

Intergroup Renewal

Introduction

We seem to have less and less sustained personal recovery in OA, which means less attraction, less retention, less sponsors, less members, less meetings, and a declining OA. In our inverted pyramid structure Regions and World Service are basically invisible to the average member. Only intergroups have the potential to quickly do something to reverse the trend. I want to transform and revitalize intergroups into high-value organizations whose top priority is to help members strengthen their personal recovery. This means organizing and enabling all sorts of training and educational opportunities for members that supplement sponsorship. In the process of doing this, IG's become much more attractive, fulfill their Tradition Five responsibility, and OA is strengthened.

The material that follows is not theory. It is a sharing of my experience at the group, intergroup, region and world service levels, especially over the past 23 of my 38 years in program. I've had the opportunity to chair six intergroups in for four states across two regions since 1997 and do all the things talked about here. I have been conducting intergroup officer training for Region 6 over the past four years. Again, it's experience, not theory, that follows.

Transforming Intergroups

This is a program of attraction. That's as true for intergroups as it is for our meetings and personal recovery. If your intergroup isn't attracting, members are telling you that what you do is not of high value to them. Transform into a high-value intergroup that helps members strengthen their personal recovery and you will change lives as well as the long-term health of OA.

Everything in OA begins with personal recovery. Intergroups whose highest priority is to help people strengthen their recovery via training and education that supplements sponsorship, have the potential to renew not only themselves, but OA overall.

As OA's Policy 2008c states, OA has to grow to survive. We stopped growing a long time ago. We as an organization based in a country gripped by an obesity epidemic are way underperforming in helping people work the program and save their lives. The core reason is simple: there is less and less sustained individual recovery in our rooms. Less recovery means less attraction, less retention, less sponsors, less members, less meetings and less intergroups. Traditionally, sponsors have been the main channels for member guidance on how to work the program and, in the process, create more recovery and more sponsors. The sponsor model needs help.

To be a program of attraction, what do newcomers need to see and hear? What brings them back a second and third time? The hope they "feel" from the recovery in the room brings them back, though they have no idea what that word "recovery" means. But they can feel and see something positive in the room. The majority of newcomers do not return. At a time when obesity in the USA has reached epidemic levels, OA meetings are declining. We have plenty of history to show that our 12-step program can work. What has happened?

World Service and Regions are basically invisible to the average member. No matter how many good pamphlets or guidelines or suggestions that originate from World Service, they are useless unless the materials or ideas are leveraged by intergroups. The future of OA may depend on intergroups transforming themselves into organizations that can reverse OA's gradual decline. If you think your intergroup doesn't have enough people to do this, remember that the people in meetings and intergroups are one and the same. In essence, every member is a member of intergroup, though in today's structure they may not realize it. You can also rely on OA veterans with sustained recovery. A majority of these seasoned veterans may not come to IG anymore. They got tired. But they're still here. When really needed, they'll step up to help. That's called recovery.

No, they'll never go back to their former level of service, but they'll step up to help in specific projects: a series of training workshops, for instance, or a four-week Quick-Step study, or a workshop on developing a plan of eating or speaking at a retreat or marathon. General appeals for service do not work to attract these veterans. They need to be "recruited" for specific tasks where they will feel useful. This illustrates a fundamental principle of the new model. The resource base is the entire membership, not just the people attending intergroup meetings, i.e., everyone is a member of intergroup, whether they know it or not.

The New Model

Vision

A high-value intergroup is one that, first, truly helps the still suffering work the 12-step program and, second, strengthens OA as a whole. An intergroup's value is measured by its usefulness to members and meetings. Usefulness is its main "product." Its reason for being, per Tradition Five, is to carry the message of recovery.

Strategic Plan

First Priority: Create training, educational and informational activities and opportunities to help members recover or strengthen their recovery. This is training on the nature of the disease, the process for arresting it, and the process for keeping it arrested. This supplements sponsorship and helps close the sponsor gap. From more personal recovery comes more sponsors, more attraction, more retention, a stronger intergroup and a stronger OA. A website full of useful information and aids to recovery is part of this model, as is a newsletter full of helpful information, as is a total membership email list for ongoing communication.

Second priority (but required): Traditional, ongoing intergroup administrative tasks, for example: meeting lists, hotlines, answering service, public information, professional outreach, events on Unity Day, IDEA Day, Sponsorship Day, sending representatives to Region and WSBC, promoting the Traditions and Concepts.

Third priority: Proactively train/assist meetings on administrative matters, for example: formats, organization, group conscience, job descriptions, treasury, inventories, etc. This will facilitate and increase member service at the meeting level, strengthen meetings, and facilitate ease of movement from group service to intergroup service.

Goals

- Help members strengthen their personal recovery.
- Increase the number of sponsors.
- Increase the number of newcomers.
- Increase the retention of newcomers.
- Help those in relapse.
- Inspire people to give more service.
- Increase outreach and public information activities.

Action Plans to Achieve Goals

A goal without an action plan is simply a wish. Action plans should be based on the seven goals and specifically define what projects or activities we will undertake to achieve the goals. Intergroups ultimately are creating opportunities for members to help themselves. Miracles happen when people put themselves in a position to receive them. Intergroups can help them do that.

Keeping the intergroup tightly focused on these high-value activities for the membership is key to attracting and retaining member assistance (especially from veterans). Think of an intergroup meeting as an event, focused on helping groups and members. There is a high “return on investment” for attendees. As intergroups work toward this restructuring of their mission they become attractive again. Actual examples of action plans from several intergroups are listed in the section below on implementation.

Implementation

The rest of this article summarizes the process through which intergroups transform themselves into the model. I have seen intergroups triple or quadruple their attendance within 12-24 months and go from barely surviving to a vital, highly respected organization that people are anxious to help (including financial contributions). At the core of everything is the simple model of change we talk about in our personal recovery: awareness – acceptance – action:

- Gaining awareness of a problem
- Accepting responsibility (if not me, who; if not now, when)
- Organizing and implementing all sorts of activities that provide opportunities for members to strengthen their recovery, which benefits the individual and OA

Willingness is up to each member, but well-organized activities inform, train, and *inspire*.

Intergroup Inventory

An intergroup inventory, involving as many members as you can recruit for three hours, is the beginning of the renewal process. It is the beginning of raising awareness of what the intergroup could be doing to help the suffering (Tradition 5 work). Said another way, it shows that intergroup as presently operating may be of minimal value to the membership or, at best, may

not be doing as much as it could to help members and thus OA as a whole. The results of the inventory naturally lead to the question, what can we do about this? This opens minds at intergroup to rethinking structure and mission.

Intergroup inventories followed by member surveys are the critical part of raising consciousness and awareness, arousing interest in doing something, building a cause with which people can identify and eventually take ownership. In this process, people begin moving toward a true “we” or “our” OA. Intergroup work on inventories and member surveys touches every member and raises awareness of intergroup in a positive way.

Two documents are used for the inventory: The Intergroup Inventory as published on OA.ORG and the OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies.

Sometimes Intergroups ask an experienced third party from another intergroup to facilitate the discussion, but it doesn't have to be if the chair feels competent in objectively leading what will be a wide-ranging discussion of “how are we doing.” In other words, this is a fourth step on our intergroup.

A secretary is needed to take good notes. The whole thing can also be recorded to help the secretary (or the chair) write up the results. If so, people should be told that the tape is simply for this and will be erased afterward. The leader needs to plead for honesty and objectivity from people within the spirit of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. Obviously, there will be disagreements, but it's always disagreement and the diversity of opinions that lead to the most creative and useful ideas.

A common question is should we do the inventory all at once or devote a portion of each Intergroup meeting to go through the questions? The latter may take several months, which is definitely NOT the best way to raise awareness. Having a special 3-4 hour session – totally devoted to taking the inventory - turns the process into an important event, which is what we want. Remember that everything we're doing in this renewal process is part of the “attraction” – team building is another way to express it – that will ultimately bring all members to the point of understanding that we are ALL part of intergroup and intergroup is part of us, whether or not we go to intergroup meetings. In fact, we can be of tremendous help to intergroup without EVER going near the intergroup meeting.

