



Area 50 Inventory Report 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Area 50 for the opportunity to serve as your 2022 inventory facilitator. It has been a pleasure to work with a fantastic ad hoc committee. The work this committee has done to make this a successful process is remarkable and worthy of many positive kudos.

The process for which this information was gathered consisted of several months of meeting on the Zoom platform. The Turning the Lights On (TTLO) strategic plan played a tremendous role in how best to proceed with getting information from as many A.A. members in Area 50 as possible. It was a pleasure to share with the ad hoc committee and the rest of the Area that the TTLO strategic plan is something that does not exist in other Areas as it does in Area 50. It is straightforward with lofty, yet attainable goals for the betterment of Area 50; a solid tool for reaching newcomers in the program and those new to General Service. TTLO provides an opportunity to explore what you are doing well and what needs improvement. I believe if more Areas utilized such a plan and an extensive inventory process such as this, more would be revealed about how best to serve the newcomer and the Program that has saved our lives.

STEPS TAKEN TO CAPTURE AREA 50 INFORMATION

- It was determined by the ad hoc inventory committee, the importance of understanding the 6 goals embedded in the TTLO.
- Weekly meetings were held to determine how best to amalgamate the questions/thoughts/concerns into a format so that all Area 50 members could participate.
- The ad hoc committee reached out to the Area 50 membership to request information about what questions or comments were floating within the fellowship.
- A video was created and made available for viewing on the Area 50 website to express the importance of participation from as many people as possible and to capture a comprehensive vision of how members/groups are feeling connected.
- Another video was created to explain the inventory process. This video was presented at the September 10, 2022 GSA, along with in-person presentations and virtual and in-person breakout groups to discuss the TTLO plan and the issues of greatest importance to the membership in Area 50.
- Based on the results of the September 10th Assembly, a Questionnaire was formalized and prepared for digital or mail in results. The Questionnaire was circulated to the Area.
- On November 12, 2022, a hybrid General Service Assembly offered further presentations on the Questionnaire, followed by in-person and virtual breakout rooms to discuss the Questions. Scribes from each breakout room summarized the discussions, and December 10, 2022 was set as a deadline for submitting final Questionnaire responses to the Facilitator.
- Responses and recommendations were collected and integrated into this report.
- The report will be provided to the Area, in advance of a planned hybrid presentation and discussion of the Report at the January General Service Assembly

The questions on the Questionnaire were guided by your Area 50 responses in the initial query of where you believe, as an Area, you stand. These questions were yours. The final question for each goal was an attempt to provide creative and thoughtful proposed solutions to the problems identified. So often, we hear comments or complaints with little opportunities for solution-based thinking. The goal of this question was to encourage people to think completely out of the box. Several responses included comments like “there are no rules in A.A.” “you can’t make people do things in A.A.” Both are true. This was an opportunity to search out solutions that may not yet be in play, as well as to see what participants know about the work that is already happening at the Area level. I have captured one comment for each goal on this final question of each section as an opportunity for growth. These may already be happening in Area 50, however, the identified responses are the most unique of all of the participants' comments.

GOAL ONE - IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE GROUPS AND MEMBERS

This goal of examining the improvement of communication with groups and members revealed there are a handful of participants who feel very connected to the Area and its districts. They appreciated the visits from the Area officers and felt informed and heard. Many responses suggested the use of the website as invaluable to feeling connected. The remaining responses suggested they did not know about the Area meetings, events etc. offered. Comments such as “not being in the loop” were common. The in-person meeting responses showed being more positively connected to the Area than the connection for virtual participants. A few virtual responses indicate there is no connection to Area at all.

Question: If you were Rule maker for the day, what reasonable solution would you insist upon to make certain communication is actively occurring between Area and the groups and individual members?

- “A one-page graphic explanation of what, when and where GSRs meet and a simple list of their responsibilities” - It is too confusing now.

This may already exist. If it does currently exist, it could prove advantageous to recreate it, update it, re-share it with the fellowship.

GOAL TWO - UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF EACH CONSTITUENCY IN GENERAL SERVICE

This goal captures the responses regarding how members get Area information, frequency of workshops and days of learning and what positions are vacant.

Many responses pointed to Service sponsorship, and the General Service Manual. Several answers were a version of “I don’t know”.

It seems that many participants believe there is a district and/or Area 50 workshop day of learning or educational event at least quarterly. There were a couple of responses that indicate either once annually or having no knowledge of any events at any time.

