

The SMR Business Meeting Study Group

Report

June 16th, 2024

Cochairs: Jim R,

The minutes of our meetings, our motions, and the materials and resources we utilized may be found at <https://www.acamorning.org/study-business-meeting-practices/>

The Study Group meets to discuss the various topics related to the business practices of the Strengthening My Recovery ACA meeting group. Our GOAL is to recommend to the meeting membership, for approval, standardized practices for conducting our business. All members are welcome to participate.

We meet now on the 1st Sunday and subsequent Wednesday every month, at the top of the hour, after our daily meeting. (9:00AM Eastern)

Areas of enquiry (*Ghosted Items - Completed*)

- **Purpose** - The purpose of a business meeting; the purpose of our meeting.
- **A Group Conscience** - The definition; the means by which substantial unanimity is achieved. *NOTE: This item may be optional, as it is never addressed or referenced.*
- **Logistics** - The timing and duration of the business meetings
- **Cochairs** - Their roll; position description
 - Enlisting the efforts of others
 - Creating the agenda
 - Reporting / Emails / Announcements
- **Proposal Process** - Our process for proposing new ideas;
- **Business meeting script**
 - **Outline** - The content of the business meeting
 - **Welcome**
 - **General Guidelines**: Our rules around business meeting behavior
 - **Procedural Guidelines**: Our rules for conducting business
 - **Prayers and Readings**
- **Other Items**

Our Proposal Process

We have developed an online polling process for allowing all members to participate in the business of SMR, not just those fortunate enough to attend the business meeting. The procedure for voting is explained on our website:

<https://www.acamorning.org/proposals-smr-business-meeting-practices/>

The new Proposal Process has been successful at bringing issues before the membership for comment and conclusion. For more information, go to:

<https://www.acamorning.org/group-conscience-motions/>

A Survey was Recently Concluded

After considering the many options about the content of a productive business meeting - the timing, the readings, and reporting - we turned to our members for their thoughts and suggestions. Here are some results:

As to the overall content of the monthly Business Meeting, there was some clear agreement. As to the following components of a business meeting here are the percentages of those in favor:

- New Business - 100%
- Announcements - 100%
- Updates of ongoing Proposals - 95%
- Hear Reports - 94%
- Approved of Prior Minutes - 90%
- Adopt the Agenda - 72%

As to which readings would be a part of the business meeting proceedings, there was one reading that was very agreeable:

- The Suggested Commitment to Service was approved of by 83% of the participants

The choice of Traditions and Concepts were less clear:

- Read ALL the Traditions - 67%
- Read the Tradition of the Month - 69%
- Read ALL the Concepts - 69%
- Read the Concept of the month - 69%

As to the overall duration of the business meeting, most chose either 1 hour (38%) or 1 hour and 15 minutes (43%). If all the choices were averaged, it came to 65 minutes.

As to hearing Reports, 72% expressed that the full reports should be given each month, although 34% of those members felt there should be no question and comment period. And 28% felt reports should be given only every other month.

A large percentage (95%) felt that there should be both a time limit for giving individual reports as well as for a question and comment period. Yet, only 64% felt that the overall section of the meeting devoted to reports should have a time limit.

The most challenging result was about the timing of the opening to the business meeting - (Welcome/Call to Service/Readings/Minutes/Agenda). Most participants (50%) wanted an opening of 6 minutes. If all the responses were averaged, the choice is closer to 8 minutes. The most flexibility, time-wise, is with the Welcome statement and the Readings. This will have to be looked at more closely.

Finally, as to the question of having the Traditions as the Self-Care reading on the day of the Business meeting, most were in agreement: 77%. They were in less agreement of postponing the Newcomer Session after the meeting on days of a Business meeting: 60%.

Next Steps

We see the recent survey as a tool for getting a general sense of where the membership is on these questions about the content and structure of our business meetings. This was not a vote. We offered an opportunity to comment. Here are some responses:

Offer comments here, on the question of business meeting content.

- limits on how long anyone can talk
- I am relatively new to this group, have not attended a business meeting and won't be able to do because of a standing commitment with a Sunday ACA meeting. My input is based on other group business meetings which were too long and the few who attended were understandably frustrated. I don't have helpful input for this group at this moment and may in the future. Thank you for your service and commitment to the ACA principles.
- The group is too large for regular ACA Conscience Practices to work. Too much is left open to individual interpretation without guidance on how to apply the normal principles to such a large group. It leaves a hotbed for conflict without a meaningful resolution. The size of the group merits different rules. Recommend consulting an expert in organizational dynamics for assistance.
- Announcements should have time limitations and guidelines. Also should be posted in the chat
- If Traditions are the reading for the self-care on the day of the business meeting, then just reading the Tradition of the Month is fine. Reports should be given 2 minutes each and should be posted in advance.

