

Future of the WSC

February 2017 Update

The document that follows is intended to spark conversation. We do not see it as a final draft or a set of recommendations we are ready to roll out for Conference approval. These are ideas we have had about how to discuss issues between WSC meetings, improve decision-making processes during the WSC, and better connect our strategic planning process with the business of the Conference. We expect that talking together with other Conference participants will revise and improve these ideas.

After an introduction, the suggestions that follow include:

- ✓ New processes for sharing ideas between Conferences
- ✓ Ideas for improving Old Business
- ✓ Ideas for improving New Business
- ✓ Suggestions for changing voting thresholds



OBJECTIVE 4 — Future of the WSC: Continue work to make the WSC a more effective resource to help achieve the Vision for NA Service

Strategies:

- A. *Based on the results of the WSC discussions, continue to further the discussion about WSC sustainability and effectiveness, and frame viable options for WSC seating.***
- B. *Improve the effectiveness of the WSC meeting by continuing to refine decision making processes, discussion protocols, consensus building strategies, and use of time during the week.***
- C. *Improve the effectiveness of the time between meetings by working on processes to forward issues and have discussions on ideas between WSC meetings.***

Objective Four of the 2016–2018 NAWS Strategic Plan is focused on improving the sustainability and effectiveness of the World Service Conference. By sustainable, we mean that the Conference can continue over time and that it uses an appropriate share of resources. By effective, we mean we use our limited time together talking about and focusing on what we, as a Conference really want to discuss and address.

We believe that we need to continue to improve both the processes at the Conference itself and the use of time between Conferences and that doing this will improve our time spent together at each WSC.

We are releasing our thoughts to date about strategies B and C related to how we spend our time and how we make decisions. Our thoughts about viable options for seating will follow in a separate report. We certainly left the last WSC with ideas and we know many of you did as well, and we have continued to talk about and think about how we can improve as a Conference. The Board has focused our discussions on what we have already heard from participants at the past several Conferences.

At the last two Conferences, participants have stated clearly why we come together at the WSC. The following list is a text version of the “Why We Gather Mind Map” that you can find online at www.na.org/future:

❖ **Oversight**

- Resources and sustainability focused on budgets, WCNA, and inventory
- Literature development, translation, and distribution
- Historical archives and artifacts

❖ **Legal Responsibilities**

- FIPT, copyrights, and trademarks

❖ **Vision and Purpose**

- Clarity of our message
- Common understanding of NA principles and PR approaches
- Addressing emerging concerns and conflict resolution
- Global selflessness/humility
- Global strategic planning
- Shared responsibility

❖ **Global Coordination/Sharing of Best Practices**

- Services to support local websites, communication, and public relations and global governmental and public relations
- Fellowship development assistance and collaboration that is proactive and forward thinking
- Mentoring and training that brings recovery into service, encourages service sponsorship, and makes the best use of existing skills and talents
- Face to face communication and nurturing awareness
- Collaboration and cooperation with zones that identifies diverse needs, coordinates planning cycles, and has follow up

❖ **Community Building**

- Meeting after the meeting inspirational effect
- Networking
- Central hub
- Developing trust and connection for developing fellowship wide conscience, global perspective to bring home, and bridging cultural divisions

We see this list as a reality, a challenge, and a goal. We already do accomplish much of what is included here, but it also seems like we spend a great deal of time at and between Conferences not focused on the items on this list. We know we can improve. Making changes in how we collectively use our time between Conferences and at the WSC will allow us to accomplish more of these items and improve the Conference’s value to the Fellowship.

We are trying to take what may be an uncharacteristically broad view of changes to the Conference. Over the years, we have made changes by adding on or changing reports and processes without looking at the system as a whole. As a result, the ways we communicate and make decisions as a Conference—and a Fellowship—are not always integrated and do not always make as much sense as they might if considered in concert with one another. It can feel like a structure that has been remodeled too many times without enough thought about how the parts work together.