There are nearly 60 questions on the OA inventory divided into three categories:

- The organization and function of the intergroup
- How it's doing on helping members of the fellowship (part of Tradition 5, our only purpose)
- How it's doing in carrying the message to the still suffering compulsive eater not yet in the OA rooms (the other part of Tradition 5, our only purpose)

The OA Handbook contains five pages on the functions of Intergroups. Two sections are of special interest in the inventory: the second paragraph on page 33 under the heading “*How Do Intergroups Start?*”:

“Intergroups may manage administrative functions, such as meeting lists, hotlines, and websites, but their primary purpose remains the same as every other group or service body in OA – to carry the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers (Tradition Five). This includes those still suffering both inside and outside of OA. Intergroups are in a unique position to help those still suffering within OA. A few representatives working together on an Intergroup committee can organize recovery events, such as Unity Day, IDEA Day, retreats, and conventions, which may benefit large numbers of members.”

The next section is entitled: *“What functions do Intergroups have?”* Twelve functions are listed as examples. Item number 4 of the 12 is of special interest to us:

“Sponsoring and arranging workshops, marathons, and other special events aimed at educating, informing, and helping members strengthen their personal recovery, since everything in OA begins with personal recovery.”

Here are some typical results from the many intergroup inventories of which I’ve been involved:

- No one is satisfied with the intergroup as it currently functions
- Everyone agrees after the inventory discussion that it is not doing as much as it should be doing to help members
- Everyone agrees after the inventory discussion that it is not doing as much as it should to carry the message to the non-OA community. Notice the phrase “after the intergroup discussion.”

What happens in the discussion is the raising of awareness. Those who were satisfied at the beginning are often dissatisfied with the function of their intergroup by the end of the meeting.

After carefully and objectively summarizing the results in writing and publishing them to the inventory participants, the next step becomes discussing potential action plans to change intergroup. One of those action plans has to be to publish the results of the inventory to the entire membership of the constituent meetings and then ask those members what they think. That’s the **member survey** which is basically **how can we (intergroup) help you?**

Member Survey

The member survey process continues the raising of awareness and sparks the beginnings of individual willingness to step up to help (ownership). From the results of the intergroup inventory and member survey, priorities for potential action plans become clear. Through the inventory and member survey process, we have developed a group conscience on what sort of actions need to be taken to help members and OA as a whole.

Organizations stick around for a long time if they are “learning organizations.” That means they have a mechanism to get continual feedback from “customers”. They learn from the feedback their members/customers give them. They make adjustments, keep up to date, do new things.

Intergroup, as a service organization, is no different. Lack of attendance at intergroup, for example, is feedback. Non-attendance is the same as a written survey. If an IG learns nothing from that, ultimately it fades away.

Nothing raises awareness and inspires action like the member survey. Member surveys are the grass-roots tool for getting member involvement and eventually ownership for OA's health in their area. Surveys:

- Establish communication with the groups.
- Help build community with a "to and from" flow.
- Generate interest.
- Stimulate service.
- Focus IG efforts on the highest priority needs of groups and members.
- Become the basis for
 - Strategic Plans: long range objectives.
 - Operating Plans: current year's priorities and budgets.

Here's the actual introductory text from a bulletin to all members kicking off a survey one intergroup did several years ago:

EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!

Member Survey Underway!

EVERY person's opinion is needed - newcomer or long-timer, in recovery or in relapse.

One of the conclusions of the recent intergroup self-inventory was that intergroup would like to increase our level of service to members. (For a summary of the intergroup inventory see article on page two of this month's newsletter.) A member survey is a great way to gather information on how we can help. Go to our website at ___ and click on the link for the member survey. It should take about 10 minutes.

The 26-question member survey should provide:

- *Information on the overall health of OA in our intergroup area*
- *Member ideas on things that might strengthen their individual recovery*
- *Member ideas on things that might help carry the message to more people*
- *Information that could help OA remain vital and growing in this area*

The survey is anonymous. Every person's opinion is needed, whether newcomer or long-timer, in recovery or in relapse. The more people who participate, the greater the value of the information gained. Survey results will be used to help set intergroup priorities in the coming year. A survey summary will be published in a future newsletter. For more information or questions, contact _____.

Typical Results from several surveys from different IG's

- 70-80% come to OA overweight.
- The majority of meetings (not all) are getting smaller.
- The majority of people (not all) in a typical meeting are not abstinent.
- 75% of members have relapsed, the majority 3-5 times.
- About 15% of the membership are newcomers.
- The membership is clearly aging.
- The majority of meetings are not getting newcomers.
- When newcomers come, only about 25% return.
- Most meetings have no specific plan to handle newcomers.
- More sponsors and help on sponsoring is needed.
- Most important thing I need to do for my program: get abstinent and work the steps.
- Most valuable thing intergroup can do: help me work the program.
- Not enough speaker meetings because of less recovery.

Multiple member surveys, including one I did that drew responses from 231 former World Service Conference delegates from across the USA, have led me to the following broad conclusions:

In general, there seems to be two types of meetings: action/solution meetings and fellowship meetings.

Action/solution meetings focus on taking the actions leading to recovery. The group norm is that people have a food plan, have a sponsor and are a sponsor, make their calls, attend meetings, work the steps, and support the meeting and OA with money and service. They often celebrate abstinence with recognition coins.

Fellowship meetings focus on understanding, encouragement, support, discussion of problems, and have less emphasis on studying the 12&12 or Big Book, or working the steps, or on abstaining no matter what, or on celebrating abstinence, or on connecting with intergroup.

The predominately-action/solution meetings attract, prosper and grow. The predominately-fellowship meetings stagnate and get smaller.

Communications

Communication is everything. We have, through whatever method is needed (email lists, newsletters, special paper bulletins, websites, face-to-face visits at meetings, etc.) communicated the inventory and survey results to every member of every meeting. We have raised awareness of a problem and raised member expectations that something needs to happen, i.e., that actions will be taken. We have also created the beginnings of member ownership. We have through good communications begun to create a "cause" and a feeling of "we". We are all in this together. We need to help each other. We are not doing as much as we can do to help other compulsive eaters and OA as a whole. If we don't step up, OA will continue to decline because of less and less

people in recovery to pass on the message. In the communications process, we have developed a resource base of people willing to help – IF we organize and recruit well.

We continue to communicate constantly to all members and meetings explaining our consensus-determined vision, goals and activities planned, appealing for everyone's involvement.

Action Plans

The intergroup takes the lead in developing action plans based on the results of the inventory and survey, without regard for the resources that might be needed to carry out the actions. What do we need? What are the highest priorities? How can we best help the most members? The list of priorities is developed. Then the recruitment effort begins. Here are some examples of actual actions from several different intergroups relative to the goals. There is no shortage of ideas in OA!!

- Workshops (typically 3 hours): Working and Living the Steps broken into individual steps or groups of steps, such as 1-2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11-12; specific workshop on different ways of doing a fourth step inventory; a writing group to work on fourth step; developing a plan of eating; getting abstinent and staying abstinent; plan of eating versus abstinence; sponsoring; using the tools, body image, spiritual awakening, carrying the message, service, prayer and meditation, Steps from the Big Book, Wisdom of the Big Book. These are true learning workshops, not typical OA meetings with speaking and sharing. There is “controlled” discussion and questions and sharing of personal experience on the subject, much like an educational seminar.
- Sponsor bank
- Speaker bank
- Guaranteed speaker bank (IG promised to provide a speaker to any meeting who requested one – a way of stimulating speaker meetings)
- Sponsor training
- Quick-Step Studies (4 weeks)
- 15-Week Step Studies
- Sponsorship Retreat (a weekend dedicated to sponsoring and being sponsoring)
- Marathons dedicated to people in relapse
- Missing Faces Campaigns (meetings go through We Care books and make calls to invite people to a special event)
- “How OA Changed My Life” (locally produced literature)
- “If Works If You Work It” (locally produced literature)
- “Sponsoring and Being Sponsored” (locally produced literature)
- OA Hotline
- Website
- Newsletters full of intergroup information and educational articles such as “Care and Nurturing of Newcomers,” or “Getting Through the Holidays Abstinely” or “Meeting Formats”
- Newcomers Orientation Video on website
- Breaking Out of Relapse Video on website

