The Program Committee and Developing the Program

The program is a core component of an NA convention or event. Thoughtful development of the program provides the very best opportunity for the NA message of recovery to be shared at workshops and meetings of the event. The primary functions of this committee's work typically include speaker selection and topic identification, and creating a comfortable and efficient flow of workshops, meetings, and activities of the event. Maintaining a strong connection with NA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts, while moving through the work will ensure a successful outcome. While there is room for creativity, keeping our guiding principles as a touchstone is paramount.

> We help others when we participate in service work and try to carry the message of recovery…
>
> Basic Text, "What Can I Do?"

The process of developing the program can include the opportunity to invite ideas from interested NA members, but typically the work of the trusted servants assigned this task is done with a high regard for the confidentiality and anonymity of those being considered for service at the workshops or meetings. Discussions can be delicate and can require that all committee members exercise fidelity and integrity in completing the work. Honoring demographic diversity and the needs and interests of the NA community is an important part of this committee's work.

As part of the planning and development, it is important to identify how the program supports other aspects of the convention, and how those other aspects support the program. In addition, the event's program goals will likely impact needs for specific room space and technical support. Communication with all other functions of the convention or event will ensure that all of these needs can be met. Maintaining communication and accountability with the hosting or oversight committee is critical to an ongoing, effective working relationship and will support the goal, to carry the NA message of recovery.

Below are some ideas, approaches, and best practices compiled from NA committees across the Fellowship. All may have value to some committees, but none should be considered a mandate. Copy, adapt, or build upon any of them as you see fit. We encourage committees to take what they need and leave the rest.

Committee/Workgroup

Suggested qualifications of members and composition of committee

- Due to the delicate nature of the work, qualification for membership on this committee requires discretion and respect for confidentiality. Information about deliberations and potential speakers must be held in confidence.

- **Chair** and **vice-chair**, in addition to any cleantime requirement:
    - ✓ Previous program committee experience
    - ✓ Effective leadership qualities and facilitation skills
    - ✓ Good time management skills, including the ability to be available as needed by the committee
    - ✓ General understanding of budgets and contracts

- **Committee members**, in addition to any cleantime requirement:
    - ✓ Previous convention/event committee experience
    - ✓ The ability to collaborate and compromise

- Some regional conventions provide the opportunity for each area in the region to send a representative to serve on the program committee.
- It is helpful to foster diversity on the program committee, including age, race, sexual identity, cleantime, and geography.

Functions of the Program Committee may include

- Gather input and ideas for speakers and topics from NA groups in the community.
- Identify all workshop topics/titles, all workshop and main meeting speakers, and all chairpersons (typically for convention committee approval).
- Prepare text for the printed program, including topic, time, and location of all meetings and workshops; coordinate with other committees involved with production of the program.
- Communicate with recording services to ensure all meeting and workshop recordings are scheduled.
- Communicate any program-related signage needs to the responsible party.
- Arrange for ASL translator and/or other meeting-related support for those with additional needs.
- Forecast meeting and workshop attendance numbers (based on past conventions) and compare to the actual capacities of the available meeting rooms to use the meeting space effectively.
- Coordinate with appropriate trusted servants and/or hotel staff to ensure effective planning for crowd flow management.
- Coordinate with appropriate trusted servants and/or hotel staff to ensure all meeting rooms are set to accommodate the type of meeting or workshop scheduled therein.
- Maintain a program check-in process at the convention to confirm that speakers and leaders are available for their assigned responsibility. Some options include:
  - ✓ Maintain a program committee check-in table.
  - ✓ Speakers and leaders check-in with program committee member in the assigned meeting room, just prior to the workshop.
  - ✓ Speakers and leaders check-in via text/email to an assigned program committee member the day of the workshop.
- Assign a program committee member to each workshop/meeting to ensure the speaker(s) arrive and the workshop/meeting begins and ends as scheduled.
  - ✓ Committee member should be present prior to the start of the workshop/meeting to ensure the meeting has everything needed (see Checklist for opening a workshop template).
  - ✓ A contingency plan should be in place should a workshop speaker cancel; for example, the assigned program committee member could select a substitution to fill a last-minute cancellation.
- Provide materials, as needed, for each convention workshop and meeting; examples include the workshop or meeting format, readings, slide show, and script.
- Monitor and record workshop and meeting attendance numbers for planning future conventions.
- Thank all workshop and main meeting speakers; this may include a memento or gift.
- Maintain a list of speakers from previous conventions as a reference resource for workshop and meeting assignments.

