

# AAWS Highlights

## *Business of the Board*



Meeting of the AAWS, Inc., Board of Directors

November 1, 2024

### AAWS Board of Directors

Carolyn W., AAWS Chairperson, Vera F., Reilly K.,  
Deborah K., Clint M., Racy J., Ken T., John W., Bob W.

#### AAWS Internal Audit Committee

The Internal Audit Committee examines significant documents, including guidelines, policies, and bylaws.

Key recommendations for the AAWS Board were reviewed, including the adoption of updated text service policies, the HR RACI update, and updates on virtual meeting guidelines. Additionally, a recommendation was made for all AAWS Board members and trustees to undergo annual anti-harassment and discrimination training, which would formalize previous voluntary training. Implementation options for this training are under review, including virtual and in-person formats.

*Recommendations forwarded to and approved by the AAWS Board of Directors.*

#### *Recommendations to accept Tech Services policies.*

- *The IAC recommends that the AAWS Board adopt the Asset Management Policy.*
- *The IAC recommends that the AAWS Board adopt the Access Management Policy.*
- *The IAC recommends that the AAWS Board adopt the Data Protection Policy.*
- *The IAC recommends that the AAWS Board adopt the Physical Document Protection Policy.*
- *The IAC recommends that the AAWS Board approve the updated HR RACI.*
- *The IAC recommends that the AAWS Board approve the 2024 Internal Audit Committee Comp, Scope and Procedure document.*
- *The IAC recommends, to align with internal office policies and the Code of Conduct, that all AAWS Board Directors and Trustees undergo annual anti-harassment and discrimination training.*

#### AAWS Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is tasked with filling vacancies on the board of directors for A.A. World Services, Inc.

#### Nontrustee Director Search Update

The committee provided an update on the non-trustee director search, reporting that out of 97 applications, 10 candidates were interviewed, and two finalists were selected and submitted to the Trustees Nominating Committee. Additionally, the committee finalized and forwarded the General Service Trustee candidate to the Trustees Nominating Committee.

#### AAWS Finance Committee

The Finance Committee reviews and approves AAWS financial reports, the annual budget, and the mid-year reforecast budget. Additionally, the committee approves literature price changes and discusses self-support matters.

#### Finance Committee Update

The Finance Committee reviewed the Form 990. The committee discussed its purpose in ensuring compliance with IRS requirements for tax-exempt status and highlighted sections requiring board review before filing by the November 15th deadline. The Internal Audit Committee has already approved Form 990 for submission to the Trustees Finance and Budgetary Committee. The preliminary budget overview for 2025 was presented, showing placeholders and pending decisions, particularly regarding literature sales projections and capital expenditures for office renovations required to transition to a smaller square footage in January 2026. The committee will meet again before the next AAWS board meeting for a more detailed budget review.

#### Financial report, September 2024 unaudited financial information, and related summary financial information

The Finance Committee reviewed financial performance through September 2024. Contributions have exceeded expectations, totaling \$8.1 million, 7% ahead of budget and 11% above last year's figures. However, gross literature sales are below budget, impacting gross margin, which is 4% under budget.

## ***AAWS Finance Committee Continued...***

Fortunately, lower-than-expected cost of goods sold (46% of gross sales vs. a budgeted 50.5%) has minimized this gap. Operating expenses have also been managed effectively, coming in 3% below budget at \$13.4 million, contributing to a \$1.2 million operating surplus compared to a budgeted \$314,000. The reserve fund stands at 6.41 months, down from 7.27 months last year, yet cash reserves have grown by \$180,000 year-over-year. Accounts receivable over 60 days have decreased by \$255,000, thanks to focused efforts, improving the organization's overall cash position and accounts payable balance.

## **Self-Support Committee Update**

The main highlight was a memo from Trustees Finance and Budgetary Committee regarding an unheard floor action from the 74th General Service Conference which the committee recommends Trustees Finance and Budgetary Committee consider forwarding to the Conference Committee on Finance.

***Recommendations forwarded and approved by the AAWS Board of Directors.***

- ***The AAWS Finance Committee recommended to the AAWS board that the IRS Form 990 be forwarded to the General Service Board.***
- ***The AAWS Finance Committee recommended to the AAWS Board that the International Literature Fund activity report ending September 30, 2024, be forwarded to the trustees' International Committee***
- ***The AAWS Finance committee recommended to the AAWS Board that the World Service Meeting Fund activity report ending September 30, 2024, be forwarded to the trustees' International Committee***

## **AAWS Publishing Committee**

The Publishing Committee oversees AAWS's licensing and publishing activities, including recommending initial pricing for all A.A. literature. They also track the progress of international translations and literature production.

The Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous

During the AAWS Publishing Committee meeting, the committee marked the launch of the Plain Language Big Book, noting initial sales of 16,000 copies within the first hour. The committee recognized the broad interest in this new tool and discussed steps to monitor ongoing sales and ensure fair distribution, particularly access to inventory for intergroups and central offices.

In the time since the price of \$11 was announced a question was received regarding the margin on the Plain Language Big Book, concerns were expressed about financial accessibility and the rationale for the

price. Since others might also be interested in this information, the question was brought to the AAWS Publishing Committee, and we have included the information here. The committee noted that the price was set at \$11 due to the importance of not inadvertently incentivizing people to buy the Plain Language Big Book instead of our basic text *Alcoholic Anonymous*, it was felt that setting the two items at the same price would ensure that anyone deciding which to purchase would not base their decision on pricing.

Unit cost for the first print run was \$4.22 per unit, putting it at a 61.6% margin. Margins on individual items range widely depending on the item. As of Sept 30, 2024, the year-to-date combined gross margin was 54.2%.

Additionally, the committee reviewed logistical plans and progress for the new service manual, now ready for print. Further, the committee explored pricing adjustments for multi-literature packages, acknowledging significant pricing discrepancies due to rising individual item costs, and agreed on a standardized 35% discount rate.

## **Review proposed AAWS 2024 Holiday Offers**

The Publishing Committee reviewed and approved the proposed holiday offers, giving special attention to the impact of combined discounts on profit margins. The analysis of the history shelf discount revealed that the reduction does not create a negative impact. The holiday offer was unanimously approved. The committee reaffirmed its commitment to language price normalization, ensuring equitable pricing across all English, Spanish and French. Grapevine's involvement in raising awareness about new literature releases was also acknowledged with gratitude.

***Recommendations forwarded and approved by the AAWS Board of Directors.***

- ***The Publishing Committee recommended to the AAWS Board to adopt a fixed discount percentage of 35% to the list prices of discount literature package components with content evaluation to follow.***
- ***The Publishing Committee recommended the AAWS Board to move forward with the proposed holiday offer for \$8 off the History Shelf (B-33), Alcoholics Anonymous Facsimile (B-3) for \$3, and a 15% discount on orders over \$100.***
- ***The Publishing Committee recommended to the AAWS Board to move forward with a 100 units of the DVD production for the video "Markings on the Journey" at a list price of \$12.00.***
- ***The Publishing Committee recommended to the AAWS Board to move forward with a 200 unit flash drive production of the video "Markings on the Journey" at a list price of \$21.00.***

## AAWS TCS Committee

The TCS committee works to improve services, enhance communication with the AAWS Board and Fellowship, and consider strategies to use technology for carrying the message.

### Dashboard Project Update

Four proposals have been received for the Dashboard Project RFP; they are currently under review.

### Data Integrity Project

Member Services has successfully cleaned up invalid e-mail addresses of 162 position holders in reactivated 261 contacts.

### Group and Meetings Working Group

This group examines the differences between groups and meetings, focusing on language, consistency and definitions within a period. They are consulting with relevant stakeholders and recommend conference guidance on terminology.

### Fellowship Connection Update

Fellowship connection updates are on track for early 2025, with specific focus on improving functionality for area registrars.

### Groups Services Assignment Report

Upcoming kits to include QR codes directing users to digital resources.  
New CPC/PI Fliers and a service manual flyer will be included in kits in 2025.

Social media policy draft. The formation of a subcommittee was approved to develop and implement a comprehensive social media policy.

### QR Code Implementation.

Initial QR code rollouts are underway with pamphlets in three languages.

The committee reviewed and discussed the quarterly reports and forwarded them to the appropriate trustees committees.