Offer comments here, on the question of committee reporting.

- limiting time is essential to not having people dominate
- Good to have set time allocated for each report but not every member has a report every month so the overall time can fluctuate
- Limiting the time allowed for reporting and commenting may help people get focused on what needs to be conveyed and get concise. It might take time but can help keep meetings on track and productive.
- If reports are available to read online ahead of time, it seems people attending should already be familiar with them without needing to be read.

Comments on the Self-Care reading option.

- Always good to include the traditions in any way during a business meeting
- Tradition for each month is usually in the SMR
- This would be a simple way for members to become comfortable with the Traditions and to get primed for a Business Meeting, after the regular meeting.

Comments on postponing the Newcomer Session.

- if we don't we will lose everyone. perhaps make a special statement to include a newcomer in the business meeting
- However we can have a very short introductory session to accommodate a newcomer who just happened to find us on that day so why not just give those with a burning question the opportunity to ask and dialogue while all others take a quick bio break or refresh the coffee for 5 to 10 min max before the business meeting begins

- I think there should be a gentleness break of at least 30 minutes before starting business.
- It could be someones first meeting. Maybe the Newcomer session could be 10 minutes making sure the newcomer(s) knows there is a contact list.
- Newcomers need to be greeted on the day they join, business meeting or not.
- Offer a secondary room for the newcomers meeting
- The Transition to the Business meeting is always difficult, especially if someone is asking for advice on recovery. It could be possible to postpone the Newcomer Session to after the Business meeting - between 9:50 and 10:00.

If you have any comments about the the work of the Business Meeting Study Group, please offer them here.

- thank u for this meeting
- It seems there are issues with time management, so limiting length of time for each section as well as limiting time comments, would be helpful. Maybe a timer needs to be used when open for discussion.
- Thanks for this opportunity to think about and contribute towards making our already wonderful meeting even more streamlined and in the interest of continuous improvement
- I will do my best to attend the business meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.
Thank you.
- Shouting out a big thank you for the time and energy involved in improving this process.
Thank you, thank you, thank you.
- Suggested script and guidelines to build upon...
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1axhKYjHLe4bpZS5qjlhsYG-lc8ygeou2?usp=sharing>

We would recommend putting the script (below), along with a few questions, as a proposal on our website. We would ask for comments. And we would ask about arranging a Town Hall so that members would be able to discuss their ideas with regards to our Business Meeting procedures.

After the comments and Town Hall, we could either try out the new script to see how well it works, or we could go directly to putting the resulting script on the website for a final vote.

Submitted by Jim R

The Business Meeting Script, as a preview, in this stage of development is offered below...

The SMR Business Meeting Script

1. Welcome

“Welcome to our business meeting. My name is _____, and I will be chairing the meeting.

By attending the business meeting, we learn how to work together in a healthy manner. The purpose of the business meeting is to address the concerns of the group - past, present and upcoming. During the meeting, we will hear reports from our Treasurer and various committees. We will hear about our Proposal Process. And we may also discuss members' ideas or suggestions as our business.

We place a high value on respect, being mindful of our words and expressions. We avoid gossip. We maintain a safe space in which all members are welcome to participate. With an open mind, we stand in unity, practicing the ACA Traditions. We value transparency, ensuring the membership is kept informed of group developments and upcoming proceedings. And we value focus, so that the business at hand stays on-topic.

2. Call to order, Time -

If you are attending the business meeting, will you please indicate your presence by raising your digital hand. If you are unable to raise your digital hand, please make your presence known. This will set the number of participants here today. Participants: Number of raised hands declaring their presence at start:

Let's open with the Serenity Prayer. Will someone lead us?

The ACA Serenity Prayer (*and the optional extended version*)

God (Higher Power) grant me the serenity
to accept the people I cannot change
the courage to change the one I can
and the wisdom to know that one is me.



Grant me patience for the changes that take time,
An appreciation for all that I have,
A tolerance for those with difference struggles
And the strength to get up and try again
One day at a time.

3. General Guidelines

Creating safety and respect in our business meeting is a responsibility we share. Please be mindful. To the best of your ability, model emotional sobriety.

- Mute your audio when you are not speaking.
- Turn off your video when moving around or doing other activities while listening.
- Also, do not to distract others with written chats

To Speak:

Please raise your Digital Hand and wait to be recognized by the Chair. Priority is given to those who have not yet spoken.

