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MEMORANDUM

January 22, 2024

To: Conference Members
From: Eileen Allers, Regional Forums Coordinator
Re: Special and Local Regional Forums

Hello,

Many of you have expressed your Region's interest in having a virtual or hybrid component included in the regional forum program. As you may know, at the July board meeting, the International Convention and Regional Forum (ICRF) trustees' committee created a subcommittee that as part of its scope is investigating this very topic. In the meantime, many of you may not know that we also provide options for Local and Special Forums – both held separately from the Regional Forum. I have attached an FAQ that provides information on the purpose and the process to request each type.

Please reach out with any questions to regionalforumssa@aa.org.

In fellowship,

Eileen Allers

Eileen Allers
Regional Forums Coordinator
212-870-3120

Special Forums Collected Experience

FAQ's on Special Forums

Q: What is a Special Forum?

A: Special Forums are designed for remote, sparsely populated or urban areas to serve A.A. members who would not normally be able to attend a Regional Forum as well as when there is an expressed need based on culture, language or geography.

“Extra” Forums to the regularly scheduled Regional Forums were held as early as 1979. Ten “extra” forums were held up until 1996 when the concept of Special Forums was formalized. In 2006, after 22 more Special Forums were held, the General Service Board decided to discontinue Special Forums by the year 2008. In 2017, the GSB decided to re-implement Special Forums for 2022.

Special Forum programs reflect Regional Forum programs and include Forum presentations, sharing sessions, and workshops to address topics such as:

- Structure and responsibilities of the General Service Board, AAWS and the AA Grapevine Boards
- Services provided by the General Service Office and the AA Grapevine
- The A.A. Fellowship's upside-down triangle structure
- How groups are connected to A.A. beyond the group level

Q: Who is responsible for Special Forums?

A: Special Forums are hosted, coordinated and financed by the General Service Board. Special Forums are supported by volunteer efforts of A.A. Welcome Committees formed at the local level where the Special Forums are to be held. Special Forums are not intended to replace or be a substitute for local service workshops.

Welcome Committees are responsible for any kind of hospitality suite onsite at Special Forums.

Q: What support is provided by the General Service Board/General Service Office?

A: GSO helps with the following:

- Coordinating attendance of Board representatives and staff members
- Producing and distributing the Special Forum flyer
- Special Forum literature displays
- Publishing and distributing a Special Forum Final Report

Q: Is there a registration fee for Special Forums?

A: No, Seventh Tradition contributions to the General Service Board finance Special Forums as a vital 12 Step service provided by the GSO.

Q: What is the anticipated format of a Special Forum?

A: Special Forum formats are typically a two-day event. Presentations, general sharing sessions and workshops can be arranged in various ways to suit the overall format.

Q: Is it possible that an ice cream social or other hospitality related activity may be part of the Special Forum?

A: Yes, based on a Welcome Committee's group conscience decision.

Q: Does the General Service Board get input for Special Forum programming?

A: The General Service Board/GSO receives input from the Welcome Contact and the Welcome Committee related to the theme and program content of Special Forums.

Q: Explain the request process for Special Forums.

A: Special Forums are A.A. events put on by A.A.s for A.A.s about A.A. Special Forums are to be requested by Special Forum Committees using the Special Forum Request Form. This form is to be forwarded to regionalforums@aa.org by April 1st **two years prior** to the year the Special Forum will be held.

GSO will forward a copy of the request to the Area Delegate and the Regional Trustee. The Regional Trustee informs the Delegates of the region about the request during the annual Regional Luncheon at the General Service Conference.

Special Forum Committees are welcome to work with their area, district and any local A.A. entity to initiate a Special Forum request. Members may create an autonomous committee to initiate a Special Forum request. After the Regional Luncheon the trustee forwards the Special Forum request with comments or notes, if any, to the secretary of the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums for the committee's consideration at their July meeting.

Q: What are the criteria for acceptance of requests?

A: The trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums approves up to two Special Forums annually, with no more than one Special Forum in a region every four years. All requests will be considered with the rotation of geographic locations in mind.

Q: **What is the role of the Area Delegate?**

A: GSO receives the Special Forum Request Form and forwards a copy to the Area Delegate and Regional Trustee for their discussion purposes. All Delegates in a region have an opportunity to comment on Special Forum requests at the annual Regional Luncheon held during the General Service Conference. The Regional Trustee forwards the Special Forum request, with comments and notes from Delegates to the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums for consideration at their July meeting.

Q: **Would Area Assemblies be involved in the request process for Special Forums?**

A: Not necessarily. The trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums anticipates that areas, districts, regions, ICYPAA committees, Indigenous communities or committees and any members and service entities may wish to create a Special Forum Welcome Committee to present a Special Forum request to the General Service Office.

Local Forums Collected Experience
FAQ's on Local Forums

Q: What is a Local Forum?

A: Local Forums started in 2008 after the concept was reviewed by the General Service Conference in 2007.

