

2019 Area 40

Inventory Summary & Analysis

Directive

At the request of the Area 40 Chairperson, Connie R., and pursuant to section G13.9 of the Area 40 Policy and Procedure Manual, Area 40 conducted its quadrennial inventory during the Fall 2019 Area Assembly. Area Advisor, Gerry R. chaired the planning committee whose membership included Shawn M., D81, Patrick P., D72, Mike S., D41, and Steve P., D31.

Planning

While preparing the inventory, the committee met via conference call twice and communicated frequently with each other via email. Past Area 40 inventories were reviewed as well as recent inventories from several other service areas that were posted on the internet. After a thorough review of this information, and considerable discussion, the questions presented in the summary below were decided upon.

Methodology

Four topic areas to be considered in inventory were identified. These were: Groups/Districts; Individual Participation/Attendance; Committees/Committee Chairs; and Area Assembly. The inventory itself was conducted by assigning each of the committee members to facilitate a discussion group that considered a set of questions for one of the topic areas. In addition, four additional groups (one for each topic area) were facilitated by Area Advisor, Gerry R., Area Chair, Connie R., Area Delegate, Paul L., and Past Delegate Terry S., thus establishing two discussion groups for each topic area. The eight groups were given ninety minutes on Saturday afternoon to discuss the questions and their comments were written down by a recorder. These minutes were then verbally shared with the Assembly Body on Sunday morning. Afterward, the minutes were collected and compiled into the summary statements below. One set of minutes, (for Individual Participation/Attendance) was not submitted and is therefore not included in this report.

Results

The generalized results will be presented here in a narrative fashion and again, beginning on page three of this report, as they pertain to each individual question.

The inventory participants, as a rule, seemed to feel that Area 40 is meeting its service responsibilities in a principled, responsive, and prudent fashion. That said, there were a few concerns that seemed to consistently arise in all eight discussion groups that were expressed as areas where improvement could be made.

Communication

As our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery, it is no surprise that improvements in the area of communication would be foremost in peoples' minds. While

problems in several specific avenues of communication were identified, respondents stayed quite solution oriented and were quick to identify ways in which those concerns might best be addressed.

One concern in particular that received attention across the groups was the Area newsletter, The Triangle. Suggestions were offered to improve the Triangle in matters related to cost effectiveness, distribution, readability and overall usefulness to the Fellowship. One suggestion that seemed to be well received was to make each digital issue searchable. Also much attention was given to whether or not maintaining the production of the hard copy version was still feasible.

Other matters dealing with communication that were raised included the challenge of reaching across the geographical expanse of our large area. The solutions brought forward ranged from authorizing more travel to facilitate in-person contact, to utilizing technology such as Skype to save time and expense. There was some mention of better utilization of the Area website as well.

Process Concerns

Suggestions on activities that might enhance our effectiveness as an Area were also brought forward. Interestingly, while many had to do with activities of the Area Committee members, such as making improvements in Assembly orientation and ensuring better continuity between rotations, Many suggestions had to do with activities performed at personal and district levels. These included all attendees exhibiting greater enthusiasm about service when returning from assemblies, sponsoring people into service, and more interaction with groups by the DCMs. It seems the Fellowship of Area 40 realizes that service, and improvements to service, begin at an individual level, and that we must each take it upon ourselves to improve how we carry the message.

Location/Accessibility Issues

A direct result of moving the Assembly from its past location in Lewistown is evident in the complete lack of any ADA concerns express during this inventory. This does not mean, however, that accessibility and/or Remote Communities issues were not brought forward. Concerns over the lack of Native Americans in our midst, the need for more young people among us, and the financial, time and travel hardships placed on smaller, rural Home Groups and districts were all mentioned.

Conclusion

As with any inventory, one hopes to obtain a clearer picture of not only where changes would be beneficial, but also to gain an idea of what one is doing right in order to know to continue moving forward in those positive and helpful directions.

It appears that the Fellowship of Area 40 believes that, as a whole, they are filling a vital and effective role in the AA Service Structure. The Fellowship also understands that improvements can always be made, must always be sought, and while our Trusted Servants and committees are responsible to those they serve, positive change begins in the hearts and through the efforts of each individual involved.

GROUPS/DISTRICTS

1. How can Area 40 better encourage and convey the importance of Concept 4 and the “Right of Participation” to our respective Groups and Districts? **Most responses stress the importance of communication, mentorship through service sponsorship, and education (especially on the Concepts) at the group and district level. Encouragement of others getting into service with a positive expression of it being not only our right, but also our responsibility was suggested.**

2. Can Area 40 do a better job of identifying and addressing its Remote Communities (defined by GSO as those communities separated by geography, language, or culture) as well as those with accessibility issues. **Most respondents seemed to feel that the remote communities within Area 40 are easily identifiable, it’s just a question of how we might do a better job of reaching them. It was stated that more and diverse modalities of outreach and accessibility were needed. Several suggestions were brought forward which included: Utilizing Area Standing Committee Chairs to reach out to these communities; Encouraging districts to visit groups who lack participation; Better utilization of the Area 40 website by providing a platform to aid communication and to help overcome anonymity issues often found in smaller communities.**

3. Do groups and districts feel connected to and involved with Area 40 between our assemblies? What can be done to better accomplish this? **There seems to be two contrasting approaches to answering this question. One identifies a need for greater outreach by the Area Committee members through travel, emails, and phone calls. Better utilization and understanding of the Area website and the Area newsletter, the Triangle, we felt to be important. The other approach sees the outreach as being more the responsibility of the DCMs and GSRs to communicate and spread enthusiasm between assemblies. Continuity and communication during rotation of service positions was also identified as being important.**

4. With respect to Concept 1, do the groups in Area 40 feel they adequately hold and exercise the final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services? If not, what might Area 40 do to help that cause? **In general, most felt that the principles of Concept 1 were alive and well in Area 40. Suggestions for improvement included: districts hosting the delegate and Area Committee members more; more GSR participation; and more “face-to-face time with folks from GSO.**

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE

1. Are we attracting a good cross section of new people to participate in the Area 40 service structure?

While we appear to be attracting new people into service we seem to lack in representation of Native Americans and young people. While no suggestions were brought forward regarding Native Americans, it was mentioned that perhaps using language that young people would more readily identify with might be helpful.