- Five-minute Member Testimonials on Website
- Recorded Step Study Workshop on Website
- Public Information Ads on Placemats in Diners/Restaurants
- Public Info Billboard
- Public Info Health Fairs
- Public Info Bulletin Board Posters
- Public Info/Professional Outreach Plastic rack displays in healthcare related locations (15 Questions and OA Contact Information)
- Public Info/Professional Outreach Mailings to local healthcare professionals
- Speaking at nursing school classes on addiction
- Speaking at hospital seminars for doctors/nurses
- OA Intergroup business cards free to all members
- Events/Marathons for IDEA Day, Unity Day, etc.
- Meetings Lists printed and distributed monthly (paper and online)
- Member Surveys for feedback on intergroup priorities
- Liability insurance for all meetings
- Rewriting bylaws that may be hindering change and creativity
- Replacing some standing committees with flexible ad hoc committees
- Changing formats of intergroup meetings
- Adding the virtual option to intergroup meetings on an exception basis
- Holding workshops in conjunction with intergroup meetings
- Canvassing members to accumulate a list of activities they would most like to be involved in. This is a resource list that demonstrates that we are all together in this effort.

Targeted Recruiting - Fundamentals

The intergroup team is a force multiplier. A few good people in recovery at intergroup can recruit, organize and inspire large numbers to do service work.

People don't have to come to intergroup to do work for intergroup. They want to help their friends, OA, the still-suffering. If members see intergroup as organizing or doing that kind of work, recruitment is easy.

Most of you reading this already know that general pleas for people to do more service fall on deaf ears. Few volunteer, but many will say yes when directly asked to help on specific projects.

Ask them to do specific tasks, not general service. Concrete task description is critical, as acceptance rates are directly proportional to the clarity of the task. This assumes a clearly defined plan/purpose/strategy for intergroup so they see where they fit in the bigger vision. Because of the inventory and member survey, they understand the problem and how they perhaps can be a part of the solution.

There will always be those whose underlying feeling is that they don't really have any particular skill to contribute. I make the point that we share a common disease and a common solution but each of us is unique in the contribution we can bring to the service table. We need whatever you can bring. Explain some of the things that need to be done where they might help - from the

complex to the manual work. Let them choose. This approach has worked right down to the level of stuffing envelopes.

It's about relationships: Recruiting is at the core of developing one-on-one relationships that form a team and get things done. Recruit like-minded people who want to help OA AND strengthen their recovery.

What about geography? If certain skills or qualifications are needed that you cannot find in your meetings, seek help in other areas. Talk to your neighboring intergroups. People in recovery are frequently willing to travel to help others – whether speaking at workshops, or leading retreats, or helping a new webmaster or newsletter editor. Working with other intergroups on joint projects has great potential.

Leadership

The person or people who lead this transformation effort lead through service and information. More specifically, they lead through example, service, organizing, informing, recruiting, energizing, suggesting, asking questions, training, and by providing information for members to strengthen their personal program - and OA. Remember, trusted servants are simply examples of gratitude in action. To create opportunities for members to help themselves, these leaders will need to find and mobilize more of the grateful recovered. They exist. We have been adding to our resource pool for 50+ years.

An old quote from Bill Wilson on the subject of leadership put to rest for me the notion that we don't really have any leaders:

"No society can function well without able leadership at all its levels, and A.A. can be no exception. But we A.A.'s sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without much personal leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of 'principles before personalities' around to such a point that there would be no 'personality' in leadership whatever. This would imply rather faceless robots trying to please everybody.

"A leader in A.A. service is a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us naturally want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgment of his own - well, he really isn't a leader at all." [As Bill Sees It, p.224]

Clearly, strong recovery is the first requirement of leadership. A leader needs to be an example of physical, emotional and spiritual recovery. We need to BE before we can DO. If we are not the message, we have no hope of leading. Someone in recovery is filled with gratitude and passion to help others. This gratitude shines out to others as a candle of hope and possibility.

What this leader, or core of leaders, will be doing is creating a cause around which grateful OAers will unite and want to get involved. We don't plead for service. We create things that

attract people who want to be useful.

- Good Leaders:
 - Motivate people by creating a compelling vision.
 - Gather quality people.
 - Lead, rather than simply facilitate discussion.
 - Don't micromanage.
 - Are always available.
 - Take no credit; it's always the group.
 - Are always wearing their recruiting hat.
 - Build well-functioning teams.
 - Bring people together rather than create division.
 - Use common sense and fairness more often than Robert's Rules.
 - Don't do things a certain way because it's always been done that way.
 - Communicate honestly without fear.
 - Give people the opportunity to volunteer to do things they love.
 - Ensure there is a high Return-On-Investment for attendance at intergroup meetings by keeping the agenda on intergroup's purpose of helping members and groups.
 - Remember that enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm.
 - Spread hope, because hope is contagious.

Conclusion

This is a summary of my experience in transforming intergroups into high-value service organizations. They truly help individual members and, in the process, attract more participation from the members, as well as strengthen OA. As I said previously, my experience is that individual recovery is the foundation for everything. More recovery means more sponsors, more service, more attracting and retaining newcomers, more OA growth and more carrying the message to more suffering compulsive eaters outside of OA.

As part of my daily morning disciplines, I often say affirmations. I have a very long list I've accumulated over the years sorted by category. Which I say on any given day depends on what's happening in my life. One that is often included has to do with service:

I meet my responsibilities to OA. If not me, who? If not now, when?

In the several appendices that follow I have gone into detail on some important points in the renewal and revitalization process:

- Appendix #1 Strategic and Operating Plans
- Appendix #2 Committees
- Appendix #3 Focused Meetings
- Appendix #4 Qualifications
- Appendix #5 High-Value Communications
- Appendix #6 Sources of Information

Appendix #7 Here are several summary charts that could be useful to you in passing these ideas on, as well as some examples of intergroup documents. If you are interested in seeing the 88 presentation charts I used in the most recent training workshop, email fobb1234@verizon.net and I will forward them.

Appendix #1: Strategic and Operating Plans

The word *strategic* typically means long-range, and the word *operating* typically means current year. The goals I referenced previously could be called a strategic plan. In all the intergroups I've chaired this has been the strategic plan which usually covers 3-5 years:

- Help members strengthen their personal recovery.
- Increase the number of sponsors.
- Increase the number of newcomers.
- Increase the retention of newcomers.
- Help those in relapse.
- Inspire people to give more service.
- Increase outreach and public information activities.

The actual activities we plan in the next 12 months to work on one or more of these goals is the operating plan (current year). This would include things like Back-to Basics Workshops, 15-Week Step Studies, Quick-Step Studies, events on IDEA Day and Unity Day, sponsor training, sponsor banks, speaker banks, retreats, etc.

Why are concrete well-publicized plans so critical to the whole revitalization process?

Pain inspires action; hope inspires action; dreams inspire action; goals inspire action. It's the same with IG as in our personal life. Goals motivate. They give us a destination. We need to have clearly defined goals and action plans to achieve those goals. Without goals and plans (and budgets to implement the plans) the intergroup is adrift. Having goals and plans focuses our attention and energy on getting where we want to go. Without them we wander around meeting to meeting in a "reactive" mode. Goals and plans put us in a proactive mode. Goals not only steer the ship, they inspire action. Once plans are in place for the year, intergroup simply directs the implementation. Assuming the plans are high-value activities, members show up.

Vision, goals, a cause, the opportunity to feel really useful – all these drive IG attraction. Once goals and action plans are in place, they "pull" people into action. They energize, empower, focus and allow people to feel useful. The whole renewal process starts with a cause. The phrase that has motivated the most effort by members in all the intergroups I've chaired: *Provide opportunities for members to strengthen their recovery.*

Sometimes defining a vision can be useful to attract and raise awareness. A vision is a broad, clear direction/intent of what we want to do. Creating a vision can be an important part of the journey. People need to be able to visualize the desired outcome. One that I have used successfully is basically Tradition Five – the reason we exist: "Save Lives Through Carrying OA's Message to the Still Suffering." My mantra through years of leading IG's has always been Tradition Five. Intergroup shouldn't be doing anything that doesn't in some way relate to that.