The intended purpose of Local Forums is to provide a Forum experience to A.A. members while meeting cultural, accessibility and population considerations for those unlikely to be able to attend Regional Forums.

Local Forum programs reflect Regional Forum programs and include Forum presentations, sharing sessions, and workshops to address topics such as:

- Structure and responsibilities of the General Service Board, A.A.W.S. and the A.A. Grapevine Boards
- Services provided by the General Service Office and the A.A. Grapevine
- The A.A. Fellowship's upside down triangle structure
- How groups are connected to A.A. beyond the group level.

Q: Who is responsible for Local Forums?

A: Local Forums are supported by the General Service Board but not coordinated by the General Service Board/General Service Office. Local Forums are coordinated by committees formed at the local level where they are to be held. Local Forums are not intended to replace or be a substitute for local Service Workshops.

Local Forum Committees are responsible for coordinating the event, including obtaining and paying for a site and mailing flyers as well as any kind of hospitality.

Q: What support is provided by the General Service Board/General Service Office?

A: The GSO Regional Forums Coordinator helps with the following:

- Coordinating attendance by two Board representatives, one of whom will be a Board trustee, preferably the Regional Trustee, and one staff member
- Providing shared experience for Local Forum Committee
- Finalizing Local Forum agendas with Local Forum Committee
- Reviewing the Local Forum flyer; review the proposed Local flyer distribution process; provide labels for Local Forum flyer mailings if necessary

- Sending literature and Forum displays
- Reviewing the Final Report prepared by the Local Forum Committee secretary for accuracy and providing answers to Ask-It-Basket or other questions related to the Board, G.S.O. and the Grapevine.

Q: If Local Forum Committees are responsible for obtaining and paying for a site and mailing flyers, will there be a registration fee for Local Forums?

A: A registration fee may be necessary based on a group conscience decision of the Local Forum Committee.

Q: What is the anticipated format of a Local Forum?

A: Local Forum formats may be for a one day, a one and a half or two-day event. Presentations, general sharing sessions and workshops can be arranged in whatever ways suit the overall format.

Q: Is it possible that a dance, ice cream social or other hospitality related activity may be part of the Local Forum?

A: Yes, based on a Local Forum committee's group conscience decision.

Q: Is the General Service Board able to dictate to Local Forum Committees how to organize their Local Forum?

A: The General Service Board is not dictating to Local Forum Committees. If the group conscience of a Local Forum Committee chooses to initiate a Local Forum, to request attendance by two General Service Board representatives and to use this event to communicate Forum information, then that committee is choosing to cooperate with the Board by implementing the suggested Local Forum format.

There is a similar process in place for Regional Forums and International Convention. The General Service Office determines the responsibilities and limits of the local committees' participation. Should a committee decide not to accept the guidelines and conditions associated with a Local Forum, we would request that they not use the name "Local Forum" for their event.

Q: Would two Board representatives be adequate to respond to all types of Forum questions at Local Forums?

A: Perhaps not. GSO's Regional Forums Coordinator has the responsibility to review the Local Forum Committee's Final Report for accuracy and to provide answers to Ask-It-Basket and other questions related to the Board, GSO and the Grapevine.

Q: Explain the request process for Local Forums.

A: Local Forums are A.A. events put on by A.A.s for A.A.s about A.A. Local Forums are to be requested by Local Forum Committees using the Local Forum Request Form. This Form is to be forwarded to GSO by April 1st of the year *prior* to the year the Local Forum will be held. GSO will forward a copy of the request to the Area Delegate and the Regional Trustee. The Regional Trustee informs the Delegates of the region about the requests during the annual Regional Luncheon at the General Service Conference.

Local Forum Committees are welcome to work with their area, district and any local A.A. entity to initiate a Local Forum request. Members may create an autonomous committee to initiate a Local Forum request. After the Regional Luncheon the trustee forwards the Local Forum request with comments or notes, if any, to the secretary of the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums for the committee's consideration at their July meeting.

Q: What are the criteria for acceptance of requests?

A: The trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums approves up to four Local Forums annually. All requests will be considered with the rotation of geographic locations in mind.

Q: What is the role of the Area Delegate?

A: The General Service Office receives the Local Forum Request Form and forwards a copy to the Area Delegate and Regional Trustee. The subcommittee expects that the Regional Trustee will discuss the Local Forum request with the Area Delegate. All Delegates in a region have an opportunity to comment on Local Forum requests at the annual Regional Luncheon held during the General Service Conference. The Regional Trustee forwards the Local Forum request, with comments and notes from Delegates to the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums for consideration at their July meeting.

Q: Would Area Assemblies be involved in the request process for Local Forums? Are Local Committees part of General Service?

A: Not necessarily. The trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums anticipates that areas, districts, regions, ICYPAA committees, Native American A.A. communities or committees, or other service entities may wish to create a Local Forum Committee to present a Local Forum request to the General Service Office.