

Future of the WSC April 2022 Report to Conference Participants

Questions about what's next for the World Service Conference after 2023 have been an active focus for all of us this cycle. The board has two initial recommendations for discussion. These ideas would be included in the 2023 CAR for Fellowship decision. We see these as simply first steps in a broad transformation of the WSC.

The first part of this report explains our recommendations, and the second part includes a summary of ideas participants have shared about transforming the conference.

Two Recommendations

First, we recommend trying a three-year conference cycle for two cycles—from 2023 to 2029. At our February board meeting, we talked about some of the possibilities in a three-year cycle, and we are excited about what that might look like. More on that in a moment.

Second, we recommend that delegate funding be available to any participant *upon request*. Currently World Services automatically funds all seated delegates. An increasing number of participants have chosen to opt out and fund their own delegates. We are suggesting switching from an “opt-out” system to an “opt-in” one. We'll explain more in the body of this report. What's most important to say up front is that any participant that opts in would be funded, no questions asked.

These two recommendations are just a starting place for change—a first step in building a new, more effective future for the WSC together. We are excited about so many of the ideas we've heard and discussed. The World Board has consensus that the WSC needs to be comprehensively re-visioned, and the length of the conference cycle is just the first focus.

There are only six months between WSC 2022 and the drafting of the 2023 *Conference Agenda Report*. Given the tight time frame, we are suggesting these two concrete changes to begin the process of change.

Why Do We Need to Change?

As the WSC continues to grow, it becomes more expensive and, in some respects, less effective. The World Board has been sounding the alarm about the need for change for many years. World Services is responsible for global services that include Fellowship development, public relations, literature translations and distribution, and so much more. As important as the WSC is, it consumes an increasing amount of financial and human resources.

The board believes it our responsibility to say again that business as usual is not sustainable. We have been through a crisis and, ideally, we can use it as a lever for positive change. But World Services isn't the same and won't be the same in 2023. We are in a new world, and we need to face it together. We all need to think about how to use NA's precious resources most responsibly.

The board has discussed ideas and options for the conference in board meetings; a couple of conference participant web meetings were devoted to the subject; we reported on it in the Interim CAR/CAT; and we posted a survey for any interested member to give ideas. We have uploaded a summary of the survey results and the small group discussion notes from the conference participant web meeting to the CP Dropbox. There wasn't full participation in the CP web meeting or the survey, but there are so many great ideas. The last three pages of this document summarize what we've heard so far. We don't see a clear consensus on any one approach, but we do see a broad willingness to consider ideas for change.

Background Information

The conversation about how to make the WSC more effective and sustainable has been going on since before the board existed—back to the Resolution Group in the 1990s and earlier.

Before the year 2000, the WSC was an annual event, and all participants funded their own delegates. In the late 90s and early 2000s, a number of WSC decisions led to the creation of the World Board, a unified World Services budget, a two-year conference cycle, and World Services' funding of delegates. At that time, there were fewer than 100 seated conference participants. More than twenty years have passed since then, and, fortunately, NA continues to grow. But in terms of the WSC, that growth creates challenges.

We are not going to do a deep dive into history here, but we have included a number of historical documents in the Conference participant Dropbox.

Some of you may remember the motions in the 2014 CAR about delegate funding and alternate attendance. The board offered those motions in an attempt to decrease the cost of the WSC to World Services and to reduce the number of members seated on the floor of the WSC.

Here's an excerpt from the 2014 *Conference Report*:

As a Fellowship, we have wrestled with how to improve our system for decades. We have a pattern of devoting significant resources to the issues, coming to the conclusion that we need to change, developing options, and then balking when we come to the decision point. The issues do not go away, we just keep "kicking the can" to the next group and going through the process again. . . .

Sometimes it feels impossible to move forward but we must, and we will. Together we can get past this place where we feel stuck.

Neither motion passed, and since that time, the conference has seated nine more regions and six zones, adding a total of 30 more seats on the floor of the WSC.