Remember it's goals that put meat on the vision and inspire action. Having no goals leads to drift and lethargy, a reactive organization rather than a proactive one. Goals define how we will seek to fulfill the vision.

Appendix #2: Committees

Committees are the wheels of the Intergroup. Committees make things happen.

Recruiting people to chair or co-chair the various committees is the number one task of the leader. Don't ask for volunteers. Go eyeball-to-eyeball with people you think could do the job.

The second most important task of the leader is follow-up with the committees between meetings. Most of the real work of the intergroup is not done in the actual intergroup meeting. Meetings are where committees report to the rest of intergroup. The chair has already had those discussions with the committee when he/she sets up the agenda for the intergroup meeting.

Your bylaws may have a list of standing committees. Those may or may not be useful to your new directions. Don't get trapped into having to fulfill a structure set up years ago in a different world that doesn't fit your new objectives. The intergroup runs on a series of ad hoc committees that are put together when a project is approved – a Quick-Step study committee, for example – and then disbands at the end of the year when the project is finished.

I spoke in the recruiting section of this document about the importance of very clear job descriptions in getting people to serve. I also mentioned changing the paradigm from thinking your resource base is the Intergroup Reps who attend intergroup to your resource base being every member of every group. Every single person out there in recovery is a candidate for working on any committee. What has consistently worked best for me is to recruit co-chairs for most mainline committees. One of them has to attend intergroup, the other does not. Remember, when you have a non-intergroup co-chair you are extending the footprint of intergroup to whole new set of people – all the people and meetings that the co-chair is involved with. This kind of footprint extension is critical to getting members in different meetings to ALL begin to feel like they are connected to intergroup. It's part of the "there is no they," "we are they."

Continuity: As it does its job each committee is either following or developing a process or procedure. There is no need to re-invent the wheel every time a new set of chairs is appointed. Meetings are set up with the old chairs, materials and processes are reviewed. One recruiting technique I've used successfully is to have the old chair or co-chair help me recruit a new chair or co-chair. They may have intentionally or unintentionally been grooming someone on their committees to step up to the chair position.

Appendix #3: Focused Meetings

This subject is critical for attraction as well as productivity. Too many IG's have the reputation of a bunch of controllers setting around arguing over meaningless stuff (which I call administrivia).

The chair sets the agenda. The chair sets the tone. The chair keeps the meeting focused on the agenda subjects which everyone has in front of them. The agenda items are listed down the left side of the page. Going down the right side I always have three boxes. The first list the Strategic Plan (3-5 years goals), the second is the Operating Plan (this year's activities) and the third is a chronology by date of this year's events. This is basically a master calendar always right in front to everyone.

The agenda subjects must be related to the plans and goals. Clear goals and plans and a detailed agenda keep the meetings focused. Nothing is discussed at IG except the agenda items...until the end when the floor is open for questions, concerns or announcements. With this tight agenda everyone knows exactly at all times what's being discussed and its relationship to the overall goals. This keeps members and the meeting focused on results.

Front page. I have always used a two-page (front and back) agenda. The first page (front) has the actual agenda, the goals and dates mentioned above. Very importantly it has 5 blank lines at the bottom listed under the heading: Key Info to Give Your Group. The last thing we do at the end of every intergroup meeting is agree on the top five points we want IR's to report to their respective meetings. A footnote centered on the bottom of the first page reads: Remember: IG's value is measured by its usefulness to members and meetings.

Back page. The second page (back) lists 1) the disciplines of the meeting, 2) moral principles of the 12 Traditions and 3) Intergroup Meeting Principles. Another useful tool on this back page is a list of meetings and their Intergroup Reps. This is kept up to date so everyone sees who represents what meeting, and meetings that don't have Intergroup Reps. It also promotes group cohesion. People see who's there and who's not there. Someone not there is likely to get a question later... "Missed you Thursday night?" It's also useful when dividing up responsibilities for making contact with meetings not attending intergroup.

Here's what I've been saying for years on the three points noted above:

Disciplines of the Meeting

- We strive for consensus, fairness, and an informed group conscience within the spirit of the Traditions and Concepts, loosely following Robert's rules. Majority rule is not the same as group conscience.
- We observe the Intergroup meeting principles below.
- Please raise your hand to be recognized.

Twelve Traditions Principles

Unity, Trust, Identity, Autonomy, Purpose, Solidarity, Responsibility, Fellowship, Structure, Neutrality, Anonymity, Spirituality

Intergroup Meeting Principles

- OA has no power structure, only a service structure.

- IG “has no power to enforce rules on OA groups or individual members.” (p.100, 12&12)
- Disagreement does not equal personal rejection.
- Diversity can be our strength.
- If we all agreed on everything, we wouldn’t all be necessary.
- Keep our discussions within the spirit of “I love you, but I disagree with you.”
- When the group conscience is reached, let there be unity.

On the bottom of the back page is a centered footnote which reminds:

Without plans and goals, we are adrift

My personal experience is that ninety minutes works best for intergroup meetings. Timeliness is critical to IG image and attraction. Start on time and end on time. Precisely. The chair controls. Set expectations early and keep them. Regular meetings start on time and end on time. IG is no different.

The majority of the committees listed on the agenda are ad hoc committees, different from the traditional standing committees laid out in the bylaws. Ad Hoc committees are formed yearly to execute whatever the various projects are for that year. Then they go away to be replaced by whatever committees are needed for the new year. I’ve mentioned elsewhere that a lot of members of these various committees don’t ever come to intergroup. Our resource base is our entire membership, not just the people who can or cannot attend intergroup. There are many, many people that can and want to help, but don’t come to intergroup for various reasons.

For those prone to tying things up in parliamentary knots it’s good to remember that Robert’s is not recommended for groups smaller 15-20. They are often overused when not really necessary. Their purpose is to guarantee everyone’s right to be heard and counted in the decision-making process. OA’s Group Conscience Guidelines note:

The meeting “does not require formal decision-making methods such as motion, amendments and debate because, as Concept 12 (d) states, ‘all important decisions shall be reached by discussion, by vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity’. The size of the group may determine the formality needed. Each group may decide how to conduct their business.”

I have seen intergroups tie themselves in knots because they say the chair can’t do anything except facilitate. In small groups (intergroups) the chair has the right to talk and make points and lead and vote. Sometimes in much larger organizations the chair can only vote to break ties. Bylaws that restrict the chair from “leading” are counter-productive to an intergroup.

It takes longer, but my objective as an IG chair has always been to avoid votes. They are the absolute last resort. Votes tend to divide. Controlled, dispassionate discussion unites.

The “takes longer” part is not so important because most of the IG leader’s real work does not take place in the IG meetings. Things don’t get discussed in meetings so much as they get approved or amended. The committees (including the IG chair who is always ex officio member of every committee) have already done the work. They bring progress reports forward, only occasionally asking for the group opinion. If they have done a good job (and almost always they have), they have already thought through all the questions that someone could ask. Also, when

the goals and priorities and action plans are so clearly defined early in the year, most of what intergroup is doing is implementation, not creating. We plan plans, then organize to implement them. Most of each IG meeting is about implementation of the plans.

Minutes are the official record of what happened. There are different styles of taking minutes - all okay. It depends on what's needed. The most common way (used by OA BOT and WSBC) is recording only actions/decisions taken, adopted or defeated motions, not everything that transpired. We can decide to record more if the IG wants, but actions and decision are the only things that are ALWAYS recorded. Word by word transcriptions of who said what are not very useful.

My most useful parliamentary phrases:

- Hearing no objection, the report will be adopted (minutes).
- Hearing no objection, the report will be accepted (treasurer's report).
- If there is no objection, the meeting is adjourned.