2. Do we effectively welcome, orient, and integrate, new people into our assembly? What could we do better? There seemed to be a sense that we could do better here. There were suggestions that more could be done to orient newcomers to the "process" and the overall service structure. Better and more frequent communication from Area and between each other as trusted servants was also suggested.

3. Do new people feel their voice and their experience are relevant at our assembly? What can we do to facilitate that? Encouraging, respecting and acknowledging the efforts of newcomers to step past their fear of speaking or disagreeing is important. It was suggested that we try to refrain from shutting new people down simply because they don't know the process yet.

4. Does Area 40 adequately recognize Concept 5 via each individual's "Right of Appeal" and minority opinion? Do we ever experience the "tyranny of the majority" or the "tyranny of the minority?"

Area 40 does a good job recognizing Concept 5 and the Right of Opinion. It displays an understanding that an informed group conscience can come from both the majority and the minority.

COMMITTEES/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

1. The Triangle is the Area's newsletter; its purpose is to communicate service information among trusted servants, groups, districts and the area committee. How effective is the Triangle in serving this purpose? What can be done by the groups, their GSRs, the districts, or the Area Committee to improve its effectiveness? Most agree that the Triangle is an underutilized and little known resource in Area 40. Some ask whether it is worth continuing if it's not serving its intended purpose, not reaching the fellowship, not being read when it does, and not being paid for by those to whom it is being sent. Others seem to feel that while much of that is true, there are practices that could be implemented to address some of those issues and make the Triangle more effective than it currently is. Some of those suggestions include: Making the digital version searchable and have it include hyperlinks (possibly utilizing Wordpress as that is what GSO uses); Taking steps to ensure the mailing list is accurate, perhaps by going so far as to purge all addresses and rebuild the mailing list; Providing the Area 40 Fellowship with subscription cards; Sending reminders when subscriptions have expired; Ask group Grapevine reps to also be Triangle "Liaisons"

2. How can we improve the methods of encouraging and selecting effective leaders as well as nurturing leadership qualities in all our trusted servants? **Many felt it is important to utilize current and past trusted servants to mentor and advise incoming trusted servants. There were a few suggestions for current leaders to help service look more attractive and fun by being enthusiastic, making sure venues are attractive, and participating in training those starting out. For the most part however, many of the responses supported a "grassroots" effort by individuals and districts to reach for the help they need as each one of us steps further into service. Participate, ask questions, invite others, hold others accountable, and educate yourself.**

3. Considering that most A.A. members are introduced to A.A. by sources other than A.A. members, what might the Area 40 Committees, or Area 40 as a whole, do to better support the Districts in carrying the A.A. message to these sources? **Enthusiasm for the upcoming Class A Trustee workshops was expressed and more of the same type of activity was encouraged. It was also recommended that Area Standing committee Chairs be encouraged to participate in local CPC Workshops. The rest of the sharing focused on what could be done better at the local level including educating ourselves on the available service material, as well as learning how to use professional terminology and appropriate technology to better carry the message to local professionals.**

4. How are Committee Chairs communicating within the overall AA service structure? What could be done better? **Better contact with DCMs was encouraged as well as faster and wider dissemination of background material prior to assemblies. One suggestion was that a set of "Cliff notes be developed to break down complicated issues on the GSC agenda. Suggested methods that could facilitate better communication included utilizing a secret Facebook page and developing discussion threads within our existing website to allow for an exchange of questions and answers. Another suggestion was that a data base of contact information be developed along with other resources to be passed on to successors.**

AREA ASSEMBLY

1. Does Area 40 operate as an effective link in the overall communication cycle of the AA General Service structure? What can we do to better ensure that it does? **The general consensus is that Area 40 acts as an effective link in the AA Service Structure. Suggestions for improvement all revolve around improvements in communication. Dissemination of background information via the Triangle and improved communication with the districts.**

2. Do the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts guide our decisions and actions when we conduct business at assemblies? Do our policies and procedures prohibit anyone from serving who might want to participate? **Everyone felt that the decisions and actions of Area 40 are guided by the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. The one agreed upon issue regarding the policies and procedures was the matter of the location and subsequent expense of traveling to**

assembly by representatives of smaller groups. There also was some concern about some matters being decided upon before GSRs had a chance to consult with their Home Groups.

3. Does the current format and scheduling effectively address communication and the business to be conducted? How can Area 40 more effectively conduct its business? The idea of frontloading the agenda was brought up by one group, otherwise most seemed to feel current format and scheduling was effective. One group did suggest that Area might provide lunch in the interest of saving time.

4. How can we make our assembly and service work in general more inviting and relevant to the Area 40 Fellowship? Suggestions included being enthusiastic about service back in our home districts, emphasizing and utilizing service sponsorship, and improving communication via attraction rather than promotion and considering using Skype.

5. Is Area 40's use of Fellowship contributions both prudent and effective? How might we make better use of Fellowship contributions? Overall the sense was that Area 40 is being prudent with the Fellowship's funds. Three areas that were suggested as areas where some modifications might be beneficial were the Area hotline, hard copy mailing of the Triangle and utilizing electronic payments for the 7th Tradition.