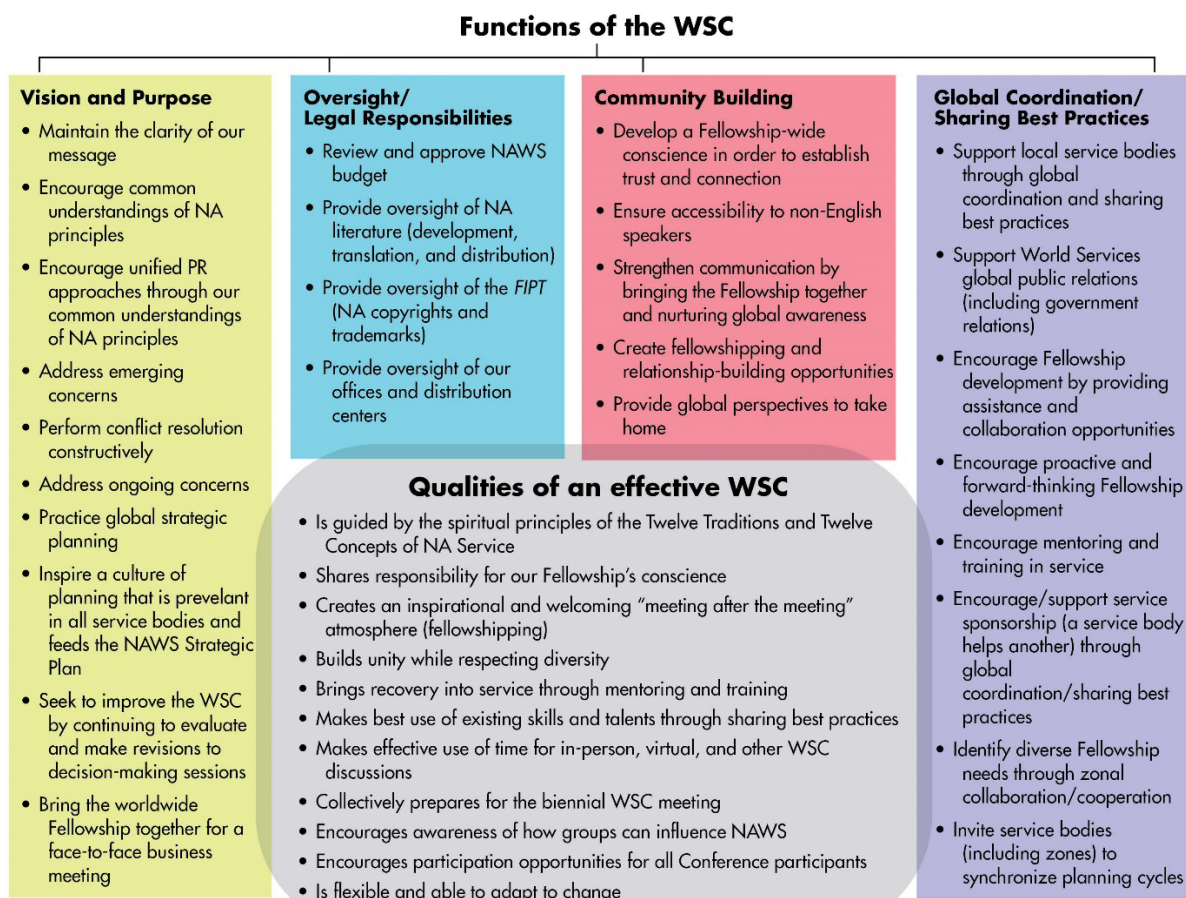
We are still circling many of the same issues eight years later, but the pandemic has proven to us that we can change whether we feel "ready" or not. In 2020, we had the first ever virtual WSC. In 2021, Fellowship contributions represented a quarter of World Services' income for the

first time. These huge accomplishments seemed impossible to many of us before they happened.

Now we are trying to have a conversation that can lead to decisions that are not crisis-oriented but that are about creating a more sustainable future. The Basic Text reminds us: “Everything that occurs in the course of NA service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.” In terms of the WSC, that means asking: How can we accomplish what we need to more efficiently so that we can focus on our primary purpose and our vision?

Each of us is challenged to consider what best serves the Fellowship as a whole for the future, regardless of our personal perspectives and opinions. That can be difficult, but we are working from a position of strength. At the last three in-person conferences, participants discussed and agreed on the functions of the WSC. We have clear consensus about the work of the WSC.

We have learned over the course of the last several years that we can stay connected and reduce the overall cost at all levels of service. Now we just need to build on what we have learned. Let’s continue in the direction we are moving. Here are some of our ideas about what might be next.



Cycle Length

The question of cycle length seems like a logical place to start thinking about change. A three-year cycle would reduce human & financial resources, allowing us to allocate some of those resources to the wider world of NA Fellowship development. It would provide more time for collaborative planning and for the discussions that help shape future work.