Many of the participants said they were familiar with the various events that happen within Districts and Area 50 heard about them through “word of mouth”. The idea that an email may go to the General Service Representative was present, however, there was some uncertainty about whether the information is shared with the group or individuals beyond the G.S.R.

Food is certainly a motivator for increasing attendance at these events. A few more suggestions were to have good speakers from out of town, to have games (A.A. Trivia) and to make sure events are offered in a hybrid model. Also important is to practice enthusiasm and excitement for General Service.

There appears to be a lack of communication regarding vacant positions. While some responses indicated a resounding yes, that there is knowledge of open positions, many comments were similar to “rarely”, “when it is remembered”, “if the right people are there to announce it”.

Question: If you were Rule maker for the day, what reasonable solution would you insist upon to make certain that everyone who takes a position in A.A. understands their role?

- “Connection and communication from the most recent member to hold that position and perhaps a contact list of all others currently holding that position who are willing to help the newcomer learn.”

Again, this may be something Area 50 is currently practicing. If this is the case, a revamp or update to the list of previous position holders would be helpful.

GOAL THREE - IMPROVING THE WORK AND VISIBILITY OF THE SERVICE COMMITTEES

This goal explored how Area 50 is utilizing past delegates and getting involved and creating enthusiasm in service committees.

Many participants were thankful for the presence of the past delegates who are involved in chairing ad hoc committees, speaking at Service events, and being an ever-ready support for help in navigating through General Service jargon and position expectations.

One participant reported past delegates are more clearly heard because of their “stature”. While the past delegates should have a greater degree of attained Service development because of their experience, this may be an opportunity for education as the past delegates and other officers’ voices are no more important than anyone else’s voice.

One of the participants shared that they had someone visit their business meeting and told them, regarding the changed Preamble, that the group could do whatever it wants as they are autonomous. This is another opportunity for growth as each group is autonomous, unless other groups or AA is affected.

It seems a unified voice could be useful in helping groups and Service committee members to carry an accurate message.

The question: How does one get involved with a Service Committee? Is it clear to the individual member where to reach out if they are interested in being a part of a Service Committee? Mostly consisted of “I don’t know” and other versions of uncertainty. Some participants seemed very clear about how to get involved, however, most responses did not express a clear path to understanding how to get involved.

Question: If you were Rule maker for the day, what reasonable solution would you insist upon to make certain Service Committees are improving work and visible to those wanting to be involved? While several responses mirrored one another, the following seemed arcane:

- “Not sure what could be said without offending.”

This struck me curious; how often do we not get involved or ask questions because we may offend someone? It seems like an opportunity to practice unity (Tradition 1)

GOAL FOUR - INCREASE COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH THE INTERGROUPS

This series of questions revealed a strained relationship between Area 50 and the Intergroup(s).

There was a prevalent response of “I don’t know” in regards to where Intergroups fall into the Area 50 structure. Other responses reported multiple committee overlap and services offered. There were responses referring to the lack of united work that “makes people feel as if they have to choose either Area or Intergroups”.

Information was captured stating that duplication does not matter due to the lack of participation within both entities. A lack of participation could be because the two entities appear to be at a divide.

There was a reported frustration regarding the meeting lists generated by one entity that do not match the list of the other and that people do not know with whom to update information. One response was a question asking “If unity is what we are searching for, why do the two entities not unite as an example to the newcomers and people wanting to get involved with Service?”

Question: If you were Rule maker for the day, what reasonable solution would you insist upon to ensure there is cooperation and coordination between Area and the Intergroups?

- “To have the two integrated with zones and districts that align. Make the intergroup its own district. Contribute together regarding services...Committees of one not two per CPC, Treatment etc... and that we elect servants not just one person to head this imperative work.”

This may be an opportunity to reconsider how each entity can support one another and provide opportunities for less animosity. Intergroup(s) and Area 50 could unite making more people available to serve General Service through committee work.

GOAL FIVE- REVIVE AND REVISE THE DISTRICT STRUCTURE

This segment of questions brought to light that along with some “*I don’t know*” regarding district restructuring, that many participants felt that most of the time their questions were answered in a timely manner. It also revealed that many participants believe that the lack of DCMs is a problem.

What is referred to as “dark districts” make it hard to feel connected, “but we don’t know what to do to get involved”.

