Service System Proposals Field Testing

We're sending this invitation to a very short list of communities that we hope will become part of our core group of field testers. We want to start by saying thank you for your interest in helping us field test. The more information we can gather from NA communities about how the service system ideas work in actual practice, the easier it will be for us to draft a transition plan and service tools.

We know many communities are already trying out GSUs or aspects of LSUs and we plan to field test the proposals as broadly as possible, sending support materials to any communities interested in taking part. But when we say "core group" of field testers, what we mean is that within that broad group we have strategically selected a very small number that represent a diverse cross-section of communities. We are asking that core group of field testers to form GSUs or LSUs that conform as closely as possible to the descriptions in the Service System Proposals (see the "Checklist of standards" under the GSU and LSU agreements that follow). Because of the limitations of budget, time, and logistics, that core group of testers is limited to North America, and the number of communities is relatively small.

We are writing to see if your community is willing or able to sign on to one of these community agreements. We know not all communities will want to take on the role of a core group tester, and though we hope you will agree to be part of the core group, we understand if your community decides not to. You can still be part of the general field test. We are interested in hearing about any community's local implementation of the ideas in the proposals whether or not they are among the core group.

Many of the details of field testing will no doubt be worked out as the test progresses—specific tools and communication methods, for instance—but in the community agreements that follow this cover, we have spelled out some of the basics we know. The community agreements should help you understand what you need to be a core group field tester and what you can expect during the process.

Whatever aspect of field testing you want to take on, we hope to work together with you to help in whatever way we can to gather information and make the experiment as smooth as possible. Communication is the key, and if you are part of the core group helping us field test, we'll need to talk together regularly either through calls or emails. We also plan to put together some tools to help with your efforts—things like sample agendas and facilitator tips.

We plan to send these same tools to any community interested in field testing as well, regardless of whether they are part of the core group of testers, and we are interested in hearing from any community that is implementing parts of the proposals. The more information we can gather about practical application of the ideas in the proposals, the better a transition plan we will be able to draft.

Why this is a "field" test not a "beta" test

There may be some bumps in the road, and it's important for us all to keep in mind that "failure" is not always a failure. That is, we can learn as much from mistakes as successes. We're not calling this a formal "beta test" because we know even in the core group there are limitations to what we can find out when we are testing pieces of a larger system out of context. In a way, taking an element of the proposed service system—GSUs or LSUs or even both—and implementing it in isolation is an artificial experiment. Unfortunately, given our

limitations, it's not possible to do more, but we expect we will learn much from this field test even if it isn't as "scientific" as one might hope.

Anonymity of field testers

We have decided not to publish the list of communities who are field testing parts of the proposals or who have agreed to be core group testers because we want to give them the ability to make community decisions with as little interference as possible. We don't want to disrupt their process by opening them to the possibility of public scrutiny, criticism, and a potentially overwhelming amount of ideas from all over about how they should be operating their service bodies or group forums. This does not limit your ability to share this information if you choose to – NAWS will just not be publishing this information.