

Highlights from AAWS

December 8, 2023

Meeting of the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Board of Directors

The General Service Office

Virtual Meeting

BUSINESS OF THE BOARD

AAWS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cathi C., AAWS Chairperson

Vera F., Reilly K., Deborah K., Clint M., Carolyn W., John W., Bob W., Racy J.

AAWS Internal Audit Committee

The committee discussed updates and policies to ensure a secure work environment.

Policy Updates:

Discussed changes to enhance document confidentiality and password protection for increased security.

Employee Handbook Review:

Examined key revisions, including office closures during health emergencies and sobriety requirements in the drug and alcohol policy. Decisions were made with a recognition for further clarification.

Sobriety Commitment:

Emphasized the importance of a safe workplace, highlighting the sobriety requirement for GSO staff to foster a responsible work culture.

HR Annual Report:

Presented the Human Resources Annual Report Template, with plans for updates to align with the organization's evolving needs.

The committee addressed vital topics and jointly committed to facing challenges directly. Here are the key highlights:

AAWS TCS Committee

Data Integrity Project Update: The committee tackled challenges in defining meetings, proposing solutions using NetSuite IDs. Discussions covered quantifying meetings, historical data conversion, and understanding non-listed groups.

Effective Communication Emphasis: Discussions focused on accurate meeting definitions, addressing challenges with NetSuite IDs and potential quarterly contribution statements.

Quantifying Meetings and Membership

Estimates:

Committee members proposed differentiating meetings through ID prefixes, addressing misperceptions about contributions and contacts.

Methodology Challenges and Consensus:

The committee reached a consensus to develop a transparent method for estimating active membership, involving area registrars and DCMs. New calculation method proposals are set for January discussions.

Integration for Clarity:

A proposal to merge service pieces on membership estimates and group links for enhanced clarity is under consideration.

AAWS Finance Committee

The Committee is taking active steps to address fiscal complexities for financial sustainability and to make informed decisions for the benefit of the organization.

Revenue: Contributions, gross literature sales, and gross margin slightly below the budgetary projections.

Expense Management: Overall expenses slightly below budget, with some categories exceeding budgeted amounts offset by underspending in others. Increased expenses in payroll tax, facility and equipment, and travel offset by decreased costs in professional fees, printing postage and supplies, data automation and website, and insurance.

Reserve Fund and Grapevine Subscription Liability:

Reserve Fund Assets as of October 31, 2023, total \$13.156 million. Reserve Fund Balance, after accounting for unfulfilled Grapevine subscriptions (\$573k), stands at \$12.583 million.

Reserve fund balance equivalent to 7.27 months of operating expenses, aiming for 9 to 12 months.

Short-Term Liquidity:

Short-term liquidity challenges in the third quarter of 2023, with operating cash on hand at \$592K versus accounts payable of \$2.352M, indicating a short-term deficiency.

Current Financial Status (as of November 20, 2023)

Cash on hand:

\$157K, total accounts payable: \$2.196M, highlighting a short-term deficiency of \$2.039M.

Past due balances exceeding 60 days: \$493K.

Delays in payments to AAGV from the GSB for LaViña support, with the second and third quarter 2023 payments pending.

AAWS Publishing Committee

Matrix Makeover:

Decision to update and simplify the pamphlet for improved resource accessibility, addressing cost discrepancies. Focus on streamlining information while ensuring transparency and member satisfaction.

Global Outreach:

Approved plan for an Americanized AAA Great Britain Video, "12 Concepts for World Services." Translations in English, French, and Spanish align with the committee's dedication to diverse international AA membership.

Revamped Resources:

Approval granted to produce revised and expanded DVDs of the "Markings on the Journey" video. Goal of creating 300 copies for AA members, offering valuable insights and guidance on their recovery journey.

Subscription Solutions: Committee discussions on Box 459 subscriptions, addressing cost concerns and exploring ways to enhance user experience. Proposal for a reader survey demonstrates commitment to inclusivity, considering member preferences for print or digital subscriptions, especially for those with vision impairments.

Informed Decisions:

Committee prioritized adjusting the pamphlet matrix and held a January meeting to discuss the reader survey and communication strategy. Showcased a commitment to informed decisions benefiting the AA community.

**Upcoming AAWS Board Meetings
2024**

Jan. 25, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting**

March 7, 2024, AAWS Strategic Planning Session
March 8, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting

Apr. 18, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting Conference**
Apr. 20, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting Conference**

June 20, 2024, AAWS New Directors' Orientation/SPS
June 21, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting

July 25, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting**

Sept. 6, 2024, AAWS Strategic Planning Session (v)

Oct. 31, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting**

Dec. 12, 2024, AAWS Strategic Planning Session (v)
Dec. 13, 2024, AAWS Board Meeting (v)

** = GSB Board Weekend

(v) = Virtual

SPS = Strategic Planning Session

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What's Happening at GSO

Bob W., General Manager

Archives

Comprehensive Inventory Task:

Conducting a thorough inventory to determine the size, estimate growth, and prioritize storage for the evolving hybrid collection.