No matter what happens, the conference cycle will change after 2023. If nothing different is decided at WSC 2023, the conference following would be in 2025, effectively shifting the cycle so that the WSC happened every other odd year. That is a big change in the cycle relative to how most service bodies think about and elect their delegates.

A longer cycle opens up possibilities for many other changes. Collective conversations and deliberations will help us build consensus together about those changes.

There's an old joke that goes: Q: How do you eat an elephant? A: One bite at a time.

We are just trying to take the first bite here.

We would like to propose trying a three-year cycle beginning in 2023 for a concrete period of time. At our March board meeting we talked about a CAR motion that would take effect after WSC 2023 and last for two cycles. If such a motion were to pass, it would mean we are trying a three-year cycle until 2029 as a kind of beta test.

We share the concern many conference participants expressed that any changes to the WSC not undermine the voices of and connections among CPs. We actually believe that a longer cycle could present opportunities to increase the participants' impact on the NAWS Strategic Plan and the work that comes out of the WSC.

Some of the ideas that came up in our discussion include the following.

- Hold a partial virtual WSC between in-person meetings
- Incorporate WCNA into the work of the conference cycle in some way, since the two events, the conference and convention, would both be on three-year cycles.
- Focus on what needs to be done in person and what can be done effectively virtually.
- Work toward better handling and processing of CAR motions.
- Develop processes for the body to build the CAR together, including mechanisms for delegates to prioritize, process, or vet motions.
- Make decisions on some "old business" items virtually before the in-person WSC meeting so that the time together can be focused on the cycle ahead.
- Evolve the WSC into a planning conference with more training, mentorship, and conversation.
- Help participants disseminate information and build relationships within their regions and zones.

- Strengthen the strategic plan “feedback loop” to help amplify the voices, role, and participation of participants and members.
- Build a more collaborative planning processes.

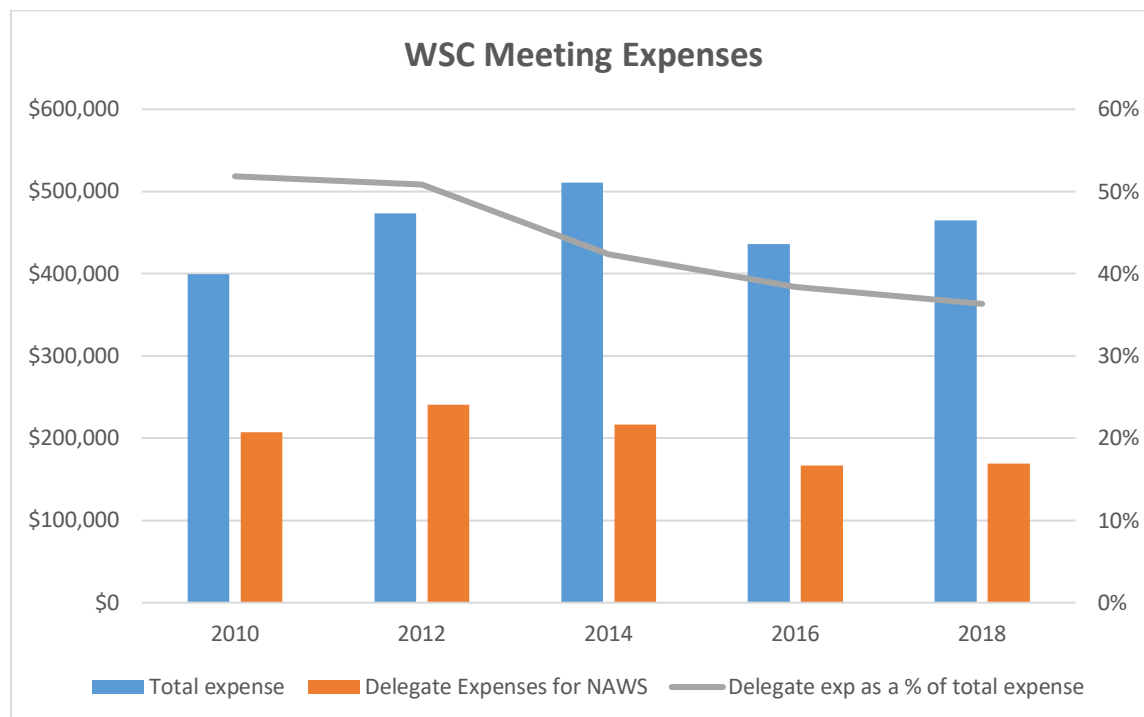
We are not necessarily recommending these specific ideas. We aren’t even sure we have consensus on them. We just wanted to give you a sense of the texture of our conversations and some of what excites us about the idea of a three-year cycle. Our conversations echoed many of the ideas we heard from other participants, which are summarized in the last three pages of this report. We look forward to discussing these ideas together with other participants, as a conference, and figuring out what might come next if the choice is made to extend the cycle to three years.

