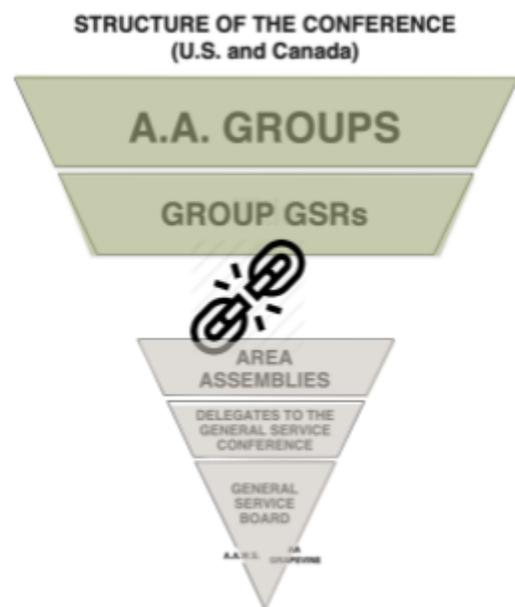


Motion for Area 72 2021 Assembly

“We move that Western Washington Area 72 create a district for online groups in the Area.”

Reasons for Creating an Online District:

- Multiple online groups within Area 72 are implementing trusted servant roles, including GSR. They have been meeting in a monthly roundtable since January—in the same way an existing geographical district does. These groups are exercising their “ultimate authority”¹ to request that an online district be formally created and integrated into the *Area’s* service structure.
- The 2020 Area 72 Ad-Hoc committee’s research concluded that there is indeed a need, and it recommended a district for online groups. Tethering to a brick-and-mortar district does not meet the needs nor the logistics for all online groups. One online group has already experienced a new rotation in which the new GSR is physically in a different district than their geographical district.
- As of the 2021 GSC, online groups are able to receive the group number that unlocks their ability to participate in the service structure: they are listed in meeting guides, and they can declare affiliation with a district of their choosing (if none is listed, the default is the geographical district of their designated GSR or contact).
- Participation in an online district affords these groups more full participation and greater engagement in the entire service structure triangle through an online group DCM that serves as a key link to the rest of the service triangle. It is through the DCM that groups are represented at Area Quarterly Business Meetings and Assemblies.



¹ “Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside-down organization because, as the structure chart shows, the groups are on top and the trustees at the bottom. Bill W. wrote in Concept I: “The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services....” (AA Service Manual, p. S15)

- Area 72 has a strong precedent in its creation of Spanish-Language districts (1 and 57). The districts were formed when Spanish-language groups came forward with a DCM and requested formal recognition. Further, Spanish-Language groups act according to their group conscience in choosing whether to affiliate with a Spanish-Language district or a strictly geographical one.
- A second Advisory Action from the General Service Conference recommends that the General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure. GSC will not form an Online Area without Online Districts actually requesting an Area (per our Service Structure). So our Area's decision will inform and even guide GSC's future actions. Whether the online district flourishes in the years to come or not, our experience, strength, and hope will only be a benefit to the General Service Committee.

Following GSC's action, the recommendation of the Area 72 Ad Hoc Committee, and—most importantly—the group conscience of a de facto district of online groups, we believe that the creation of an online district by Area 72 is the Next Indicated Step.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the vast majority of in-person groups were forced to move online, and in addition, new online groups were formed. These online groups continue to thrive, and in many cases will continue to exist once in-person groups resume. Members of these groups have come from “brick and mortar” groups, and many have joined because of other conditions that prevented them from attending in-person groups prior to the pandemic. Members of these online groups are fully accustomed to having full participation in the general service structure to allow their voices to be heard; to cast their votes on various issues and motions; to be a part of the communication network that has been well established in the general service structure, and to provide opportunities for service work.

Problem Identification

- Online Groups Meet Real Needs
By reaching alcoholics that are unable or unwilling to attend in-person meetings, online groups are vital to AA's present and its future.
 - Newcomers intimidated by in-person meetings
 - Geographically isolated, immunocompromised, or homebound people
 - Underserved alcoholics
 - elderly, either at home or in care facilities
 - limited by transportation or time (caregivers, e.g.)
 - hearing-, seeing-, or mobility-impaired
 - who feel greater safety/connection in online groups due to culture, language, identification, or affiliation
 - people in treatment, detox programs, or in custody
- Within Area 72, online groups have firmly and persistently expressed the desire to be a part of the general service structure.
- The recent GSC recommendation turns a key by recognizing online groups with online group numbers that mean they are included in meeting listings alongside in-person (and now, hybrid) groups. This means they can apply to be integrated into the communication system, give a GSR voting rights, and have the ability to contribute to service.
- However, without an online district, online groups can be hampered in their ability to fully participate or join in on decisions at the General Service level.

“Without a district we do not have a place for our groups GSR’s to come together, gather information, share information or a DCM that can take our right of participation and right of decision onto the quarterlies, our current delegate, and the assemblies, and thus the conference.”

- Lack of District affiliation eliminates a key level in the general service structure communication model. Not only from top-down and bottom-up, but across, in that online groups do have issues and opportunities particular to the medium.

- Tethering an online group to an existing District is not viable for all these groups because return to in-person District groups will likely preclude their GSR's participation.
- Often these groups have members from wider geographical areas than existing Districts, although in general, the bulk of the group members are within Area 72 geographical boundaries.
- In the spirit of rotation, as a new GSR is elected, this may force groups to switch districts multiple times.
- Online groups face unique challenges such as safety online, electronic contributions, distribution of literature, etc, that brick and mortar groups do not.