Our strategic planning process, for example, could stand to benefit from a more systemic approach. The World Board spends most of its time focused, in some way or another, on planning, looking at where

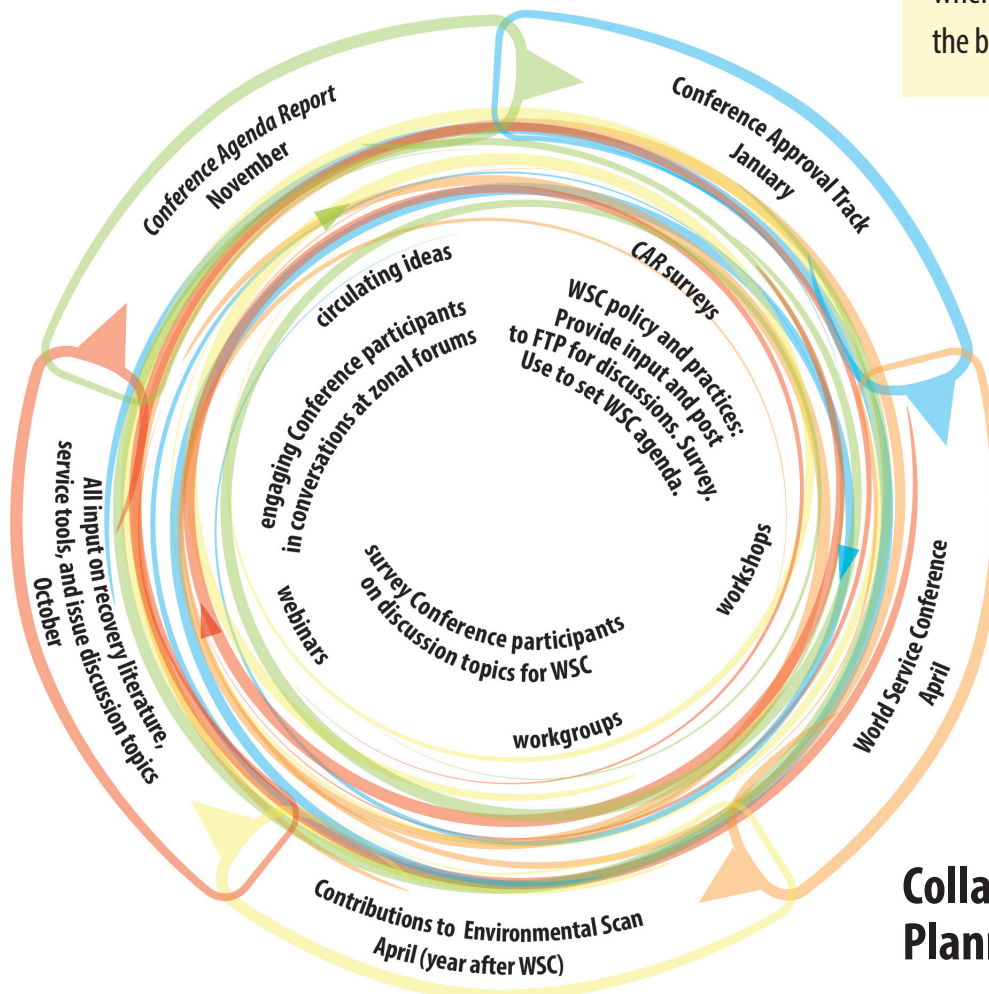
we are and thinking strategically about how to get closer to our Vision. Our time is spent formulating objectives and strategies, prioritizing the work, implementing strategies, and evaluating progress. Despite the fact that the strategic plan is so central to the work we do, however, it's not well incorporated into the processes of the Conference. Most of our Conference communications and processes were developed before we even had a strategic planning process, therefore the work of the WSC and World Services' strategic planning process are not as integrated as they could be.

We see our attempt to better involve participants and regions in the strategic planning process this cycle as a first step in this improvement. The proposals that follow about circulating ideas throughout the cycle, polling about what to talk about at the WSC, and spending more time in discussion and less in formal business are all intended to better integrate planning and WSC processes.

This report is only meant to be a beginning. We expect to revise and improve these ideas before the next WSC by engaging participants in conversations at zonal forums, workshops, and webinars, as well as further Board discussions. Our recent experience shows that if we can agree to a direction, the WSC can try out new ideas to experience them before considering adopting anything as policy. We are envisioning a similar process for these ideas. We plan to offer some processes on a trial basis if there seems to be support among participants for the ideas. Together we can.

GWSNA

"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity." Nowhere in our service structure is this tradition more evident than at the meeting of the World Service Conference. Guided by our Twelve Traditions and Concepts, it is the one point in our structure where the voice of NA as a whole is brought to view and expressed on issues and concerns affecting our worldwide Fellowship. The World Service Conference is not just a collection of regions; its concerns are greater than just the sum of its parts. The conference is a vehicle for Fellowship communication and unity: a forum where our common welfare is itself the business of the meeting.