Audio-Visual Preservation Strategy:

Update on organizing materials on the eighth floor, with the main phase scheduled for 2024, ensuring the safeguarding of valuable audio-visual resources.

Projects and Goals for the Next Year:

A glimpse into upcoming initiatives to address the evolving needs of archival resources.

Exploring Alternative Communication Methods:

Board discussions on managing requests efficiently and exploring alternative communication methods within the fellowship, ensuring sustainability.

Finance

Cash Position Management:

Weekly monitoring of the organization's cash position. Key stakeholders receive a weekly cash report. Weekly Zoom meetings scheduled to discuss liquidity strategies and ensure funds for essential needs.

Current operating cash balance: \$225,000, supplemented by an additional \$25,000 in the lockbox. Next liquidity assessment on December 12, 2023, to determine funds needed for the next payroll.

Accounts Receivable Focus:

Accounts receivable currently at 61% of sales as of November 30th, 2023 (down from 96% on July 31st, 2023). Receivables 60 or more days past due reduced by more than half, currently at \$150,000 (compared to \$285,000 on July 31st). Approximately 50% of overdue receivables come from intergroups and central offices. Ongoing monitoring of cash and receivables planned over the next 90 days.

Inventory Management Collaboration

Joint effort with the Publishing Department to create a quarterly report. Report details decisions on book quantities, projections, plans for the upcoming quarter, and their effects on costs and cash flow. Initiative aims to facilitate longer-range planning.

The Finance Department's proactive approach to cash management, accounts receivable, and collaborative efforts with other departments reflects a commitment to financial stability and strategic planning.

Publishing

Flash Sale Triumph:

Recent flash sales exceeded expectations, with a significant portion of revenue from customers spending over \$200 and enjoying a 15% discount. Notable 72% of these orders were prepaid, providing a crucial cash infusion.

Best Sellers:

The facsimile's first printing of the first edition and the Great Responsibility pamphlet experienced a remarkable surge in sales, highlighting their continued popularity.

Holiday Special Offers Trio:

Featured two new AAWS items—the well-received "AA for the Older Alcoholic" booklet and the redesigned pamphlet, "Young People in AA," distributed an impressive 33,000 copies since its debut.

Upcoming Projects:

In the next 90 days, anticipate the 2025 International Convention souvenir book and progress on animating the retired pamphlet "Too Young," with sample animations expected in January.

Illustrations for the 12 Steps: Ongoing efforts to create new illustrations for the 12 Steps involve collaboration with a popular Grapevine illustrator, promising fresh and engaging visuals.

Literature Catalog for 2024:

Despite challenges, notable progress in implementing new translations, ensuring a visually impressive and user-friendly catalog.

Digital distribution to intergroups and central offices is planned by year-end, with reduced printing costs and format discussions in January.

Increased Interest:

The catalog's popularity is evident with persistent requests from intergroups and central offices. Considerations for the digital format's editability and potential 2024 revisions will enhance its effectiveness.

Language Services

Team Expansion:

Eduardo has joined as an in-house Spanish translator, enhancing the team's capabilities. His addition followed a comprehensive application process, contributing to the team's diversity and language proficiency.

74th Conference Background Tracker:

Introduction of the 74th conference background tracker streamlined processes for around twenty team members.

Access extended to the Trustee Committee on the General Service Conference.

Users adapted well to Smartsheet software, optimizing workflow with its features.

A progress report for the Trustee Committee is scheduled, with twenty-nine documents recorded in January. Some items like draft pamphlets and translations require clarification, targeted for resolution before February 16-23.

Upcoming Memo to the Board:

A memo will be delivered to the board in the coming weeks, sharing suggestions, information, and requests.

Proposal for a meeting with the board in the next two months:

Short presentation.

Discussion of department policies, procedures, and operational details.

Objective: Deepen the board's understanding to inform future policies and procedures.

Seeking support and participation from the board for this initiative.

The Translations Department's focus on team enhancement, workflow optimization, and proactive engagement with the board showcases a commitment to efficiency, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Communication Services

Google Ads Management: Current accounts are running smoothly. There is an ongoing issue with a past disconnection, and clarification is awaited from Google. The department is exploring external resources to maximize the grant program.

Resource Optimization: The department is considering freelance consultants as a cost-effective alternative to agencies and making efforts to maximize available resources for efficient operations.

Future Projects (2024): The department is developing a communication strategy for the international convention with enhanced digital capabilities.

Asset Repository Project: The department is actively involved in the asset repository project, focusing on continuous learning and collaboration.