Speaker Selection

General recommendations for speakers

- Establish cleantime requirements for main meeting and workshop speakers.
- Look locally for potential speakers; consider attending speaker events/meetings as a committee.
- Post the event at www.na.org/events; include a call for speakers, and contact information for the program committee.
- In the spirit of rotation, limit the reuse of the same speakers over consecutive conventions.
- Generally, speakers would not be members of the convention committee.
- Seek diversity in the program with regard to things like speaking style, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, cleantime, and sponsorship relationships.
- Ensure that speakers have a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA and offer a message of hope.
- To ensure the greatest confidence in the selections, seek broad program committee agreement or consensus support (80%+) on all speaker choices.
- Communicate any expectations the committee has for speakers; examples may include:
  - ✓ We ask that you use NA language.
  - ✓ No religious references, please.
  - ✓ Refrain from using gratuitous vulgarity.
  - ✓ Please arrive 10 minutes prior to the start of the workshop.
  - ✓ Please share for 20 minutes maximum.

Recommendations for main meeting speakers

- Request current speaker recordings (MP3 or CD).
- Consider speakers from surrounding states, areas, and regions.
- Seek diversity in the compilation of main meeting speakers.
- Ask members of the ASC/RSC for input on previous speakers to gain insight on the service body's expectations.
- Once main meeting speakers have been selected:
  - ✓ Contact selected speakers. Send reminders as the convention approaches.
  - ✓ Contact those who were considered but not selected, thanking them for their willingness.
- Assign a program committee member as the point of contact for each main speaker. This is especially helpful for out-of-town speakers.
- If applicable, explain any travel reimbursement policy to invited main speakers.

Recommendations for workshop speakers

- Choose topic-appropriate speakers by considering things like age, gender, cleantime, and service experience compared to workshop topic.
- Select workshop speakers from the list of pre-registrants to ensure their attendance and to encourage pre-registration.
- Once workshop speakers have been selected, contact selected speakers. Send reminders as the convention approaches.

Workshops & Meetings

- Schedule meetings and workshops considering the expected volume of attendees, based on past attendance records.
- Consider the impact of other activities, like entertainment functions, when scheduling workshops or meetings.
- Creativity is valued and committees are encouraged to consider new ideas; it is best to share any new ideas with the convention committee to ensure consensus before moving forward.
- Online surveys can be used to collect input from members on topics of interest or meeting format ideas.
- Consider the needs of, or interest in, any common needs meetings or workshops; remember underrepresented communities or populations when identifying workshop topics and formats.
- Identify topics that are relevant to the theme of the event.
  - ✓ Using portions of NA literature.
  - ✓ Using our guiding principles.
- Topics that are timely and relate to current challenges/experiences of the NA community typically increase interest in workshops.
- Discuss any identified topic and/or theme with selected speakers.
- Consider the use of alternative formats for workshops (see templates for detailed examples):
  - ✓ Open-podium format for low attendance hours/locations.
  - ✓ Recovery small-group discussion format (flash groups) for opportunities for everyone to participate.
- Consider the length and sequence of main meetings:
  - ✓ Scheduling meetings that last more than 90 minutes will likely result in members leaving before the meeting ends.
  - ✓ Scheduling cleantime countdown, geographic roll call, and other similar activities after the main speaker will ensure that most members are present for the speaker, and minimize stress on the speaker.
- Consider opportunities to simulcast or stream the audio portion of main meetings to local institutions and/or NA members not able to attend the event.
- **Service workshops**
  - ✓ Work with other committees (e.g., H&I, PR) and trusted servants (e.g., RCM, RD) to identify opportunities for service workshops.
  - ✓ Service workshops typically attract smaller attendance; schedule service workshops so that they are most likely to be well attended.
- **Marathon meetings** *(note: some communities assign this to a separate committee)*
  - ✓ Schedule 55-minute slots for marathon meeting chairpersons. Start a new meeting at the top of the hour and end at 55 minutes past the hour, allowing for a five minute break.
  - ✓ Provide a meeting format and reading cards in the meeting room.
  - ✓ Some conventions ask ASCs or NA groups to "host" marathon meeting for one hour periods.

Templates and samples

- Checklist for opening a workshop
- Cleantime countdown slide show
- Press announcements
- Program grid 1 & 2
- Program timeline
- Speaker evaluation form 1 & 2
- Speaker release form
- Program budget

- Formats
  - ✓ Two-speaker panel workshop
  - ✓ Four-speaker panel workshop
  - ✓ Interactive flash group
  - ✓ Main meeting
  - ✓ Marathon meeting
  - ✓ Open podium workshop
  - ✓ Main meeting reading worksheet

Additional guidelines, templates, and other resources are available at **www.na.org/conventions**

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This is Board-approved service material.