Appendix #4: Qualifications

Here's my thoughts on Officer and Intergroup Rep qualifications. Yes, I know it's not a perfect world. But if we don't set a goal of where we want to go, we will always end up somewhere else.

Hope is a wonder drug that treats the mind, body and spirit. The recovered dispense the drug. An intergroup full of recovery can dispense much, much more of the drug than any single recovered individual. An intergroup full of sound recovery attracts. An intergroup without recovery repulses. Hard truth, but true. I've seen it over and over.

Officers certainly need to be abstinent and in recovery – physically, emotionally and spiritually. Every IG's bylaws specify the abstinent requirement for officers. Sadly, some IG's have weakened to the point of ignoring the requirement. When I ask them if there are members in recovery out there in the groups, the answer is always, "Of course, but they're not interested."

I maintain that's not true at all. There are people out there that want to help OA and will help if given the opportunity. The right leader at an IG, with the right kind of projects, can totally change that. Intergroup can be revitalized into an attractive and highly useful organization. If you build it, they will come. The image of an intergroup is a very intangible and tangible thing. Many of the intergroups with whom I've talked around the U.S. have had negative images with the general membership. Yes, I know that's a strong statement, but remember what I said about feedback mechanisms from the members. No one attending is negative feedback. No attendance at intergroup is the same as a written survey.

Concept Nine talks about Leader Skills and Abilities: "Able, trusted, servants, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are indispensable for effective functioning at all service levels... Although some service positions may require certain skills and abilities, willingness is the first step in OA service. If, however, the job requires specific skills in addition to willingness, these requirements need to be clearly stated prior to the selection of trusted servants. For instance, important attributes of an effective leader include skill, ability, tolerance, responsibility, flexibility and vision."

What about Intergroup Reps? Typically, IG bylaws leave it up to individual meetings to set the requirements for Intergroup Reps. Mistake. If some of the IG Reps are not abstinent, IG's hands are tied. All the chairs and committee chairs have abstinent requirements as, of course, do reps to Region and Delegates to WSBC. If people come to IG not abstinent, we have no resources to draw from.

Here's what the OA Handbook says about Intergroup Reps:

"In areas where an intergroup has been formed, each group usually elects an intergroup/service board representative. Representatives from the various groups meet periodically at intergroup/service gatherings.

"In addition to keeping his/her group informed about things going on at the intergroup/service board or in other groups that attend the intergroup/service board gathering, the representative is expected to fully participate in service activities undertaken by the intergroup/service board; for example, marathons or workshops that serve OA meetings in the area or OA as a whole."

“From its ranks of officers and intergroup/service board representatives, each intergroup/service board selects representatives to attend regional assemblies and delegates to attend the World Service Business Conference. These positions have abstinence and service requirements.”

All this means people sent to IG need to be abstinent and need to be there for at least a year. A chart of characteristics of a good Intergroup Rep that mirrors what the Handbook says might look something like this:

- Abstinent
- Committed to the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions
- Committed to personal recovery and OA service
- Committed to OA’s best interest
- Communicates from group to intergroup and back to group
- Keeps group informed about intergroup activities
- Fully participates in service activities undertaken by the intergroup
- Ensures an alternate IR attends intergroup meetings if he/she cannot

Appendix #5: High-Value Communications

Communication is everything in revitalizing an intergroup. Written communication and as much face-to-face time as possible is at the core of a good leader's strategy. As a new chair, I first visit as many meetings as possible to let people get to know me and my recovery and make a decision about whether to trust me or not, i.e., I establish credibility, raise awareness of intergroup and open a communication channel to intergroup. This task could be divided between the chair and the vice-chair or other officer, assuming solid physical, emotional and spiritual recovery.

We make sure we have as many channels as possible for ongoing dialogue with members. Part of the nuts and bolts of bringing everyone together is a direct communication link to as many as possible. A group is a set of people with common cause/goals. What we're trying to do is develop a new mega group of people – all members of all groups – who actually feel themselves part of something bigger. Region and WSO are invisible. Only IG's can do this.

Friends of Intergroup: We set up an email list of ALL members of all groups who are willing and call it Friends of Intergroup. The meeting visits usually start this process moving. Once high-value information begins to flow on the list, the reluctant ones usually sign up. They decide it's in their best interest to be on the list. The Friends of Intergroup list is a tool to mobilize, keep informed, thank, and pass-on OA information of all sorts, not just local IG information.

The broad objective is to show that EVERYONE is a member of intergroup. It's theirs. They put in and take out. They are all part of the resource-base. What intergroup does is plan, organize and energize. A few IG members become a force-multiplier force (to use the military term). To quote Bill W. in *As Bill Sees It*, p.13, "AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics IN ACTION."

Newsletter: Another important channel is the monthly newsletter. This is another direct channel to members from the IG, not simply a collection of member letters. It is IG's mouthpiece, our communications vehicle with individuals and meetings, in addition to their IG rep. Wouldn't it be great if we could get people to eagerly await its publication because it has information to help their personal recovery and information on the exciting things going on with the renewal effort? We can and do.

Remember our goal of helping people strengthen their personal recovery. Newsletter content should be aligned with this goal. Content is aimed at providing useful information for personal recovery, with a particular focus on educating/informing on the Program fundamentals (12 steps, 12 traditions, 9 tools.) Perhaps 60% recovery focused and 40% general information, e.g., letters, announcements, events.

Monthly columns are used to explain goals, strategies, not just of IG but also World Service. Newsletters become important documents by having a monthly dialog with the membership about what's going on, what IG is trying to do, how we're doing, what they can do to help, and year-end reports. There is the chair's column, every month. Sometimes a special edition of the newsletter is used to invite everyone to a kickoff meeting, for example, or to summarize the results of a member survey, or the strategic plan.

Newsletters are also a crucial instrument of IG's new education and training mission. The object is to fill them with **high-value material**, not just member letters. Some examples of value-add articles are given under the Local Literature section below.

Intergroup Reps: Friends of Intergroup mailings and newsletters are direct channels. A more indirect channel – but if managed well can be close to a direct channel – is the Intergroup Reps who attend the IG meeting. Continuous honest communication is critical to enlisting membership help: full disclosure, full information, why we're doing what we're doing, where we want to spend "their" money. We teach IR's how to communicate quickly to their group by giving them the script at the end of each IG meeting on what to report. We agree before closing on the top five things to report back to their meetings.

With good communications we gradually begin shifting member's paradigm from "they" to "we or us." Ultimately a major portion of members/meetings begin to look at themselves as part of something bigger than their own meeting that they need to support. Done properly, people begin to take ownership and step up to do the work. As I look back over the intergroups I've chaired, I can say that I have not had trouble getting people to do service. Where there are special skills involved, such as treasurer or newsletter editor, it simply takes a little longer.

Website: Another major communication channel is the website. In today's world it is crucial. It is, of course, aimed at both internal and external audiences. It's where members who weren't able to attend a training workshop, for example, on working steps 10, 11, 12 can go to listen to the podcast. They can find podcasts there of all past workshops. In one of my former intergroups, we created a Newcomer Orientation Video to which all newcomers were sent. Next to that Orientation are five-minute podcasts of members sharing on their recovery. This same IG created a Breaking-Out-of-Relapse video which was later picked up by WSO, "professionalized", and is now found on oa.org

What is Intergroup: Another useful communication vehicle is a *What is Intergroup* pamphlet that is updated every year and distributed to all meetings to help educate members about intergroup. In addition to describing the work of IG, what Intergroup Reps do and their suggested qualifications, it lists officer and committee contacts.

Local literature: Another communication vehicle which can be highly useful and a community-builder is a booklet produced every year of writings by local members on a particular subject. For example, one year it was *How I Got Abstinent and Stay Abstinent* written by members with at least one year of abstinence. Another year it was *How OA Changed My Life*. The huge publicity in soliciting stories and the resulting booklet dramatically increase IG exposure, is seen as high-value work by members, and the booklet itself is inspiring. This is a very useful instrument in raising awareness of IG and showing that long-term abstinence is possible. The booklets this intergroup produced had twenty-five to thirty 500-word essays in them.