Training Initiatives:

The department is providing training opportunities in analytics, SEO, and web accessibility, with the aim of enhancing in-house skills for navigating the evolving digital landscape.

The report reflects the department's commitment to managing current operations effectively, exploring cost-efficient solutions, and preparing for future projects to enhance digital communication strategies.

International Licensing & Translations

Document Management:

Actively organizing and maintaining legal documents using a database.

Improving accessibility and streamlining approaches for enhanced efficiency.

Licensing Front:

Adapting policies to align with the TL Connect portal. Developing a Spanish translation of the current license and an a la carte license form for simplified processes.

Translation Projects:

Progress in translating the Big Book into Haitian Creole (scheduled for January 2024). Finalizing printing of "Is AA for Me" and "How It Works" pamphlets in Haitian Creole.

Efficient Request Handling:

Collaboration with IT to create a Smartsheet for organizing and categorizing requests.

Translating auto-responses into French and Spanish for timely acknowledgment.

Stay connected for further updates on these exciting developments from our legal department!

Technology Services

Policy Development:

Drafting physical data protection policy.

Active work on access management policy and data protection standard. Focus on robust processes for effective access and asset management.

Collaboration with Fractional CISO:

Initiative linked to the record retention policy.

Emphasizing alignment with established policies, led by archivist Michelle Mirza in 2021.

Stay informed about our progress in cybersecurity, ensuring the safety and integrity of our data.

Human Resources

Staffing Updates:

Conducting interviews for a temporary staff assistant. Current staff assistant actively involved in key projects, praised for contributions.

Welcome extended to Rainer, the new team member.

Upcoming Interviews:

Finalizing interviews with impressive candidates.

Meeting with Bob to determine finalists.

Inclusivity Matters:

Concerns raised about pronouns in staff email signatures.

Organization addressing challenges and promoting flexibility.

Impactful letter received, emphasizing the importance of acceptance.

Confidentiality Adjustment:

Internal pivot to focus future reports on shared content without specifying contributors.

Stay updated on HR developments, inclusivity efforts, and organizational adjustments.

General Manager

Gratitude Month Triumph:

Positive feedback and increased contributions, particularly through online channels.

Engaging Gratitude Week program in Human Resources fostering camaraderie and positive workplace culture.

AAWS Highlights and Efficiency Boost:

Successful iterations of AAWS Highlights. Enhanced efficiency in language services and translation processes.

Organizational Progress:

Reorganization of staff coordinator role contributing to better organization.

Introduction of the new administrative coordinator role for improved preparation.

Welcoming New Team Members:

Warm welcome to Rainer, Kelly, and Paige, integrating into GSO's positive culture.

Finance Department's Dedication:

Commendable persistence and focus on the budget, fostering open discussions.

Regional Visits and Future Plans:

Highlighted recent visits to Mississippi and the East Central region. Upcoming trips planned for Florida (January) and Naras (February).

Emphasis on Positive Developments:

Overall emphasis on positive developments, organizational improvements, and continuous efforts for effective communication and engagement.

A.A. Around the World

A.A. is available around the world in various countries and languages. Today, an A.A. presence can be found in approximately 180 nations worldwide, with membership estimated at over two million. There are more than 123,000 A.A. groups around the world and A.A.'s literature has been translated into over one hundred languages.

Need literature in other languages?

Literature in English, Spanish and French is posted in PDF format on this website. Readers can print one copy for personal use. A selection of translated books, booklets, pamphlets and other materials is available for purchase via our online bookstore.

Contact A.A. outside of the U.S and Canada

Many countries have their own general service office that can guide you to meeting lists and literature relevant to your location and language. If you live outside the U.S. or Canada, your best A.A. resource will most likely be a local office within your country.

The World Service Meeting

Since its inauguration in 1969, the World Service Meeting (WSM) has provided an ongoing international forum for shared experience and ideas on carrying the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism. Held biennially, the event alternates between New York and other locations around the globe, and has convened in such diverse cities as Cartagena, Colombia; Auckland, New Zealand; Oviedo, Spain; Malahide, Ireland; Mexico City, Mexico; Warsaw, Poland; and Durban, South Africa. Participating countries select delegates to attend this meeting. The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all A.A. activities: to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world they may be, whatever language they may speak. The World Service Meeting seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of WSM delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world.

Described as a living and growing exchange of experience responding to the needs of A.A. worldwide, WSM sessions cover a broad range of issues pertinent to the development of A.A. in participating countries.

Visitors are welcome at the General Service Office

Monday through Friday, from 9am – 3pm.

Tours are scheduled at 10am, 11am and 2pm,
and lasts about 45 minutes.

A 12:15pm guided tour follows the weekly 11am A.A. meeting on Fridays.

GSO and Grapevine

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