Collaborative Strategic Planning Process

Ideas for improving our processes between Conferences

Conference cycle fellowship and participant discussions

- C. *Improve the effectiveness of the time between meetings by working on processes to forward issues and have discussions on ideas between WSC meetings.***

We have several suggestions to improve consideration and discussion of ideas between Conferences:

1. Formalize a method for Conference participants to give input to the NAWS Strategic Plan.
2. Encourage participants to forward ideas for posting on the FTP site throughout the cycle.
3. Continue to use a CAR survey for ideas for recovery literature, service tools, and Issue Discussion Topics.
4. Survey Conference participants about which ideas they wish to discuss further at the WSC and/or by webinar.

One of the ways we can definitely get better is to improve our communication as a Conference between WSCs, to better engage in our WSC community with ideas that are important to us as participants and/or to our regions. Many of us leave a Conference with great ideas that fade over time. We are trying to find ways to help participants to share those ideas with each other throughout the cycle.

Participants have already been asked to take part in the NAWS strategic planning process by contributing to the environmental scan by April 2017. The scan is used as the foundation for the NAWS Strategic Plan and project plans published in each Conference Approval Track. This cycle's call for participation is a first step in increasing involvement, and the planning process will be evaluated for other possible opportunities after we have more experience. We commit to keeping you informed as to what input we receive for the environmental scan and the planning process in general.

We are also asking participants to forward ideas and supporting rationales or explanations for circulation and consideration by other participants throughout the Conference cycle. If you send these ideas to the World Board, we will post them to the FTP site and notify Conference participants. This new process is not intended to prevent participants from posting ideas to the Conference participant bulletin board, but not all participants use the bulletin board, and we are trying to find a way to ensure that ideas get circulated among all participants. These ideas could then be included in a Fellowship survey in the *Conference Agenda Report (CAR)* or prioritized by Conference participants for further discussion.

The survey we included in the 2016 CAR and posted online seemed to have value to the Fellowship, the Conference, and the Board. The Conference used the results of this survey to shape the focus of work this cycle on service tools, recovery literature, and Issue Discussion Topics. We would like to continue including this type of survey in the CAR and online. CAR survey topics will include ideas most relevant to the Fellowship including ideas for new or revisions to recovery literature, service tools, and possible Issue Discussion Topics. All ideas on these topics received by the October prior to the WSC will be summarized and included in CAR survey.

Ideas received during the cycle that are related to the WSC and its policies and practices will be separated out in the FTP site and used to create a list for Conference participants to indicate which ideas they wish to discuss further at the WSC and/or by webinar. All results will be reported back to participants and used to help frame the agenda for the WSC. The time available at the WSC and participant responses will determine how many topics are discussed at the WSC.

Outcomes of these discussions will depend on the topic and direction received from the discussions at the WSC. Possibilities include addressing the idea in the Moving Forward session, forward the idea for Fellowship-wide discussion, or further developing the idea following the WSC.

Discussion and Decision Making at the WSC

- B. *Improve the effectiveness of the WSC meeting by continuing to refine decision making processes, discussion protocols, consensus building strategies, and use of time during the week.***

The World Service Conference is the place in our cycle where we all come together to approve the work that has been done and set priorities and discuss the work for the cycle ahead. The more effective our discussion and decision-making processes are, the more effective our planning overall is.

We have captured the number of items that were considered in all business sessions for the last five Conferences, their disposition, what majority they were carried by (when it was available), and the amount of time we spent. The summary is attached to this report as an addendum. The complete data is posted on the Conference participant FTP site.

At WSC 2016, ideas were offered to improve the business sessions of Conference week. Four proposals specifically asked for formal business sessions to be eliminated, and there was consensus to commit those proposals to the World Board. To get a sense of the direction the Conference wished to go, a straw poll was conducted before the proposals were committed, and participants were in consensus support to eliminate formal business.

New approach for Old Business

We have three main suggestions for Old Business:

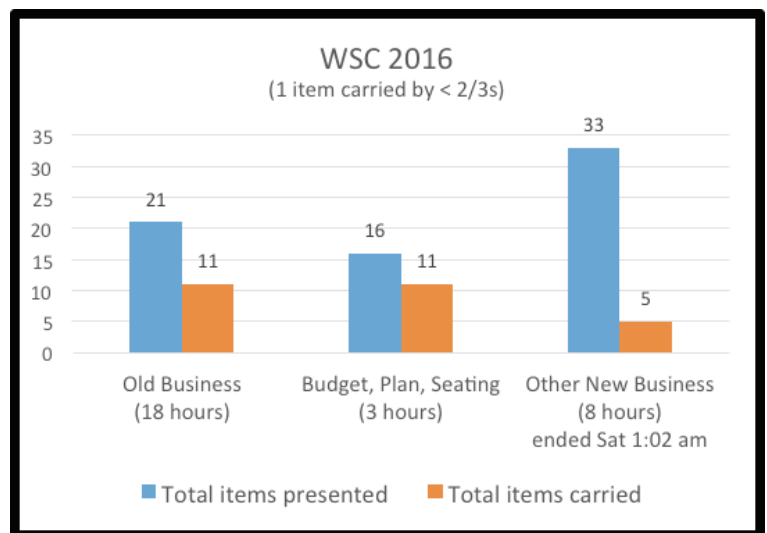
1. Rename this session **CAR Discussion and Decisions**
2. Eliminate formal Old Business
3. Consider limiting changes to motions that have consensus

We agree with the proposals committed to the Board and suggest the Conference take the decisions on CAR motions in the session now called “Old Business Discussion and Proposal Decisions,” which would be renamed “CAR Discussion and Decisions.” What is now the final straw poll on all CAR motions would become a *vote* and thus the final decision on the motion. The Cofacilitators will make it clear to all participants when they are making a final decision.

Currently, we have a discussion session and then go into a Formal Old Business session, which utilizes the WSC Rules of Order. This change would eliminate the formal business session and its restrictions.

Our third suggestion has to do with CAR motions that receive consensus in the initial straw poll (80%). When there is this level of support to adopt or not adopt a motion, we suggest asking the body if they want to consider any proposals for change. If there is consensus to make a decision on the motion as written without considering any proposals, none would be considered and the body would move to a final vote on the motion after hearing from two participants in the minority as the WSC policies currently require. If the Conference chooses to consider a proposal to change, it would follow the same process as any other motion or proposal for discussion and decision.

We spent hours of time during Old Business at WSC 2016 on procedural motions that did not change the outcome of decisions. There is never enough time at the WSC to discuss everything we would like to, and the change in process suggested above does not eliminate



any opportunity to offer a change to a *CAR* motion but better facilitates participants’ ability to decide what they would like to take the time to discuss.

New approach for New Business

We are suggesting a number of changes to New Business:

1. Make a distinction between the decisions related to the material in the Conference Approval Track and the new business proposals submitted at the WSC.
2. Address CAT-related decisions in the same way described above for *CAR*-related decisions.
3. Rename this session “CAT Material Discussion and Decisions.”
4. Prioritize the list of new business proposals submitted at the WSC.
5. Address only the number of proposals that can be addressed in the time allotted.
6. Possibly discuss those proposals in small groups rather than bleachers.
7. Rename these sessions the “New Proposals” sessions.
8. Conclude these sessions by 6:00 pm Friday, with the ability to also have discussions Saturday morning if needed.

CAT-related decisions

We are suggesting the Conference use the approaches described above for *CAR*-related Discussions and Decisions to deal with the following Conference Approval Track-related decisions:

- Approval of budget
- Approval of project plans
- Decision on any requests for seating (including proposals that are submitted at the WSC)
- World Board proposals included in the CAT (would require the WB to offer proposals in the CAT)
- Any proposals to change any of the above items

We are suggesting we treat CAT-related business as one distinct session named “CAT Material Discussion and Decisions.” The approach for dealing with these items would be the same as that suggested above for *CAR* decisions. This is material for which participants have had 90 days prior notice. We are not suggesting changing the scope of the material included in the Conference Approval Track itself. The fourth item above “World Board proposals included in the CAT” would be the same types of material we traditionally include in the CAT, such as proposals to approve service material or revise *A Guide to World Services in NA*, or proposals such as the one in the 2016 CAT to update the WSC Mission Statement.

The addendum shows that the average time we have spent at the last five Conferences for this type of business is 3.3 hours. With the elimination of the formal business session, we think it is realistic that we can schedule this for the first two sessions on Friday, which is approximately three hours.

New business proposals submitted at the WSC

As we looked at recent WSCs, it became clear that the decision-making about proposals submitted at the Conference has been the least efficient of all. Typically there are about 30 proposals submitted for New Business, with some percentage of that being presented on the floor for decision, and just a few of those having enough support to be adopted. Here are some data from the last three WSCs for this type of new business:

WSC 2016	33 items presented and five adopted.
WSC 2014	23 items presented and three adopted
WSC 2012	21 items presented and three adopted.

On average less than 15% of the ideas submitted at the WSC and considered in New Business have been adopted for the last three Conferences. We spend an inordinate amount of time, between 7 and 8 hours, discussing issues that are not adopted.