The board understands that service bodies will have questions about the length of terms for their trusted servants, and we are committed to working with service committees to find solutions.

Opt-in Funding

In a way, the second recommendation, to make funding opt-in rather than opt-out, is simpler. Again, we want to emphasize that funding would be available for the delegate of any seated participant without question. The board does not want to place any additional barriers to accessibility. This is really more about changing our collective culture.

In putting together figures about the World Service Conference, we noticed a clear trend:



NA World Services funds delegate travel, but over the course of the last four in-person conferences that expense has decreased as more and more regions have begun funding their delegates. From 2008 to 2018, the conference seated 22 regions and zones. That should translate to a 20% increase in travel funding over that time which clearly it did not.

Gathering hundreds of people together in a conference room for a week is expensive. The cost of the conference room, the sound system, the electronics, the set up and break down of the room—there is no way to avoid a large expense in a group our size. In the past ten years, as the conference has grown, expenses such as risers and audio visual needs have increased, but delegate travel expense to NAWS has not.

For those who prefer numbers, here are the figures that created the chart above:

	Total	Delegate Expenses for NAWS	Delegate exp as a % of total expense
2010	\$399,610	\$207,166	52%
2012	\$473,719	\$241,023	51%
2014	\$510,925	\$216,504	42%
2016	\$435,726	\$167,179	38%
2018	\$465,081	\$168,998	36%

Delegate travel is made up of hotel, meal, and travel expenses. Each of these three categories is roughly one-third of the total expenses, with minor variances from conference to conference. Regions have taken on a variety of different ways to contribute to funding – some pay for air fare, some do not take meal expenses, some pay for the hotel; some cover all expenses, and all different combinations. The above numbers and graph tell the fundamentals of the story—that talking about the cost of the WSC and the possibility for regions to fund their delegates has made a difference. Our recommendation is building on this change in culture or expectation: We are suggesting simply to include something on the reservation form each participant fills out to indicate if the delegate needs funding. If they do, NAWS will cover it.

What's Next?

The second weekend of the 2022 World Service Conference is devoted to discussion about the future of the conference. We intend to have two large group sessions and two small group sessions during those two days. Those sessions will be an opportunity to discuss the ideas in this report.

As we mentioned earlier in this report, we need to come to agreement relatively quickly about first steps in order to make decisions at the 2023 Conference. That isn't much time to build

consensus about motions for change. We offer these ideas as the first steps on a path to the future. The future is bright, and we are so grateful we get to walk this path together.

The pages that follow contain a summary of the discussions at the January 2022 Conference participant web meeting and the survey results from CPs.

Future of the WSC Input Summary

This is a summary of what we heard from CPs in the Future of the WSC survey and the January CP web meeting small groups. So much of what we have heard, regardless of the question being answered, is about how we use our time between conferences. A three-year cycle seems to allow for more opportunities to really improve some of the WSC processes.

How can we use the time between meetings more effectively?

The single overwhelming idea offered by CPs in response to this question is that polling and voting on issues that delegates have already workshoped in their regions and zones could be done virtually (possibly during CP web meetings, possibly via epoll) to allow more time for small group discussions, Q&A, brainstorming, and planning when we meet in person. Several CPs also offered the idea of discussing *CAR* issues and other WSC business prior to the conference. A number of CPs highlighted the importance of being succinct during discussions and being prepared by reviewing advance material prior to the WSC.

Other ideas from CPs included:

- Use the WSC to look forward rather than backwards. Shape the future together and do everything else virtually.
- What are our goals and how do we meet them effectively for the WSC? What are the issues in NA and how can we help for the focus.
- Filtering topics, particularly from the Fellowship, at virtual meetings and webinars. A more deliberate and scheduled use of CP webinars. Surveys and straw polls to determine where there is consensus. More small groups.
- Improved communication methods for delegates. More ability to have sidebar conversations. Perhaps a moderated WhatsApp group. More access to contact information.
- More informal settings like small groups for tutoring, discussion, and getting to know each other and our Fellowship's needs. Better use of chat virtually. Chat rooms on breaks.
- Involve delegates more in the work. Delegate-run workgroups
- Mentoring the new conference participants (formally or informally), Delegates sharing session, tutoring. Using the time for more small group Q&A sessions
- Limit the CP webinars to participants only.
- Small groups monthly, large group quarterly. Small groups monthly, with weekend long meetings periodically.
- Multiple webinars on the same topic by time zone.
- Make decisions between conferences on agreed upon topics.
- Choose topics to discuss that local members are interested in. Also regional concerns or issues.
- Use CP webinars to frame topics to delegate discussions to the zones, regions, and service symposiums and then come back together as CPs to finalize.
- Involve the regions more in planning.
- More electronic engagement of members and regions for input to determine the pulse of the Fellowship.