### Recommendations forwarded and approved by the AAWS Board of Directors.

- *The TCS committee recommended to the AAWS Board that the Analytics Working Group Progress Report be forwarded by AAWS to the trustees' Committee on Public Information.*
- *The TCS committee recommended to the AAWS Board that the 2024 second quarter LinkedIn report be forwarded by AAWS to the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community.*

- *The TCS committee recommended to the AAWS Board that the 2024 second quarter reports on Website, Meeting Guide App, YouTube, Google Ads, Online Business Listings and Podcast be forwarded by AAWS to the trustees' Committee on Public Information.*

## Interim Language Services Committee

The Interim Language Services committee provides guidance and oversight to the Language Services Department, with a priority of policy development.

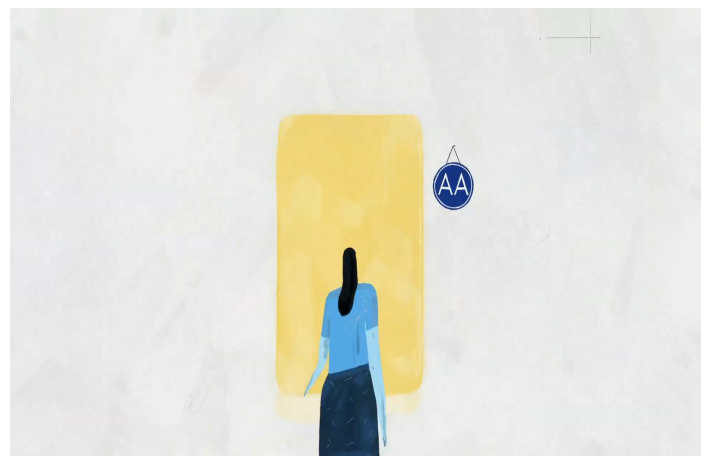
Interim Language Services Committee Update  
The committee reviewed data showing an increase in translation requests in 2024 compared to previous years. A detailed activity report was presented, noting a diverse range of materials, including conference-related documents, publishing materials, and communications.

The committee decided to maintain simultaneous release of newsletters in all three conference languages to ensure timely access in English, Spanish and French. Plans were discussed to clarify the release cycle of newsletters for consistency, especially with mobile-friendly updates anticipated in 2025.

## Intellectual Properties Ad Hoc

The IP Ad Hoc Committee has met three times since the July board meeting to review policies and procedures for protecting intellectual property. The committee supports the IP team's ongoing work to update and consolidate IP-related documentation.

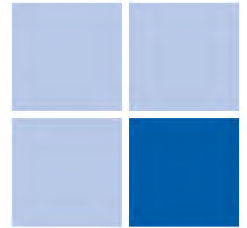
A recommendation was made to the AAWS Internal Audit Committee to annually obtain and review a comprehensive list of AAWS IP assets, including trade names and domain names, to improve asset oversight.





# AAWS Highlights

## *What's Happening at GSO*



Bob W., General Manager

November 1, 2024

### General

Happy Autumn! I hope all are enjoying the beautiful changes it brings as leaves begin to change their colors and the weather cools. The work at the General Service Office continues at a brisk pace.

Preparation for next year's General Service Conference is well under way with the deadline for the receipt of PAI's has passed and are assigned for trustee committee and board discussion over this weekend's GSB Weekend. Other notable items worth mentioning are the distribution of the Literature Catalog earlier this month, the final preparations of the updated Service Manual slated for an early December launch and the Plain Language Big Book was made available for purchase on November 1, 2024.

### Workload

Concerns about workload continue to remain a high priority. The working group consists of the Administration department (my two assistants), the Director of Staff Services and Staff Coordinator. We have continued to meet regularly to discuss and assess the workload secretaries and staff support to both the General Service Board and the AAWS Board, their committees, subcommittees and working groups.

The working group is now in the process of developing an inventory survey to be distributed to the various departments housed at GSO to assess the workflow processes, prioritization of projects, resource allocation, etc. Once input has been received from the different departments, the team will analyze the information to have a better understanding of the departments and their respective workload.

### 2024 World Service Meeting

We were very excited and grateful to welcome over 70 World Service Meeting Delegates from around the world to the World Service Meeting, which was held October 26-31st.