Here are 25 examples of IG high-value topics, products, or material that can be used as standalones, in newsletters, at events – not in any particular order other than alphabetical. These have all been used in one form or another by my intergroups.

1. Anonymity: Are you hiding out?
2. Doing service
3. Fostering Unity

4. Fourth step options
5. Getting honest with your food: the A-B-C exercise
6. Taking a group inventory
7. Living the steps
8. Missing faces campaign
9. Newcomer retention
10. Breaking out of relapse
11. Relapse is not contagious
12. Responses to “I want to eat!!!”
13. Service is not optional
14. Sponsor Training
15. Talking to your Healthcare professional
16. The least each of us can do to keep OA healthy
 - Work our program. OA is a program of action and attraction. Each of us is the message
 - Pick a home group and commit to making it a strong meeting
 - Make sure our group has a process in place for befriending newcomers
 - Make sure our group is represented at IG by the right person
 - Pass it on. We can't keep it if we don't give it away.
17. Tips on getting through holidays/events
18. What does a newcomer need to hear, and see?
19. What makes a good Intergroup Rep?
20. What step are you working on?
21. Where your contributions go
22. Why I am a sponsor; Why I have a sponsor
23. Workshop summaries
24. WSBC summary
25. Year-end summary of IG activities

Appendix #6: Sources of Information, Ideas and Guidance

There is a mountain of information available in printed form or online to educate ourselves about every aspect of OA, as well as stimulate ideas for use by your intergroup. There are bylaws and policies (worldwide group conscience), handbooks, guidelines, manuals, pamphlets, intergroup and regional websites as well as oa.org. In fact, the very first thing to do as an IG leader is to study all these sources of information, ideas and guidance.

The pamphlets in particular are full of valuable information to help members work the program – much of which goes unread. My experience across several different geographies is that most members don't read any of the pamphlets after their first few months in the program. They make their decision about OA based on what they hear and see in the meetings, not what they read. Intergroups can use our literature in training programs and steer people to it.

Major Sources

- OA.ORG
- OA and Intergroup Bylaws
- OA Policies (Continuing Effect Motions)
- Intergroup Policy and Procedure Manuals
- OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies
- OA Public Information Manual
- OA Professional Outreach Manual
- OA Literature in general
- OA Strategic Plans
- WSBC Workshop Reports, Forum Reports, Strategic Planning Meeting Report
- WSBC Committee Reports
- A Step Ahead – OA's quarterly newsletter
- OA Distribution List – stay current
- Courier – OA once a year newsletter aimed at Health Care Professionals
- OA Membership surveys
- Other Intergroup and Region websites
- Other Intergroup and Regional newsletters (tap in, steal ideas!)
- Dialogue with other Intergroups
- 12SWI Handbook
- Other

OA bylaws and policies (Continuing Effect Motions) are available on oa.org. You need to get very familiar with these, especially the policies which can change year-to-year based on group conscience at WSBC.

Appendix #7 – Charts & Examples

The New Intergroup

Vision

High-value Intergroup that:

1. Helps the still suffering
2. Serves membership and attracts
3. Strengthens OA as a whole

Structure

1. **First priority:** Create training/educational activities and opportunities to help members recover or strengthen their recovery. This supplements sponsorship and helps close sponsor gap. From more personal recovery comes more sponsors, more attraction, more retention, stronger IG and OA.
2. **Second priority** (but required): complete ongoing IG admin tasks, e.g., meeting lists, hotlines/answering service, PI/PO, reps to Region & WSBC, Unity Day, IDEA Day, other.
3. **Third priority:** Proactively train/teach/assist meetings on administrative matters, e.g., formats, organization (job descriptions), group conscience, treasury, inventories, etc. This will facilitate and increase member service at the meeting level, strengthen meetings, and facilitate ease of movement from group service to IG service.

Goals/Strategic Plan (2-5 years)

1. Help members strengthen their personal recovery
2. Increase the number of sponsors
3. Increase the number of newcomers
4. Increase the retention of newcomers
5. Help those in relapse
6. Inspire people to give more service
7. Increase outreach and public information activities

Action Plans (current year Operating Plan) to Achieve Goals

- | | | | |
|----|----|----|-----|
| 1. | 4. | 7. | 10. |
| 2. | 5. | 8. | 11. |
| 3. | 6. | 9. | 12. |

IG's value is measured by its usefulness to members and meetings.
Usefulness is our main product.

SERVICE POWER

LEADING THROUGH SERVICE

- Intergroups can lead through service and information.
- Intergroups by their nature are in the best position to inform, educate, organize, suggest, energize and provide opportunities for OA members to strengthen their personal program and OA and carry the message to the still-suffering.
- We create opportunities for members to help themselves.
- We plan plans and take actions. The results are up to members and God.
- Miracles happen when people put themselves in a position to receive them. We can help them do that.
- There is no they, only us.
- Everyone is a part of intergroup, whether they attend IG meetings or not.
- If not me, who?

Intergroup's Greatest Service

Show people HOW to strengthen their PERSONAL RECOVERY.

Show people HOW to work the Program.

- More recovery
 - Means more sponsors, more service
 - Means more attracting & retaining newcomers
 - Means OA growth
 - Means carrying the message to more suffering compulsive eaters

Intergroup Renewal Process

Basic requirement for getting started: a dedicated leader or core of leaders living in recovery; people who walk the walk and talk the talk, and attract through their physical, emotional and spiritual recovery.

The Process

Recovery+Passion+Process = Renewal

If you build it, they will come

1. Intergroup inventory
2. Membership survey
3. Create the “cause” based on results of inventory and membership survey; for example, OA decline, lack of recovery, no sponsors, meetings failing, etc.
4. Recruit. Go out and talk to other members in physical, emotional and spiritual recovery to get them to buy into the cause; one-on-one conversations with people in recovery from as many different meetings as possible.
5. Kickoff meetings to talk about what to do about the cause. As many members as possible. Everyone has a voice. Common cause.
6. Establish a clear vision (based on inventory, member survey, other info).
7. Establish a clear set of goals/priorities to work toward vision.
8. Set a clear set of activities to accomplish the goals.
9. Set responsibilities, commitments, accountability – with a budget for each.
10. Through this process a “team” has been created.
 - Individuals have “ownership” because they have been involved.
 - Individuals have a high stake in carrying out their commitments as well as the *team* meeting its overall objectives.
11. Distribute information (newsletter/email) to ALL members and meetings explaining group-conscience-determined vision, goals and activities planned, appealing for everyone’s involvement. Possible theme: *Freedom isn’t free.*
12. Set a clear beginning and clear ending of the plan, for example the calendar year.
 - Review progress at each IG meeting / articles in newsletter / other channels.
 - Celebrate achievements – have fun.

CTIG Agenda – August 19, 2019

1. Serenity Prayer - Welcome - Tradition of the Month
2. Introductions: Officers/IR/Alternates/Visitors
3. July Minutes

Officer Reports

4. Chair Report
5. Vice Chair
6. Treasurer Report Bal. \$ _____
7. Recording Sec Report
8. Corresponding Sec Report

Committees/Other Activities

9. BTB Workshops
10. Quick-Step Studies
11. Speaker Bank
12. New Sponsor Training
13. PI/PO
14. Newsletter
15. Website
16. Hotline
17. R6 Assembly; IGR Training
18. Questions, concerns, announcements
19. Read Concept #8 and adjourn by 8:30

Key info to give your group:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Next Meeting Sept 16, 2019

Remember: CTIG's value is measured by its usefulness to members and meetings.

Usefulness is our main product.

Strategic Goals

1. Help members strengthen their personal recovery.
2. Increase the number of sponsors.
3. Increase the number of newcomers.
4. Increase the retention of newcomers.
5. Help those in relapse.
6. Increase outreach activities, especially to health care professionals.