- More reports and information electronically. Questions from the CPs could be sent in and then discussed virtually.
- Be more results driven.
- Important to remember that hearing all points of view takes time and isn't always the most "efficient" process.
- CAR-related
 - More discussions prior to WSC. Polling to determine what needs discussion.
 - We could do most if not all business (decision making) online. Leave time for discussion of bigger ideas together.
 - Set a time for all ideas and motions for the next WSC, then discuss and build a conscience before determining what goes into the CAR for Fellowship discussion and decision.
 - Redesign entire CAR process and timing

What needs to be or benefits from being discussed or decided at an in-person conference and what can be done virtually?

Participants seem largely to agree that meeting virtually is not the same as or a substitute for meeting in-person. Some of the challenges with meeting virtually were repeatedly mentioned: Focus and concentration are harder virtually; time zones are a challenge, etc. .Even so, most believe that more can be done virtually, which would leave more time for real discussion at the in-person WSC event. Participants had different impressions of the in-person event, depending on whether they had attended. Many who had not attended seemed to have a sense that there is more real debate in-person than may actually be the case. Improving on how to build consensus before a decision came up often in the responses, regardless of the level of experience..

- Online:
 - Hold a 2-3 Day Virtual Conference prior to an in-person meeting with voting on CAR motions
 - Can do so much more than we currently do, almost all can be done virtually
 - Find ways to hear more discussion and the different voices virtually. In person can speak to others between sessions to ask questions.
 - Small group discussions
 - Change or have a variety of times to adapt to the world
 - Should foster this opportunity for delegates to get answers in a communal setting. Shared experienced does come across virtually.
 - Less important business can be done virtually. Share best practices. Sponsor service bodies to help share experience.
 - Meet more often for shorter time periods. Spread things out throughout the cycle.
 - New business and planning
 - Poll to decide what can be done virtually
 - Lit approval, elections, and budget

- Workshops, polls, issues about the world convention, low-impact projects (literature, guides, guidelines for virtual meetings) / possibility of alternating face-to-face and virtual meetings could make a 3-year cycle feasible.
- In person:
 - Elections
 - Vote on CAT motions , *FIPT*, budget
 - Develop and work on IDT to become CAR motions in the next cycle
 - Exchange info/approaches to service delivery, FD, etc.
 - Develop trusted servants & relationships, encourage relationship building, leadership development.
 - Most important business—like CAR and financial
 - RD/ZD small groups
 - Planning and long range goals
- Maybe it's time for another NAWS inventory.

Who needs to attend the in-person meeting in the future? Who could attend virtually?

Results here reflected the variety of experience, with some participants unaware of current WSC practices and policy. To clarify: Participants who are unable to attend the WSC due to visa issues are able to attend virtually. Those participants have been included in small groups, with some challenges, though admittedly there have only been a few virtual attendees to the in-person WSC to date. The request to stream the WSC came up repeatedly, and that is something we have done for the virtual WSCs and intend to discuss for the future.

- The WSC keeps getting larger and more expensive. At some point, we should say "enough is enough." Fewer people than current model.
- Zonal attendance:
 - Vision of zones attending the WSC with zonal delegates attending, not RDs (less expensive, fewer people, etc.)
 - Possible scenario: Regions still represented & vote online. Zonal delegates do the intangible, in-person work.
 - Limit participation to zonal delegates or zonal teams
 - Unsure about zonal attendance. Clarification on the role of zones & zonal delegates needed before we consider zonal representation.
- Voting participants and cofacilitators
 - RDs, ZDs, WB, cofacs; ADs and HRP virtually
 - AD can attend virtually for training. This would balance the hybrid experience.
 - Only some WB attend
 - All attend as currently done
- All except those that cannot come (or get into the US) due to political or personal issues, etc.
 - All in person or all virtual.
 - Delegate teams for institutional memory, mentorship, and full experience.