Of those who answered the question regarding struggling districts, much emphasis was put on the scantiness of DCMs and other district support.

One of the responses referred to the “fund” available to struggling districts and also commented that it was an unknown available resource to some of the people sitting in their group round table.

A suggestion was to have Area officers attend district meetings and help develop a TTLO strategic plan specific to the district needing support.

Overall, there seems to be steady progress regarding this goal, with some exceptions for people who have not had the opportunity to learn more about the suggestions/expectations of the General Service Area committee.

Question: If you were Rule maker for the day, what reasonable solution would you insist upon to ensure a healthy, robust district?

- “Possibly allowing for new positions to build up the number of A.A.s in the service structure. Sometimes new service men or women/new members in general may be too timid to accept or run for positions that they deem too important/inconvenient/lofty for their experience level.”

If the Intergroups and Area 50 can come together and eliminate duplicate roles this suggestion could open up for more people to feel confident in standing for positions they are qualified to hold.

GOAL SIX - RE-IMAGINE THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE ASSEMBLIES

As with the questions above, this sequence of questions generated some “I don’t know” responses.

However, most responses showed a picture of how the enthusiasm of the past delegates, current and alternate delegates are infectious. “Enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm.”

In terms of Area 50 events, it provided many of the same responses as the goals above - Officers visit districts and home groups, search out **to** the meetings which are not registered and help them to understand their importance in the Service structure. “By making Service work look fun, instead of a chore, more people will have enthusiasm and take part in the work”.

Another comment that mirrors some of the responses in other goals is to encourage “new blood”. “The same people are enthusiastic about General Service work, and it is like a rinse and repeat who the players are”.

Question: If you were Rule maker for the day, what reasonable solution would you insist upon to ensure an Area structure that would function at a higher level?

- That each AA group forfeit one meeting each month or even every other month for a GSR or even DCM to teach AA members about the AA structure. At this time, available service positions could be announced.

This suggestion struck me as an opportunity, simply because it proved that AA members are willing and open to learning more about General Service.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The response rate was 34 emailed and 9 USPS inventories.

While this may seem like a small number, this included some inventory questionnaires that were done in the homegroup setting, which may have captured many participants at once.

It is also important to note that the fellowship which has been formed through the ad hoc committee asking scribes to participate, officers getting out to meetings to express encouragement for all members voices to be heard as well as having clearly received responses from people who are brand new to A.A. or General Service, is a true win.

I assure you more people are now interested in the most important questions: Why?, How?, When?, and What can I do?. This is evidenced by the higher participation at the General Service Assemblies.

Recommendation 1) Area 50 continues to work towards achieving the six goals outlined in the TTLO. The importance of continuing this strategic planning work, is the fellowship will continue to grow-up around the newcomers.

It is imperative that this information for Turning the Lights On stay fresh in the forefront for the future Area officers to continue to strive for a more bonded General Service presence.

I see that happening with an inventory process happening more regularly. Perhaps a biennial inventory process happening at the end of each panel's new year (November/December). The new officers can get their bearings and have a goal for their second year in their position.

Recommendation 2) The Area Chair to assign districts to each officer to visit at least once per year, participate in a district meeting, and show the districts what General Service in Area 50 has to offer.

If Area officers are going to district meetings, possibly DCMs can assign District representatives to groups to attend group business meetings. We grow by attraction rather than promotion and we attract people with enthusiasm and presence.

Recommendation 3) The Area Chair appoints an ad hoc committee to consider the duplicate services of Area and Intergroup(s), to determine which entity is best to handle each identified committee service, and to identify where in the Area 50 service structure the Intergroups fall, making a clear distinction for newcomers and those new to General Service.

As you can see in Goal 4, it seems there is much duplication and a sense of disconnectedness. Many responses to the inventory questions alluded to people not knowing how valuable each entity is to the alcoholic looking for recovery.

Recommendation 4) is for the Area chair to appoint an ad hoc committee made up of different members than the current inventory ad hoc committee to examine options for moving forward with this newly gathered information.

The importance of appointing a new committee is to support the principle of Spirit of Rotation (Tradition 2), to get a fresh perspective and not have this owned by any one group of people.

Conclusion

Again, I truly appreciate the opportunity to work with the Inventory Ad Hoc Committee, and the Area 50 assembly members. I enjoyed watching the process and look forward to following up in the future to see how things are progressing.

Respectfully submitted,

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