



NAWay Atlantic

Summer 2011

Planning to Make Our NA Area Work Better

Planning helps us better carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Planning helps any service committee come together to determine where services are most needed and decide how best to move toward agreed-upon goals.

The aim of an area service committee (ASC) is to coordinate services on behalf of the groups served by that area. In essence, an area is the way in which all groups join together in an effort to further NA's

Who is Involved?

All trusted servants of an area service committee participate in planning; however, certain members need to be entrusted with the responsibility of setting the planning process into action. Some areas may choose to create an ad hoc committee.

Once an area service committee decides to proceed with planning for its services, adequate time should be allocated. Trusted servants of the area, including the GSRs, should be given time to inform groups and members of the area about the planning process and scheduled meeting date(s). Providing an opportunity for everyone who desires to be involved in the process is an important aspect of planning.

A Time to Ask Questions

A key to this step is for the area to begin thinking about itself from a new perspective. For example, members may not regularly consider what the groups want from the area, and what might be lacking in those relationships. If groups don't participate at the area meeting, for instance, the area can use this step to think about ways to give those groups attention and support. In addition, this step can help the area to think about its relationships in the community, and whether or not NA is seen as a reliable and credible program of recovery. All of these relationships—both with each other in the area and with those outside of NA—help in the work of carrying NA's message to suffering addicts.

Four topics can insure that the Area looks at itself, as well as outside of itself:

1. How well has the Area done this year in serving the groups, and how can it better serve them in the coming year?

primary purpose—to make our message of recovery available and accessible to everyone in their community.

When there is no planning, it's easy for areas to function in a vacuum. Often a service body will move forward in a status quo fashion—"this is the way we have always done it" may be the theme song. And with this theme song, areas may find that their committees do not work together with each other or with the group service representatives (GSRs).

The Seven Planning Steps

Key Topics

1. Gathering Information
2. Listing the Issues
3. Developing Goals (what not how)
4. Setting Priorities
5. Creating Actions to Reach Goals
6. Reviewing the Logic (A Second Look)
7. Developing an Action Plan

2. How well has the Area committee served the larger community, and how can it improve?
3. How well has the Area functioned in the past year?
4. Do Area subcommittees and trusted servants understand the work assigned to them?

Information for this newsletter has been drawn from *Area Planning Tool*, published by NA World Service in October 2006.

Concept 5: For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.

Every service committee or organization develops patterns of behavior over time. This is an opportunity for a frank discussion about what behaviors at the area meeting and with its subcommittees are working and what can be improved. Do new GSRs know what is expected of them? Is the area meeting welcoming and effective? Does the area understand and take responsibility for its subcommittees and the work they have been asked to do on the area's behalf?

Reviewing the area's relationships with regional and world services is also important to this step.

Make Our Area Better

A GSR Orientation booklet (10 pages) was published in January 2011 to help GSRs understand their role and how and why Area works. On top of this, we completed a review of minutes from 2006 to ensure that our guidelines reflect all recent Area decisions. Steps have also been taken to improve the conduct of our Area meeting including:

- giving groups a common format to submit their report;
- asking for group and committee reports by email to relieve some of the load on the secretary; and,
- asking for GSR's to present only information essential to Area concerns in their verbal reports.

These changes will only help as long as GSRs and committee chairs understand what is being requested and how to do it. One problem we struggle with is turnover in membership, including GSRs. Perhaps we should assume there is a new, inexperienced GSR at every meeting?

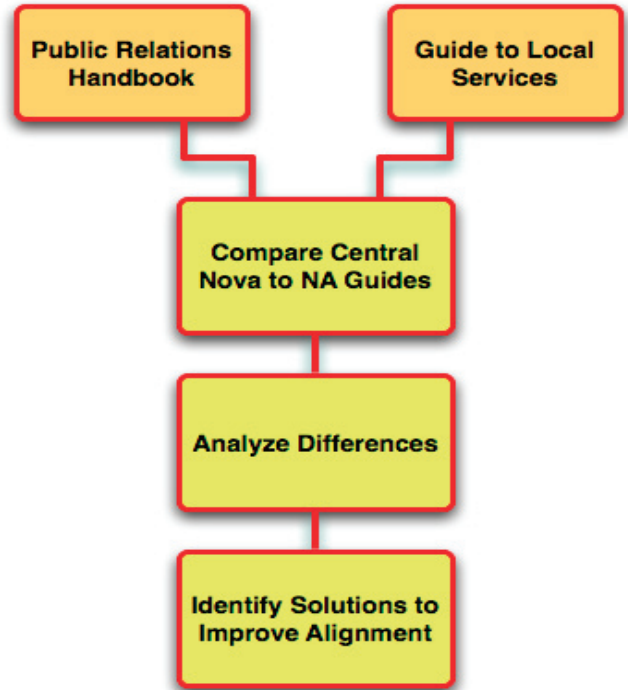
Questions for our Membership

1. Do you feel the steps taken over the last 6 months to make the Area meeting function better are an improvement? yes no
2. If you are a GSR, have you seen the GSR Orientation booklet? yes no
3. Do you feel your home group members understand how our Area structure works and the responsibilities of your GSR? yes no
4. Would having some organization focused on groups within different areas, for example, Cape Breton, northern NS, Halifax, and Dartmouth, be helpful? yes no
5. Do you think having a meeting focused on group concerns instead of Area concerns every other month would be an improvement? yes no
6. Do we need to support our individual groups better through Area or are we doing generally a good job? yes no
7. Should we do an annual review of the performance of our Area prior to elections? yes no
8. Should this review be done by each group using a fairly simple survey? yes no

General Comments: _____

Monitoring Progress

The question remains of how we evaluate our progress. How do we know if the changes we've made are improvements? What criteria do we use to evaluate our performance, when do we look at it, and who does it? Below is an evaluation framework that can be used on a regular basis using our established NA guides as our evaluation tool.



The NA Message: An addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose their desire to use, and find a new way to live.