And, if a point has been made, ask yourself if it needs to be repeated.

Speaking times may be limited:

During our Reports

- Two to three minutes for those giving reports and
- one minute for questions or comments and answers.

4. Call for Service (*The following attendees offered to be of service*)

- a. Meeting Chairperson -
- b. Recording Secretary -
- c. Timekeeper -
- d. Other (*optional*) -

5. Readings:

The Suggested Commitment to Service (BRB, pg 601), **read by:**

I perform service so that my program will be available for myself, and through those efforts, others may benefit. I will perform service and practice my recovery by:

1. **Affirming that the true power of our program rests in the membership of the meetings and is expressed through our Higher Power and through group conscience.**
2. **Confirming that our process is one of inclusion and not exclusion; showing special sensitivity to the viewpoint of the minority in the process of formulating the group conscience so that any decision is reflective of the spirit of the group and not merely the vote of the majority.**
3. **Placing principles before personalities.**
4. **Keeping myself fit for service by working my recovery as a member of the program.**
5. **Striving to facilitate the sharing of experience, strength, and hope at all levels: meetings, Intergroups, Regional committees, service boards, and World Services.**
6. **Accepting the different forms and levels of service and allowing those around me to each function according to their own abilities.**
7. **Remaining willing to forgive myself and others for not performing perfectly.**
8. **Being willing to surrender the position in which I serve in the interest of unity and to provide the opportunity for others to serve; to avoid problems of money, property, and prestige; and to avoid losing my own recovery through the use of service to act out my old behavior, especially in taking care of others, controlling, rescuing, being a victim, etc.**
9. **Remembering I am a trusted servant; I do not govern.**

The Tradition of the Month, read by: [NOTE: there is interest in having all read]
Tradition 7: Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

The Concept of the Month, read by: [NOTE: there is interest in having all read]
Concept VII

The Annual Business Conference recognizes that the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Adult Children of Alcoholics. It is further understood that our World Service Organization relies upon the force of tradition and the power of the ACA purse for its final effectiveness.

6. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of last month's meeting have been posted to our website. They are found at: <https://www.acamorning.org/our-meeting/minutes-agendas/>

The minutes will not be read into the record. Participants may read the minutes and be prepared to voice any concerns.

Motion to approve - ; 2nd - ;

7. Motion to Adopt the Agenda - Motion to adopt - ; 2nd - ;

Today's Agenda:

- Reports
- Current Proposals
- Old and New Business
- Announcements

8. Reports

Reports from all of our Committees, Study Groups and Trusted Servants are found on our website. Most are found at: <https://www.acamorning.org/all-reports/> Each subject will be given up to 5 minutes, with the Trusted Servant offering their report in up to 3 minutes. Here are this month's reports:

Treasurer: [Shana]

Service CoSecretary: [Laura]

Communications CoSecretary: [Andy]

Webservant: [Staci]

WSO Representative: [Vivienne]

Safety Policy Study Group: [Lisa]

Business Meeting Study Group: [Jim R]

9. Current Proposals - Update (Old Business)

Our meeting has chosen to utilize online polling to gather a group conscience on various issues. To learn more about the process go to our website:

<https://www.acamorning.org/proposals-smr-business-meeting-practices/>

Screen share, or reference, the status of the Proposals on our website:

<https://www.acamorning.org/group-conscience-motions/>

Optional statements as needed:

- Currently, your comments are requested on the following proposal(s):
- Voting is happening now on this/these proposal(s):
- Here are the voting results for the following proposal(s):
- A Town Hall discussion is being planned:

10. Old and New Business and Procedural Guidelines

Describe the Process [Still in development]

The Strengthening My Recovery meeting group seeks Consensus in our decision making process. We honor the opportunity to discuss and amend the suggestions of our members. We attempt to incorporate the concerns of the minority in any final motion. If a motion arises from our discussions here, it will be posted on our website as a Proposal, for comments and then voting.

Invite Participation

If you would like to bring an issue or idea before the group, please write to the Business Meeting Cochairs at: info@...

Procedural Guidelines

The Chair will direct today's new business, asking for, or if necessary, postponing discussion. The General Guidelines listed above continue to be honored.

Speaking times may be limited. A new issue is discussed, overall, for up to 20 minutes. During that discussion, the new issue is introduced - for up to 3 minutes. Any follow-up question, comment or answer will be allowed up to 1 minute.

The Chair, or any fellow traveler, may call for a 30 second pause before 'voting'. At any time, anyone may ask for the Guidelines to be read, or for one minute of silent meditation.

Now, on to our Business...