Typically trying to address all of the proposals that are submitted for New Business means the session runs so late that it impacts our effectiveness as a Conference and as individual participants. It is usually the case that we must cancel a session or more than one session to accommodate these discussions. We are offering a process that would help the Conference decide what ideas it actually wants to discuss.

We are proposing that the deadline for submitting “new proposals” be Wednesday noon of the Conference week. These proposals are not those related to seating specific regions, the budget, or projects; they are proposals that have been submitted at the Conference. A list of all proposals submitted would be distributed to participants no later than Thursday. This is all very similar to what happens now.

What is new in our recommendation is that after the “new proposals” are distributed, participants would be asked which proposals they would like to consider by indicating yes or no for each proposal. There are a number of ways this could be accomplished—by paper or an online survey. Those proposals that receive the highest ranking would be addressed on Friday in the time allotted. This will require flexibility and goodwill to accomplish.

We are proposing that we report participants’ responses, make a recommendation for what we believe is possible to discuss, and seek concurrence from the body before we proceed.

An initial poll of new proposals submitted at the Conference will allow participants to focus their discussions on those that they deem most relevant and necessary to consider in the limited time we have together. When considering this approach, remember that we are suggesting that participants make use of the other avenues to forward ideas prior to the start of the WSC, reserving new business proposals for those things that come up and need to be addressed at the WSC.

The prioritized new proposals will be considered on Friday for a maximum of two 90 minute sessions after lunch and will end no later than 6 pm Friday. These sessions will be renamed the New Proposals sessions. If there are more ideas than can be addressed in this time, we can schedule discussions for Saturday morning.

The Friday discussion on new proposals could occur in two different ways. The process that seems to us most in harmony with consensus-based decision making would be to have small-group discussions in breakout rooms. This approach seems like the best opportunity to hear from all voices and create a common understanding. It would require some sort of set-up and agreement while we are all together in one room and the feedback of the results to participants for further action on Saturday. Alternatively, we could hold these sessions in the risers or all in one room as we currently do. The challenge with this approach is that while it lends itself to clear decisions, it does not offer much opportunity to evolve ideas or to involve most participants in discussion.

The outcome of these discussions could change practice or policy in the Moving Forward session or provide the beginning frame for discussions for the upcoming cycle. It seems consistent with a planning-oriented Conference to prioritize what we spend our time discussing, and carry forward good ideas to be developed throughout the cycle.

This is perhaps the largest change we are suggesting. Currently, new business proposals lend themselves to a yes/no decision. While we think this suggested new approach could still accommodate this type of proposal, we are hoping that we evolve this session to include ideas that can grow and change with Conference input and discussion. This would mean that submitted ideas could include more written explanation and a rationale for distribution to participants. Currently new business proposals do not include a rationale. The only limits we see to what is included in a new business idea is our ability to translate into Spanish onsite which only means we have to consider the length or number of words for what is submitted. Although the CAR and other WSC materials are translated into a number of languages, written material distributed during the WSC is provided in English and Spanish.

If we can end the discussions of new proposals at a reasonable time on Friday, we think we can treat the closing Saturday of the WSC much differently than we do currently. We would have time to have two small-group sessions on Saturday morning to frame direction for ideas that have been generated throughout the week and to provide a better frame for the Moving Forward session on Saturday afternoon. This would still allow us to adjourn the WSC on Saturday afternoon.

Voting percentages

Our last suggestion relates to all decisions made throughout the week except for elections. We are suggesting a uniform threshold for all WSC decisions.

As we continue to move toward a more consensus-based body, we believe that it is time for our decisions to better reflect that ideal. Currently, some proposals or motions are able to carry with what is called a simple majority (50% +1). This means that a motion or proposal could pass when the body is very nearly split on the idea. We often spend time debating what majority is required for decisions and the outcomes of the past five conferences show that only a very small number of items pass by a slender margin.

We are suggesting that all decisions at WSC require a two-thirds majority to be adopted. The measurement of consensus passed at WSC 2016 was 80%. While we are not opposed to adopting that as a uniform threshold for decision making, we believe two-thirds may be the easiest for us to try now. Currently, policy decisions require a two-thirds majority. If a standard threshold of two-thirds works for us, the WSC can certainly consider some other threshold to measure consensus in the future.

The one exception to this approach would be elections. This project does not include nor were we asked to address elections. Elections would continue to require 60% majority for seating on the World Board and simple majority for the HRP and Cofacilitator positions.