

Future of the WSC June 2022 Report to Conference Participants

Hello Conference participants and others,

This is the second report from the board this year devoted to the future of the World Service Conference. The June 2022 conference participant web meeting will be focused on the ideas here, with plenty of time for participants to share thoughts and ask questions. This report elaborates on the [recommendations](#) we made in April 2022. (That report is posted in the Future of the WSC section of www.na.org/conference). Participants' ideas shared at WSC 2022 and via email have helped us add some elements to the recommendation.

The conversations at WSC 2022 looked forward to a real transformation of the conference—with thoughtful focus of our limited resources, including our time; strategic use of technology to accomplish some tasks and continue connecting virtually; and increased collaboration on the work of the WSC particularly the *Conference Agenda Report*.

To take the first steps in this transformation, the essence of our recommendation remains the same: Let's try a three-year WSC cycle and shift to an *opt-in* funding model, with delegate funding available upon request rather than automatic.

We are recommending the WSC adopt a three-year cycle for two cycles as an experiment. Continuing a three-year cycle past that point would require further conference action.

An interim virtual meeting would take place two years into the cycle.

We recommend a workgroup of zonally selected members be formed after WSC 2023 to fill in some of the detail about what a transformed WSC and a three-year cycle might look like and make further recommendations to the board for us all to discuss.

Both the interim meeting and the workgroup are suggestions from a number of participants. Thank you! There are many more good ideas that we anticipate discussing and trying in this evolutionary process.

We will try to answer some questions we've heard so far below.

Don't we need to know more about what a three-year cycle will look like in order to make a decision?

We—the board, the WSC, and the Fellowship, to at least some degree—talked for many years before the pandemic about how to improve the effectiveness of the WSC and use our limited resources more strategically. If our historical experience is any measure, discussion alone would not leave the conference in a substantially different place in 2025. In NA, we often learn by doing. In recovery, we are used to taking one step at a time.

The WSC is currently in the midst of a three-year cycle because of global health and economic circumstances. Adapting to the conditions of the pandemic has often been very difficult, but it has also increased our capacity to imagine a different future.

The board does not believe it is necessary to fully plan how things might best be improved as long as we know participants share a commitment to improving it. In the last CP webinar, we heard that delegates would like more opportunity to give input and the idea of a delegate workgroup seemed popular.

Many delegates also suggested an interim WSC meeting. The board agrees that it seems necessary to meet virtually mid cycle, or two years in, to make decisions that must be addressed.

We have faith that the conference will develop a picture of a three-year cycle incrementally and collectively while we are in a six-year experiment, just as, in our personal programs, we “made a decision” and then continued on a path of spiritual awakening. To get anywhere, we have to start the journey, and this is a way to start the journey.

Is this just about saving money?

We believe that, in NA, the question shouldn't be, *What can we do to save money?*; it should be *Are we spending the limited resources we have as wisely as we can to further our primary purpose?* Part of being responsible is regularly reexamining our choices about how we allocate resources in the face of change. A three-year cycle will free up some Fellowship resources—money, but also delegate time, regional and area discussions, NAWS efforts, etc.—to focus on how to better carry our message to still suffering addicts.

At World Services, we would love to be able to devote more resources to revising dated service materials, such as *A Guide to Local Services*; holding an African Zonal Forum; and offering more support—conversations and tools—to address Fellowship concerns, such as protecting anonymity, navigating social media, guarding against predators, helping all members feel welcomed, “regardless of...” and so very much more. These are just a few ideas. The list is longer than the space in this report.

For many years, the board has said that the current approach to the conference is “not sustainable,” yet we have been doing the same thing for decades. Is it responsible? Is it strategic?

We believe the cost-savings alone of moving to a three-year cycle make it a worthwhile change, but not because we are “saving” money—because we are making money available to carry our message in other ways.

Our resources are finite. The need is infinite.

Why is the board pushing this idea so hard right now?

We heard a couple of participants ask some version of this question during the WSC discussions, and we want to address it directly. The World Board is a leadership body. Our responsibility as stewards of NA World Services' resources is to advocate for approaches that use all of our resources as wisely as possible. In that capacity, we often suggest ideas for change. In NA, "leaders are but trusted servants." We offer recommendations in a spirit of service, with the faith that the Fellowship and the conference will make the decisions that are best for NA.

Probably no path toward change is ideal. No matter what decisions the conference makes, the benefit of hindsight will always reveal things we could have done better. But this feels like a particularly opportune time for improvements because so much change was thrust upon NA by the pandemic. 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. We learned that we can get a lot done virtually, including making decisions and having fun (virtual dance party anyone?), when we need to. We see the suggestions in this report as a way to begin to leverage what we learned during the pandemic.

