

P61 Area Meetings Thought Force Report
Final Report
July 15, 2021

Background Info: We are in a new era of scheduling Area business meetings since we will be using some form of technology in the near future. And even after we return to face-to-face meetings, we can use some of what we have learned during 2020.

Thought Forces are excellent group conscience tools that gather Al-Anon members together to discuss a topic and bring their experience, strength and hope to the KBDM questions. This work will not create a new schedule, but rather offer various options and ways of looking at the schedule of Area Events other than the current structure: 2 In Person AWSC Meetings; 2 In Person Assembly Meetings; 1 In Person Convention; 1 In Person Service Workshop; 1 In Person Alateen Roundup; 1 In Person Alateen Conference. Discuss possible options considering the five questions below.

Charge: Using the KBDM Questions as a starting point, discuss several different ways the Area might schedule its business meetings using various types of technology. Consider the probability of combining technology with some face-to-face meetings, and how we might structure a year of meetings, workshops, events, and other things that would allow us to create a schedule that may be more flexible, more open to participation, more convenient, and in line with our spiritual principles.

Five KBDM Questions:

1. What do we know about our membership's needs, wants and preferences regarding meetings, events and the various concerns about travel and face to face gatherings? What do we know about our membership's experience during 2020 with virtual participation?
 - From the survey we know that some struggled with technology while others welcomed the change, and it became easier for some to attend via zoom due to the cost of travel and sending a GR to Area Assembly.
 - Information is still evolving.
 - We know that there is little consensus among our membership regarding "needs, wants and preferences regarding meetings, etc."
 - We know that during 2020 participation in virtual meetings has been strong, but we "lost" a few members along the way.
 - Going virtual, we gained some also.

2. What do we know about our resources relative to the scheduling of Area meetings and Area events? Our Area has purchased a Zoom account. How can we use that to its full capacity? What other things can we consider? Can we break up the content into different types of meetings?
 - We know we have the resources to facilitate the meetings for Area both virtually and in person. We can use them both to its full capacity by having hybrid area meetings where we offer face to face meetings with the option to attend via zoom.

- We know that resources are available to us relative to scheduling, etc. We know we have members willing to assist with technology, knowledgeable or willing to become knowledgeable.
 - We can increase / maximize our Zoom account by making it available to coordinators to host zoom meetings, for example.
 - Although not explicitly explored by this thought force team, breaking content up into different types of meetings is possible.
 - Reports are provided to all prior to assembly and AWSC to make others prepare ahead of time.
 - Breaking up the content may not provide the largest possible audience of area members to all aspects of the area meeting.
3. What do we know about the current realities within our Fellowship and in the world at large that affect Area meetings and Area Events? What do we know about our fellowship demography, experience, and openness to addressing the flexibility of scheduling Area business?
- We know that meetings are starting to go back in person, and some are ready for that.
 - We also know others are not ready.
 - We can address our flexibility by facilitating hybrid meetings.
 - Knowing more about “current realities” - other than to say there is much uncertainty on many fronts, is difficult.
 - We got a sneak peek at our fellowship’s demographics with the survey, but there is more that can be explored.
 - Knowledge of demographics, openness and flexibility is a "moving target". Things change rapidly.
4. What are the ethical implications of our choices – what are the pros and cons? Will our decision be consistent with our spiritual principles?
- Ethical implications will only come into play if the individuals making decisions have something to gain from the outcome, which seems highly unlikely.
 - Educating the membership can allay the divisiveness that comes from not fully understanding decisions our Area Officers make.
 - We are using our spiritual principles by showing consideration and compassion to those with the different challenges.
 - It is important to communicate to the membership the rationale for the decisions that are made.
5. What would we like to know? What would we like for the Officers to address or open to a wider Group Conscience discussion?
- The likely increase in cost for in-person Area meetings when we do not contract with the hotel for the full year (4 meetings). The cost of hotel rooms (borne by the membership) is usually dependent on utilization of the hotel’s amenities --- meeting rooms, audio-visual equipment, meals, coffee, etc.
 - Other financial repercussions.

- How will this affect the technology coordinator position? What do we need to do to make hybrid meetings happen?
- By offering the survey to the membership we addressed some of what we would like to know.

The Thought Force participants recommend a Task Force be created and charged with the following: Determine if making all future area meetings Hybrid (face to face with zoom option) is a viable option for Area 9 business meetings in Panel 64 and beyond.

Respectfully submitted by,
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