Proposed Solution

Area 72 creates a District for online groups in Area 72. (Motion for 2021 Assembly)
We see this as “the next indicated step” to online groups’ participation in the General Service Conference structure.

How the District would Operate

- This District would operate in the same way as other Districts. (AA Service Manual Chapter Three: The District and the D.C.M.)
 - The Service Manual defines a district as a “geographical unit”. For purposes of this district, the geographical area is defined as all of Area 72.
- This District would elect a District Committee Member in the same manner as described in the Service Manual.
- Financial Support – this district would be financially supported in the same manner as other districts i.e., by the groups that belong to the district.
- DCM Duties – the duties of the DCM for this virtual district would be identical to the duties outlined in the Service Manual:
 - Regularly attends all district groups and area assemblies and quarterlies.
 - Is the communication link between the district groups, the area and the delegate.
 - Provides reports to the GSRs/groups from the area, delegate, the conference and GSO.
 - Provides reports from the GSRs/groups to the area, the delegate, the conference and GSO.
 - Votes, where applicable, at area assemblies and quarterlies
 - “By maintaining active contact, both with the groups in the district and with the area delegate, the D.C.M. is a key link in ensuring that all the A.A. groups are aware of the importance of their total participation in local, district, area and world services.” (Your D.C.M.; Pamphlet F-12)
 - All additional duties as described in the Service Manual.

Online District FAQ

Will the creation of this district require Area 72 to have online or hybrid quarterlies and assemblies?

No, each DCM and GSR will participate in area events as offered by host committees.

Will the creation of this district add any additional costs to Area 72 expenses?

No, Area 72 expenses would not be impacted.

Will the creation of this virtual district reduce contributions to Area 72?

No, the district would be self-supporting and would make downstream contributions based on their group conscience. Groups within this district would continue to do the same.

If the General Service Conference ultimately creates an online area, what would be the impact to this district?

This district would have to come to a fully informed group conscience about whether to remain with Area 72, or join that new Area.

If online group members are also home group members of brick-and-mortar groups, how would voting be handled?

Voting by individual members should always be in accordance with our spiritual principles and members should decide on which group to cast their appropriate vote. This is exactly how this operates currently when members have more than one home group.

- A member can vote in any group on internal group related issues.
- When it comes to issues requiring a vote on a district, area or GSC level, the member should choose only one group where they will cast their vote.

We have Geographical Areas. What happens if the group has a lot of members from outside this Area?

Every group has a right to designate the district with which it is affiliated. The geographical designation has been a historical practice and makes for a logical structure with respect to service. However, every AA is an AA, whether from Florida or WA, and we trust the spiritual principles to guide each member and group as they reach a group conscience in what they truly believe is the best interest of AA as a whole. We have countless examples of home group members, district servants, etc., who live outside the strict geographical confines of their group

or district already. As well, we have many examples of groups who decide to shift to a preferred district.

What will happen if there is no participation in this online district?

Nothing. There is no impact to Area 72 other than the potential elimination from the area roll of districts.

Is there a minimum number of groups required to create a district?

The service Manual (p. S31) mentions, "...as few as five..."

How will this district participate in the service committees in the area?

They will participate in the same manner as other districts. If they have a member willing to serve, they will participate. Further, they may also be able to develop online service offerings to help AA's—in detox, treatment, or correctional facilities, for example.

What if the area committee quarterlies are in-person groups?

Each committee member will participate in the event that the host committee has offered.

Has a sufficient need been established?

Based on the research conducted by the Ad-hoc Committee in 2020 (See Attachment II), there were 26 online groups contacted in Area 72 that indicated they were or might be remaining as online. Of the 9 that were staying online, 7 of those groups want to be involved in District and General Service. Some were undecided, in part because there was no current way for them to be involved, but would consider involvement should a path be created via an online district.

As of April 2021, 43 online groups were identified as online only, with a majority intending to remain as such.

Discussion Topic Proposal for 2021 General Service Conference

Incorporated into 71st GSC agenda item #45: "How to give online only (virtual) meetings a voice and a vote."

We look to GSC to explore the pros and cons for options to integrate online-only meetings into and then define a clear path that meets the needs beyond our area and even our region.

As the discussion moves forward in the GSC, we ask that the GSC consider **Tradition Four**, which states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." Online-only groups' potential in service and outreach has a *profound* effect on the evolution of A.A. as a whole.

As well, please consider **Service Concept Four**, which states that "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." This Concept fairly demands that GSO reach out to online-only groups to give them a voice in the process of determining a solution to this issue, which in some sense transcends limited geographical units like "District" or "Area."

We understand that other Areas are also seeking solutions and submitting their requests and/or specific motions to address this issue. We wish to add District 17's (NW Seattle's) voice to the upswell of voices urgently requesting this change from the GSC in the AA Service Structure and GSO's policies and practices. We are willing to participate in any ad hoc committee exploration at the GSC and/or GSO committee level.

As Bill W wrote in the November 1960 issue of the AA Grapevine:

" A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches [...] Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination.

71st General Service Conference Policy/Admissions Committee Recommendations:

- “The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group’s preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group’s primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as “International Correspondence Meetings.”
- “The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.”