2019 Oper Plan Events

15 Week Step Study Jan 23

Quick-Steps

New Haven	Feb
Unionville	Mar 26
New London	May 16
Oakville	Jun 25
Old Saybrook	Sept 9
New Britain	Oct 30

BTB Sun PM Workshops

- Basics of Recovery Apr 14
- Wisdom of the BB June 9
- Sponsoring and Being Sponsored Aug 18
- Body Image Sep 22

OA Holidays

- Unity Day Feb 24
- IDEA Day Nov 17

Other

- Sponsor Bank TBD
- Sponsor Training Oct
- Speaker Bank Sept
- Member Survey TBD

2019 Major Events Chronology

Jan 23	15 Week SS Begins
Feb 2	Quick-Step Study Begins
Feb 24	Unity Day
Feb 24	Hartford Health Fair
Mar 26	Quick-Step Study Begins
April 6	Vernon Holistic Fair
Apr 13	Region 6 Assembly
Apr 14	BTB: Basics of Recovery
May 6-12	WSBC
May 16	Quick-Step Study Begins
June 9	BTB: Wisdom of the BB
June 25	Quick-Step Study Begins
Aug 18	BTB: Sponsorship
Sep 21	Region 6 Assembly
Sep 9	Quick-Step Study Begins
Sep 21-22	Mum Festival
Sep 22	BTB: Body Image
Oct 18-20	Region 6 Convention
Oct 30	Quick-Step Study Begins
Nov 17	IDEA Day

Disciplines of the Meeting

- We strive for consensus, fairness, and an informed group conscience within the spirit of the Traditions and Concepts, loosely following Robert's rules. Majority rule is not the same as group conscience.
- We observe the Intergroup/Meeting Principles below.
- Please raise your hand to be recognized.

Twelve Traditions - Principles (p. 120-121, OA 12&12)

Unity, Trust, Identity, Autonomy, Purpose, Solidarity, Responsibility, Fellowship, Structure, Neutrality, Anonymity, Spirituality.

Intergroup Meeting Principles

- OA has no power structure, only a service structure.
- IG "has no power to enforce rules on OA groups or individual members." (p.100,12&12)
- Disagreement does not equal personal rejection.
- Diversity can be our strength.
- If we all agreed on everything, we wouldn't all be necessary.
- Keep our discussions within the spirit of "I love you, but I disagree with you."
- When the group conscience is reached, let there be unity.

Mon	Avon	7:00	Robin	Thu	W. Hartford	6:00	Faith
Mon	E. Hartford	1:00	Marie	Thu	Collinsville	7:00	Donna G.
Mon	Manchester	5:00	Wendy	Thu	New Britain	7:00	Don
Mon	Middletown	6:45	Sharon				
Mon	Oakville	7:00	Tom	Fri	Southington	5:30	Jen
Tue	New Britain	7:00	Kimberly	Sat	Bristol	11:00	Laura
Tue	Hebron	7:15	Donna/Amy	Sat	Rockville	10:00	Lois
Tue	Enfield**	6:00	(W.Mass IG)	Sat	Torrington	9:00	Diana
				Sat	W. Hartford	9:30	Laura
Wed	Bristol	10:00	Kathleen	Sat	Willimantic	10:00	Ginny
Wed	E. Hartford	10:00	Marie				
Wed	Southington	5:30	Dawn	Sun	Unionville	7:00	Michelle
Wed	Windsor	7:00	Fran/Mark				

2019 CTIG Jan 21, Feb 18, Mar 18, Apr 15, May 20, Jun 17, Jul 15, Aug 19, Sep 16, Oct 21, Nov 18, Dec 16

Without plans and goals, we are adrift.

What does IG Do with My Money? (2014 year-end report to membership)

1. We buy **Liability Insurance** for all meetings. It's required for many of your meetings and certainly for all special events.
2. We have a **Sponsor Bank**. The number is on the meeting list. 30 or so names in there, some of which of course are temporary sponsors.
3. We have been doing **Sponsor Training** most of the year. It takes place in 3 locations once a month. We now also do it for meetings on request. Look for updates on that next year.
4. We conducted five **Working and Living the Steps Workshops** in 2014. All these workshops are aimed at the same thing: helping members strengthen their personal recovery. Several hundred people have attended.
5. We also did five of the above workshops last year. Same objectives. Same outstanding results.
6. We produced a **Booklet** of 32 local member stories this year entitled: *How OA Changed My Life*. We handed out 250 free copies.
7. Last year it was 25 local member stories entitled, *It Works If You Work It*. It was handed out free.
8. We maintain an **OA Hotline** – 1,000 calls through September, way ahead of last year.
9. We maintain a **Website**. Website hits this year are way ahead of last year. The exciting things this year which we're calling **new media** was the *Newcomers Orientation Video* and the *Member Testimonials*.
 - The *Newcomers Orientation Video* is getting worldwide use. We know that several countries have translated it into their language. Over the few months that it's been on the website it has had 2,000 + views. [Note: Now, almost exactly a year later, it's approaching 5,000 views]
 - *Testimonials*. Fifteen member videos are there. 3,000 views so far. [Note: Now, almost exactly a year later, the testimonials are approaching 8,000 views]
10. **Public Information**: Several thousand placemats in diners; billboard for approximately four months in the mall by the Whole Foods store last year; County Center display at a large health fair where ~2,000 saw our OA display; Tarrytown Street Fair; Bulletin Board posters.
11. **Professional Outreach**: Mailings to approximately 100 health care professionals. These were names that our members submitted as good candidates to receive information. We've started placing literature displays in health care professionals' waiting rooms. It contains the 15 question card, our IG business card with our phone and website address.
12. **Bookmarks**: We made and passed out to all members bookmarks that mirrored the OA 2013-16 Strat Plan: **Get Abstinent, Work All the Steps, Carry the Message.**

13. **Business Cards**: We print and give to members business cards for use in 12th step work. The card says: Is Food A Problem for You? It gives our hotline and web address and has a space for the “giver” to put in his or her name and number.
14. **IDEA Day** event November 15. This is aimed at people in relapse or struggling. CALL people you have not seen for a while and invite them, or better yet, TAKE them.
15. **Unity Day** event February 22.
16. **Meeting lists**: Printed monthly and distributed through IG reps.
17. We publish a **Newsletter**. We’re about to go electronic so make sure you are signed up on our website to receive all our emails.
18. **Quick Step Study** will be starting in January. Through the steps in four weeks. You’ll get more information shortly. [Note: Now, a year later we have conducted six Quick Step Studies.]
19. And lastly, we’re about to go out to you with a **Member Survey** to find out exactly what you think and want for 2015 before we set our goals in January. Another reason to make sure you’re on our mailing list. The survey will be online.

This is what we’re doing with your money. Continue to give what you can, or even a little extra if you want. Intergroup can accept personal contributions, by the way, anonymous of course.

Signed: Intergroup Chair

What Makes a Strong Intergroup?

Compilation developed by officers from approximately 35 intergroups
from two different OA Regions at conclusion of Intergroup Renewal Weekend Training

1. Accountability
2. Awareness of available resources and proper utilization of them
3. Bylaws/Policy Manual
4. Clear job descriptions
5. Commitment to Abstinence – Steps, Traditions, Concepts.
6. Commitment to actions aimed at helping members strengthen their recovery.
7. Communication to all members and groups
8. Connected to Region and WSO
9. Create an inviting IG environment
10. Current database of IG Reps, meeting contacts addresses, phone #.
11. Email lists: Board, Committee Chairs, Friends of IG – general OA population
12. Encourage visitors (who can speak but not vote)
13. Enthusiasm
14. Enthusiasm at group level starts with Intergroup (IG)
15. Fiscal responsibility, budget
16. Generate & accomplish goals (Short/Long Term)
17. Group survey (membership “buy-in”)
18. Interesting Website (continually updated)
19. Intergroup Rep mentoring
20. Intergroup Reps (IR’s) with abstinence / recovery
21. Leader follows-up with all committees, volunteers for service (and new reps)
22. Leadership with strong recovery (abstinence requirements for officers)
23. Make sure speakers at workshops are “right” speakers and speak on subject
24. Mission Statement - Clarity of purpose - Concrete service to the groups
25. Multimedia, multi-style Communication
26. Newcomer strategy
27. Newsletter
28. Practice acceptance, respect, kindness, tolerance, humility and discipline in IG meetings
29. Primary Purpose - Carry the message, don’t get caught up in adminstrivia.
30. Principles before Personalities
31. Professional Outreach / Public Information
32. Properly accountable committees
33. Quick response to hotline and inquiries and emails
34. Recovery
35. Recruitment – Don’t wait for volunteers – Ask for help
36. Regular inventories
37. Remember our primary purpose (Tradition 5)
38. Respect and trust
39. Retention of IR’s
40. Rotation of service
41. Send delegates to region and WSBC