This was the largest attendance in the meeting's history. The WSM was a deeply important and spiritual event. Due to the pandemic and the financial challenges that all structures have experienced over the last few years, the last two WSMs had been virtual. This was the first in-person WSM since 2018, which was held in South Africa, and the first in New York City since 2016. The opportunity to come together in person made a significant impact in carrying the AA message around the world. Our General Service Board invited the WSM Delegates to observe the GSB Weekend, which immediately followed the event. This was consistent with the past practice of our GSB and the WSM and was significant for these autonomous structures, helping with the evolution of their own development and ultimately increasing the effectiveness of carrying the message worldwide. The International assignment was engaged in the final preparations for the event. I worked closely with them to assist in adopting a stronger Seventh Tradition support policy. We realized that the financial support provided for previous WSMs was no longer sustainable. As we prepared the event budget, we made many changes in planning and programming. All participating structures shared in the sacrifices made to implement several cost-saving measures. Notably, many delegates shared rooms, we forewent some AV amenities, and we also planned some meals outside the hotel.

We established clear financial responsibility that belongs to each structure participating and set policy that requires each structure to cover their delegate fees, air travel and incidental expenses. For those who cannot meet these obligations, we utilized the World Service Meeting Fund.

The World Service Meeting Fund has made an enormous difference with participation and bringing the WSM closer to being self-supporting. Many structures have contributed heavily to this fund since its inception in 2018. Not only has it provided support to countries in need of meeting their Seventh Tradition responsibilities but also has provided support to our structure to help offset our costs.



The close attention to detail in planning and the work we and all participating structures did together was a good example of the blend of money and spirituality. I looked forward to sharing the results and reporting more details following the World Service Meeting. We asked everyone to reach out to the many delegates who observed the GSB weekend and thank them for their service and for the sacrifices they made to make this a successful World Service Meeting.

## **Meetings, Events, & Travel Services (METS)**

Specific mention was given to the dedicated employees of the METS Department. Over the past few years, the hospitality industry has undergone significant changes, with challenges arising from the pandemic and economic fluctuations affecting event planning. I want to highlight the budget variance related to some of the audio-visual (AV) costs at some of our Regional Forums this year. Despite these challenges, the METS team has demonstrated exceptional negotiation skills, successfully keeping our meeting costs down across the numerous events we host and plan each year, including the World Service Meeting and the General Service Conference. A particular challenge with Regional Forums is that they are contracted two years in advance. AV vendors, who are third-party providers and not affiliated with the hotel, are not bound by the same fixed costs as the hotel itself. Consequently, by the time the event occurs, AV costs often rise significantly from the initial estimates. The METS team works diligently to negotiate these expenses, including adjusting reduce AV services. I am committed to supporting the development of each team member. They participate in negotiation training and other professional development programs that enhance their skills and knowledge. I have complete confidence in their professionalism and expertise. Additionally, we are exploring options with the Trustees' ICRF to adjust our site selection process, which will provide the department with greater flexibility in negotiations.

### **Poland GSO 50th Anniversary**

Poznan, Poland, August 14th – 19th

I had the privilege of attending Poland's 50th-anniversary celebration alongside Trustee-at-Large Marita R., where I had the wonderful opportunity to visit their General Service Office (GSO). The event attracted over 7,000 attendees. During our visit, we collaborated closely with Poland's General Manager and General Service Board to discuss the printing, sale, and distribution of Russian literature. Additionally, we had the chance to sign several hundred 7th Tradition appeal cards which were distributed to their groups.

### **Eastern Canada Regional Forum**

Ottawa, ON, Canada, August 22nd – 26th

The Forum saw a wonderful turnout, with 418 members in attendance, including 272 first-time attendees. Notably, 40% of the participants were francophone.

### **2030 International Convention Site Visit**

St. Louis, MO, September 12th-13th

Although we haven't yet hosted our upcoming 2025 International Convention in Vancouver, I'm thrilled to announce that planning is already underway for the next event. Our recent site visit to St. Louis was successful, and the excitement and enthusiasm is building quickly among the local hospitality committee.

### **AA Portugal II International Convention**

Braga, Portugal, October 4th – 6th

I attended Portugal's II International Convention, alongside Trustee-at-Large Robert L. The event welcomed approximately 400 attendees and embraced the theme 'Language of the Heart,' which was beautifully showcased through prominent signage. The convention featured a logo inspired by Grapevine's Language of the Heart, adding a meaningful touch to the gathering.

### **The Next 90 Days**

#### **Upcoming Travel Commitments:**

- 2025 International Convention Site Visit, Vancouver: November 16th – 20th
- Southeast Regional Forum, Biloxi, MS: December 6th – 8th