair, a Special Needs Liaison shall be appointed by the Planning Committee Chair or elected by the Planning Committee to serve as the contact between the Host Committee and the Area Special Needs Coordinator.

The Host Committee shall be responsible for the following:

- The selected facility and the Main Meeting Room shall be Handicapped Accessible.
- The Registration Flyer shall include the Handicapped Icon.
- The Registration Flyer shall include the Hearing Impaired and the following statement below (the Handicapped & Hearing Impaired icons are available at www.graphicartistsguild.org/resources/disability-access-symbols/):

“Call the NIA Special Needs Coordinator no later than two (2) weeks before the NIA Big Book Conference if an interpreter is needed.”

*Add contact information listed below: Special Needs Coordinator
Name, Telephone, TTY#, e-mail address.*

Financial Report

The proposed budget for the Conference, all financial reports to the Conference Planning Committee and the Final Financial Report to the NIA should follow this format. The Treasurer should update and distribute a budget report at all Planning Committee meetings.

	Item	Budget (\$)	Actual (\$)
Income	Area Seed Money	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00
	Registration		
	Pre-registration		___ @ \$ ___ = ___
	On-site registration		___ @ \$ ___ = ___
	Lunch		___ @ \$ ___ = ___
	Donation cans		
	Total		
Expenses	Facility rental/donation		
	Flyers		
	Programs		
	Registration materials		
	Main Speaker		
	Refreshments		
	Beverages		
	Donuts, fruit etc.		
	Lunch		
	Special Needs		
	Spanish Translation		
	Miscellaneous		
	Total		
Income less Expenses			
Less Area Seed Money		(\$2,500.00)	(\$2,500.00)
Net Profit/Loss			

The cost of Registration for the Conference may be calculated by dividing the Total Expenses budgeted for the Conference by the estimated number of attendees (a minimum of 250 based on past Conference experience).

Confidentiality Statement

The Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions emphasize the importance of anonymity in our relationships with people in general and that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance, reminding us to place principles before personalities, thereby practicing genuine humility. It has also been pointed out by our trusted servants in the Northern Illinois Area and throughout Alcoholics Anonymous that those who serve the Fellowship cannot be so anonymous that we cannot find each other when we need help in accomplishing our primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers.

The importance of all of this to the Big Book Conference Planning Committee is in maintaining confidentiality of the Conference Database - both committee members and participants. Members of the Fellowship in service positions trust that others in service positions will not reveal their full names, addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information to anyone without the individual having knowledge about how the

information will be used and for what purpose. The Big Book Conference Planning Committee should be clear about how personal information will be used and for what purposes, such as, committee member lists, lists given to the facility, participant registration lists, and facility room registration lists.

All personal information about members of Alcoholics Anonymous must be considered confidential and ought to be used for A.A. purposes only. No personal information is to be used for a mailing list or for any form of solicitation or commercial ventures!

This security of personal information was confirmed by the 1974 General Service Conference and reaffirmed by the 1977 General Service Conference.

The importance of this protection cannot be overemphasized! Refer to the appendix for the Anonymity Statement, Confidentiality Statement, Preamble, and the Twelve Traditions.

Section Revisions

Revision Guidelines

Revisions to this section are approved by a substantially unanimous vote of the Area Committee. All approved revisions must be reported to the Assembly when it next meets, discussed if necessary, and accepted or rejected by a "Sense of the Assembly."

Revision History

- Revised with Assembly approval on December 2, 2006
- Changed title to "Procedures for Planning..." reformatted to standardized document style, added standardized Section Revisions section. Text changes only as needed to support style. Report and Charter Committee, 5/17/2009, 6/13/2009, 9/27/2009, 10/3/2009, 10/11/2009
- Approved by Assembly, 12/12/2009
- Approved by Assembly, 6/18/2011
- Moved Anonymity Statement, Preamble, and the Twelve Traditions to an appendix. Approved by Assembly, 12/10/11
- Removed from the unabridged version of the Northern Illinois Area 20 Service Handbook. Approved by Assembly, December 9, 2017
- Updated to address accessibilities in font size and style, 10/2024

APPENDIX FOR CONFERENCES

Anonymity Statement

There may be some here who are not familiar with our tradition of anonymity at the public level:

"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio (TV) and films."

Thus we respectfully ask that no A.A. Speaker - or, indeed, any A.A. Member - be identified by full name in published or broadcast reports of our meetings.

The assurance of anonymity is essential in our effort to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us, and our tradition of anonymity reminds us that A.A. Principles come before personalities.

The long form of A.A.'s Eleventh Tradition says "Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed." In keeping with this principle, please do not post recognizable photos of identifiable A.A. members on websites accessible to the public, including unrestricted pages on social networking sites.

A.A. Preamble

Alcoholics anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. Membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. Is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses or opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving god as he may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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The Twelve Concepts

I. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

II. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective consciences of our whole Society in its world affairs.

III. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision”.

IV. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

V. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

VI. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

VII. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is no a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

VIII. The trustees are the principle planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

IX. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

X. Every service responsibility should be matched by equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

XI. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

XII. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never become the sear of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principles; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote,

and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action. .

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Section Revisions

Revision Guidelines

Revisions to this section are approved by a substantially unanimous vote of the Area Committee. All approved revisions must be reported to the Assembly when it next meets, discussed if necessary, and accepted or rejected by a “sense of the Assembly.”

Revision History

- Originally adopted by the Winter Assembly, 12/10/2011
- Removed from the unabridged version of the Northern Illinois Area 20 Service Handbook. Approved by Assembly, December 9, 2017
- Updated to address accessibilities in font size and style, 10/2024