42. Service mentality: How can we be of service to members and groups?
43. Solid tone from leader
44. Speaker Bank
45. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Rewarding, Time-sensitive goals (SMART) (i.e. workshops, events, “missing persons” campaign)
46. Sponsor Bank
47. Stagger board term elections so not all board positions change at same time
48. Strive for 100% group representation at IG
49. Structured & timely meetings, gentle usage of Robert Rules (consensus vs votes)
50. Substantive/training type of newsletter
51. Train IR on “What to bring back” and how to present it
52. Train your replacement (reps, committee chairs, officers)
53. Transparency with respect to goals/methods – invite participation
54. Two-way communication with members, groups (and other intergroups)
55. Use member’s strengths
56. Welcome to Intergroup new IG Rep packet
57. Willingness – Humor – Diversity - Creativity
58. Working knowledge of OA Handbook

Fall 2014 Member Survey
 surveymonkey.com
 xxx Intergroup

Intergroup's #1 objective is to be useful to our membership. Our current strategic goals are:

1. Help members strengthen their personal recovery
2. Increase the number of sponsors
3. Increase the number of newcomers
4. Increase the retention of newcomers
5. Help those in relapse
6. Inspire people to give more service

As we prepare our 2015 plans, we want to know more about what you think we should do.

Following is a 25-question member survey that we hope everyone will complete. It will give us

1) Your ideas on things that Intergroup might do to help you in your individual recovery; 2)

Your ideas on things that might help Intergroup carry the message to more people; 3)

Information about the overall health of OA in the area.

This is an **anonymous** survey. The more people who participate, the greater the value of the information gained. Every person's opinion counts, no matter how long he or she has been in OA. A summary will be published in our newsletter or online.

1. How did you find OA?

- OA member
- Friend
- Family/relative
- Other 12-step program
- Health care professional
- Internet/social networking
- Newspaper
- Other
- Don't recall

2. How long have you been a member of OA?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

3. What is your length of abstinence?

- Less than 90 days
- 3 to 12 months
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- More than 11 years

4. Do you work with a sponsor?
 Yes
 No
5. If you do not work with a sponsor, what is the reason (s):
 Can't find a sponsor
 Haven't looked for a sponsor
 Bad prior experience with a sponsor
 Simply in-between sponsors
 Other _____
6. What brought you to OA?
 Out of control eating
 Overweight/to lose weight
 Purging
 Anorexia/restricting
7. What keeps you coming back? Check all that apply.
 Fellowship; love; support; acceptance
 Hope; people who have what I want
 OA works if I work it
 Found new way of living (sanity, peace)
 12 Steps as a way of life
 Nowhere else to go
 Fear of relapse
 Opportunity to be useful
 Higher Power
 Other: _____
8. Have you ever left OA for a reason OTHER THAN RELAPSE?
 Yes
 No
9. If you left OA for a reason OTHER THAN RELAPSE, what were the reasons:
 Not ready/not willing
 Do it on my own
 Lack of recovery in the meetings
 Personalities in the meetings
 Meeting closed
 Health issues
 Family issues, including pregnancy
 Scheduling problem/busy schedule
 Other _____
10. If you left, what brought you back?
 Relapse: physical, emotional, spiritual

- Needed the OA Fellowship
- Nothing else works
- Maturity/willingness
- Personalities changed
- Other _____

11. Have you ever relapsed? How many times?

- Yes
- No
- Number _____

12. Are you in relapse now?

- Yes
- No

13. What do you think is the most important thing you personally need to do to strengthen your recovery, whether you're abstinent or in relapse?

- Accept I truly have a disease
- Work/complete/redo the steps
- Increase use of tools
- Surrender to program suggestions
- Increase spirituality
- Work with a sponsor
- Tighten plan of eating
- More service/pass it on
- Reach out to others/don't isolate
- Self acceptance
- All the above
- Other _____

14. How many people attend your home meeting on average?

- 2 to 10
- 11 to 20
- More than 20

15. What do you see as your home meeting's strengths?

- Strong attendance
- People in recovery
- Focus on steps and traditions
- Committed members
- People willing to do service
- Good format
- Atmosphere: friendly, accepting, supportive
- Intimate
- Anonymity practiced

- Sponsors available
- Opportunity to share
- Other _____

16. What do you see as your home meeting's weaknesses?

- Low attendance
- Lack of recovery
- Lack of sponsors
- Don't focus on steps and traditions
- Sharing not focused on recovery
- Don't reach out to newcomers
- Disorganized
- Cliquishness
- Don't stick to format
- Gossip
- Controllers
- Cross talk
- Don't get to share as much as I would like

17. Does your home meeting get newcomers?

- yes
- no

18. Approximately what percent of newcomers return?

- 75%
- 50%
- 25%
- Almost none

19. If newcomers don't usually stick around, what do you think is the reason?

- Not ready
- Lack of member attention at first meetings
- No explanation of how program works
- No follow-up calls
- OA not for them
- Time/location/day not right
- Lack of sponsors
- Other _____

20. Rate the following possible Intergroup services in terms of their importance:

High (H), Medium (M), Low (L)

- 1. Assisting your meeting in publicizing itself
- 2. Assisting your meeting with an inventory
- 3. Organizing Step Studies
- 4. Organizing or promoting more OA traditional marathons throughout the year
- 5. Organizing weekend retreats

- 6. Training workshops, as Intergroup has been doing the past 3 years
- 7. Create "training" videos to supplement sponsorship
- 8. Sponsor Bank
- 9. Sponsor Training
- 10. Speaker Bank
- 11. Newsletter
- 12. Other _____

21. Intergroup has been conducting Working and Living the Steps (training) Workshops for the past 3 years that have been very popular. If these continue, what are the most important subjects to be covered? Rate each (H) high, (M) medium, or (L) low priority.

- 1. Plans of Eating
- 2. Using the Tools
- 3. Being Sponsored and Becoming a Sponsor
- 4. Working Steps 1-3
- 5. Working Steps 4-7
- 6. Working Steps 8-9
- 7. Working Steps 10-12
- 8. Big Book Study
- 9. Relapse Recovery and Prevention
- 10. Attracting and Retaining Newcomers
- 11. Member Retention
- 12. Twelve Traditions
- 13. The Value of Slogans
- 14. Quick Steps studies
- 15. 4th Step workshops
- 16. Body Image
- 17. Other suggested topics _____

22. Rate the following High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L), as possible topics for Intergroup newsletters or other publications:

- 1. Nurturing newcomers
- 2. Characteristics of a great sponsor
- 3. Characteristics of a great meeting
- 4. Anonymity: what it is, what it isn't
- 5. Getting started: first things first
- 6. Conducting group business meetings
- 7. Taking a group inventory
- 8. Meeting formats: OA recommendations
- 9. Group conscience: what it is
- 10. Fourth step options
- 11. What each of us can do to keep OA strong
- 12. Other ideas for articles or publications _____

23. What, if anything, could Intergroup do to help your meeting? Here's some things people

have said in the past. Add your own ideas.

- Don't know
- Provide training/explain responsibilities for service positions, such as treasurer, program chair, secretary, etc.
- Speaker's bureau
- Send people in recovery from Intergroup to speak
- Organize more IG activities
- Increase the number of sponsors, including temporary
- Help train sponsors
- Sponsor bank
- Special events aimed at newcomers
- Help us increase attendance
- More communications from Intergroup
- Newsletter publicity featuring individual meetings
- Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

24. Are you willing to do more service to help support Intergroup and OA? How?

- Yes
- No

25. Any other comments/ideas/suggestions?