If any business was held over from the month before, we begin with that, otherwise, we begin by addressing issues that were emailed to the CoChairs. If there is no business before the group, issues may be taken from the floor.

11. Announcements

Are there any ACA announcements?

12. Adjournment and Closing Prayer, Time -

Motion to Adjourn:, Seconded:

Closing prayer

Next meeting: Sunday,
Minutes submitted by:

References:

The ACA Serenity Prayer (*and Long Version*)

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to accept the people I cannot change
the courage to change the one I can
and the wisdom to know that one is me.



Grant me patience for the changes that take time,
An appreciation for all that I have,
A tolerance for those with difference struggles
And the strength to get up and try again
One day at a time.

The Suggested Commitment to Service (BRB, pg 601)

I perform service so that my program will be available for myself, and through those efforts, others may benefit. I will perform service and practice my recovery by:

1. Affirming that the true power of our program rests in the membership of the meetings and is expressed through our Higher Power and through group conscience.
2. Confirming that our process is one of inclusion and not exclusion; showing special sensitivity to the viewpoint of the minority in the process of formulating the group conscience so that any decision is reflective of the spirit of the group and not merely the vote of the majority.
3. Placing principles before personalities.
4. Keeping myself fit for service by working my recovery as a member of the program.
5. Striving to facilitate the sharing of experience, strength, and hope at all levels: meetings, Intergroups, Regional committees, service boards, and World Services.
6. Accepting the different forms and levels of service and allowing those around me to each function according to their own abilities.
7. Remaining willing to forgive myself and others for not performing perfectly.
8. Being willing to surrender the position in which I serve in the interest of unity and to provide the opportunity for others to serve; to avoid problems of money, property, and prestige; and to avoid losing my own recovery through the use of service to act out my old behavior, especially in taking care of others, controlling, rescuing, being a victim, etc.
9. Remembering I am a trusted servant; I do not govern.

The ACA Traditions (BRB, Chapter 19, pg 489)

Tradition 1: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.

Tradition 2: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Tradition 3: The only requirement for membership in ACA is desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.

Tradition 4: Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve Step programs.

Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.

Tradition 6: An ACA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Tradition 7: Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Tradition 8: Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Tradition 9: ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Tradition 10: Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinions on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Tradition 11: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotions; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.

Tradition 12: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The 12 Concepts of ACA (BRB, pg 615)

Concept I

The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for ACA World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.

Concept II

Authority for the active maintenance of our world services is hereby delegated to the actual voice, the effective conscience for our whole fellowship.

Concept III

As a means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship between the ACA meetings, the ACA WSO Board of Trustees, and its staff and committees, and thus ensuring their effective leadership, it is herein suggested that we endow each of these elements of service with the traditional Right of Decision.*

*The right of decision as defined herein refers to:

- 1) the right and responsibility of each trusted servant to speak and vote his/her own conscience, in the absence of any contrary mandate, on any issue regardless of the level of service;
- 2) the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and the Commitment to Service will be followed by trusted servants in decision making;
- 3) delegates to the Annual Business Conference are trusted servants and therefore equally guided by the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, and the Commitment to Service;
- 4) standard practice that decisions made by subcommittees are subject to the authority of the service body which creates its mission and defines its parameters.

Concept IV

Throughout our structure, we maintain at all responsible levels a traditional Right of Participation.

Concept V

Throughout our structure, a Right of Petition prevails, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of grievances will be carefully considered.

Concept VI

On behalf of ACA as a whole, our Annual Business Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Annual Business Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters would be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the World Service Organization when they act among themselves as the World Service Organization of Adult Children of Alcoholics.

Concept VII

The Annual Business Conference recognizes that the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Adult Children of Alcoholics. It is further understood that our World Service Organization relies upon the force of tradition and the power of the ACA purse for its final effectiveness.

Concept VIII

The Trustees of the World Service Organization act in this primary capacity: with respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs.

Concept IX

Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are, at all levels, indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization.

Concept X

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority—the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, or by the Operating Policy and Procedures Manual and bylaws.

Concept XI

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for ACA's World Service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate trustees, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

Concept XII

In all its proceedings, Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization shall observe the spirit of the ACA Twelve Traditions, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no WSO action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the WSO may act for the service of Adult Children of Alcoholics, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the fellowship of Adult Children of Alcoholics which it serves, the WSO itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

Unity Prayer (of SMR)

Together we can do what we could never do alone.

No longer is there a sense of hopelessness.

No longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady will power.

We are all together now, reaching out for power and strength greater than ours;

and as we join together, we find love and understanding

beyond our wildest dreams.

Keep coming back.