What about all of the other good ideas about changing the WSC? Why are these the only ideas the board is recommending?

As we have said repeatedly, these recommendations are a first step—the beginning of a process of change, not the end. So many great ideas have been shared about ways to improve the WSC. An expanded cycle gives us more opportunity to try some of those new processes and possibly more time for existing processes as well.

A longer cycle might allow more time for the *CAR* and the *CAT* to be workshopped. Perhaps the conference can develop processes for the body to build the *CAR* together, including mechanisms for delegates to prioritize or vet motions.

Another suggestion that has come up repeatedly is to make some decisions virtually before meeting in person so that the in-person meeting can focus more on planning, training, mentorship, and conversation.

We've heard input about how to improve collaboration and strategic planning, including more use of zones and better communication with members, groups, and local service bodies. Having more time to build consensus and hear the quiet voices will strengthen the conference and the Fellowship.

More discussion among participants will help us refine some of these processes and come to consensus about what else we want to try.

Will a three-year cycle mean a longer conference and CAR?

A three-year cycle would be the first step in a larger evolution. It's not about doing exactly the same things less frequently. It's about spreading out work throughout the cycle and using the time between meetings to improve communication and collaboration.

The longer cycle would allow more focus on zonal forum activity and use of zonal forums, more emphasis on training new trusted servants, more focus on FD, PR, and carrying the message locally.

As we shared above, we hope both the WSC and the CAR are reimagined along with the cycle. All of these are ideas shared by participants during the WSC and CP web meeting.

More will be revealed.

Who will be part of a workgroup, and what will they do?

We are recommending that a workgroup focus on framing some of the ideas participants have offered about new and more effective processes to plan, communicate, and work throughout the cycle. Our last workgroup related to the WSC was made up of a member selected by each zone, and at least in our preliminary discussions, this seems to make sense now as well. This would be a virtual workgroup.

Most participants feel strongly about the future of the WSC, and want a part in developing a path forward. We expect that the workgroup will be focused on forwarding ideas for discussion at CP webinars so that we can move forward together. It will take all of us together to create effective change.

Will a three-year cycle cause problems for regions and zones that are trying to fill delegate and alternate positions?

Any changes in the years the WSC is scheduled will affect regions and zones.

We all—regions, zones, and NAWs— have had to make changes over the past few years to accommodate a virtual WSC meeting in 2020 and 2022 and an in-person meeting in 2023. Similar concerns were expressed in 2002 when we moved from an annual to a biennial WSC, and we have adapted. Now, a two-year cycle is all many members have ever known. Change can be difficult, but it is possible.

A three-year cycle would mean a six-year commitment for a member who serves first as AD and then RD or ZD. Many regions currently have delegates and alternates serve two terms in a row, for a total of eight years, which would become twelve years with a three-year cycle. On the other hand, a longer cycle with an interim WSC and more emphasis on mentorship might lead some of those bodies to opt for a single term, reducing the commitment to six years. We don't mean to make light of the challenges such changes can present. It can be difficult to find willing trusted servants now with a two-year term. Lengthening the cycle may exacerbate that difficulty. World Services is notified of changes to delegates and alternates almost every week throughout the two-year cycle, currently.

If the work of the WSC becomes more visible to members and groups and is seen as more relevant, more willing members may come forward.

We believe that whatever decisions are ultimately made, together we will find our way through and thrive as a result.

Doesn't opt-in funding just move the money around?

When the Fellowship adopted policy that all delegates would be funded by World Services, there was a belief that contributions to World Services would increase in response. Regions that needed the funding would have it, and regions that would have otherwise funded their own delegate would forward that money to World Services. The thinking was that automatic funding of delegates just moved the money around. That has not proven to be entirely true. Currently, some participants fund their own delegates, some increase their contributions, and some spend the funds that might have gone to delegate travel on local initiatives.

We believe that making funding available upon request, no questions asked, will ensure that anyone who needs funding has it, while encouraging regions and zones that are able to fund their delegates to do so.

Won't a three-year cycle separate the WSC even more from groups and members?

We see exactly the opposite as more likely. If we can make strategic planning more of a collaborative effort, the work of the conference, which happens throughout the cycle, not just during the in-person meeting, could feel more relevant to members and groups. The conference is so much more than a collection of motions in the *CAR*, and a three-year cycle would allow more time to bring that magic to the Fellowship at large and to better assess the needs of NA as a whole.

What's next?

The conference participant web meeting on 18 June is focused on these ideas. Any decisions about cycle length or funding will be made at WSC 2023. We look forward to our discussions with other conference participants, which will help ensure that any project plans or motions offered for decision are well thought through. As always, we welcome your thoughts at any time: wb@na.org.