

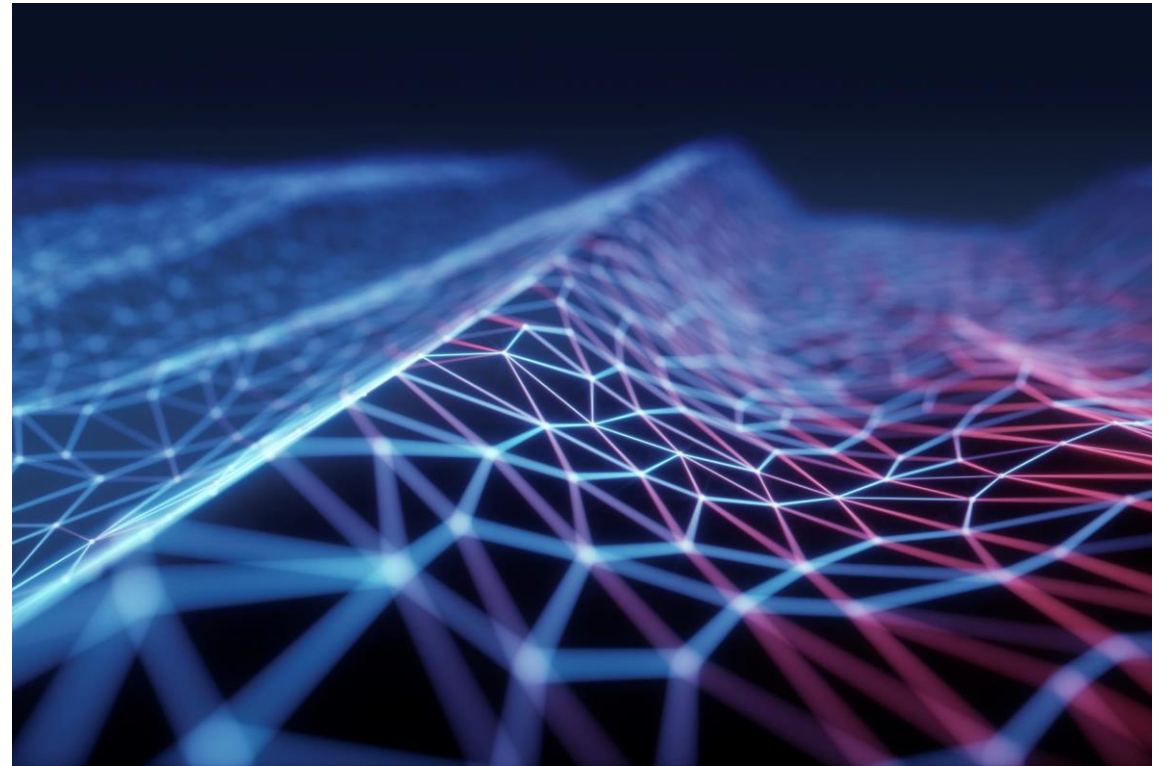


2023 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON POLICY/ADMISSIONS

ITEM E

# ITEM E

- Review report of the GSB Ad-Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada Service Structure.



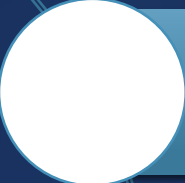
# BACKGROUND

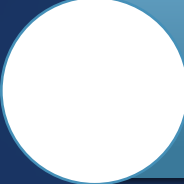
- *2021 Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference*
  - It was recommended that:
    - The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation by listing groups who request to be listed in Fellowship Connection according to the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This replaces the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as "International Correspondence Meetings."
  - It was recommended that:
    - The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.

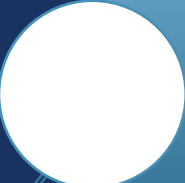


## PARTICIPATION OF ONLINE GROUPS

### GSB AD HOC COMMITTEE

 Advisory Action: The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.

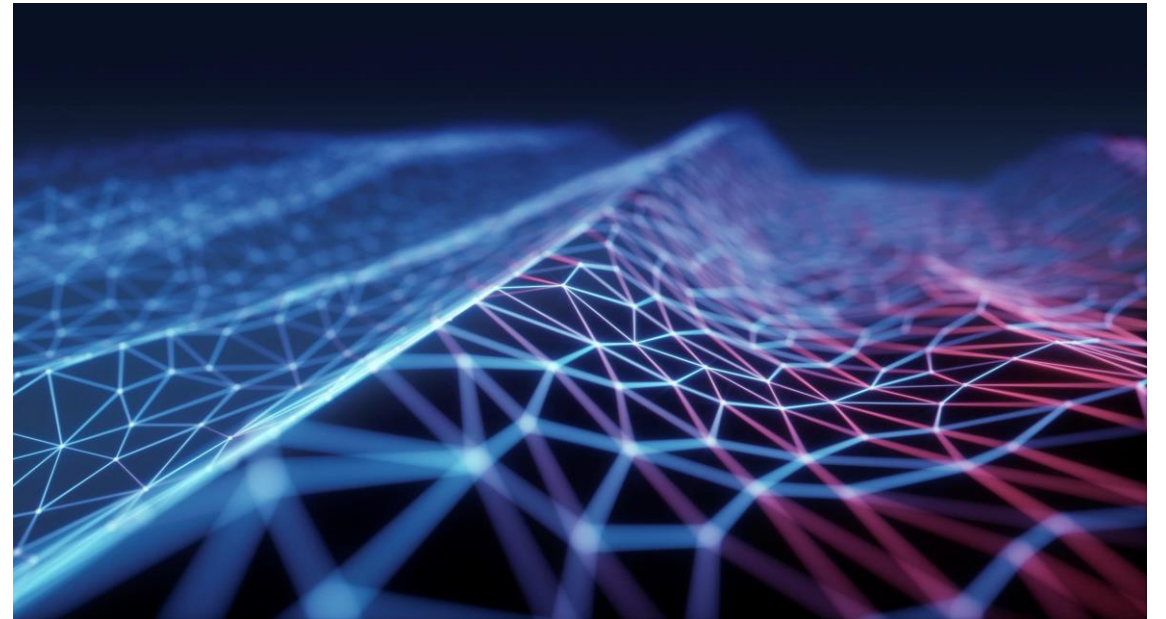
 Gathered input and sharing from the GSO Working Group, Online Intergroup of AA (OIAA), other fellowships, AA in other countries, submissions to the GSC. This 35 page report was presented to the 72nd GSC. Among the conclusions was that there were more questions to be asked, and that a survey to the delegates to better understand online group participation throughout the 93 areas of the US Canada structure should follow.

 Survey to the delegates regarding participation of online groups has been sent, review and analysis of the results is in progress. •In the interim many areas and districts have found methods to include participation of online groups, and proposed agenda items on this topic (pro and con) continue to be received.

## ITEM E

### *2022 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions*

- The committee reviewed the Progress Report from the trustees' Ad Hoc Committee on the Participation of Online Groups in the U.S. and Canada Service Structure and expressed appreciation for the ad hoc committee's work. Given the Fellowship's interest in this topic and a desire for accountability to the Conference, the Conference Policy/Admissions Committee requests a progress report be provided as part of their background material in advance of the 73rd General Service Conference.

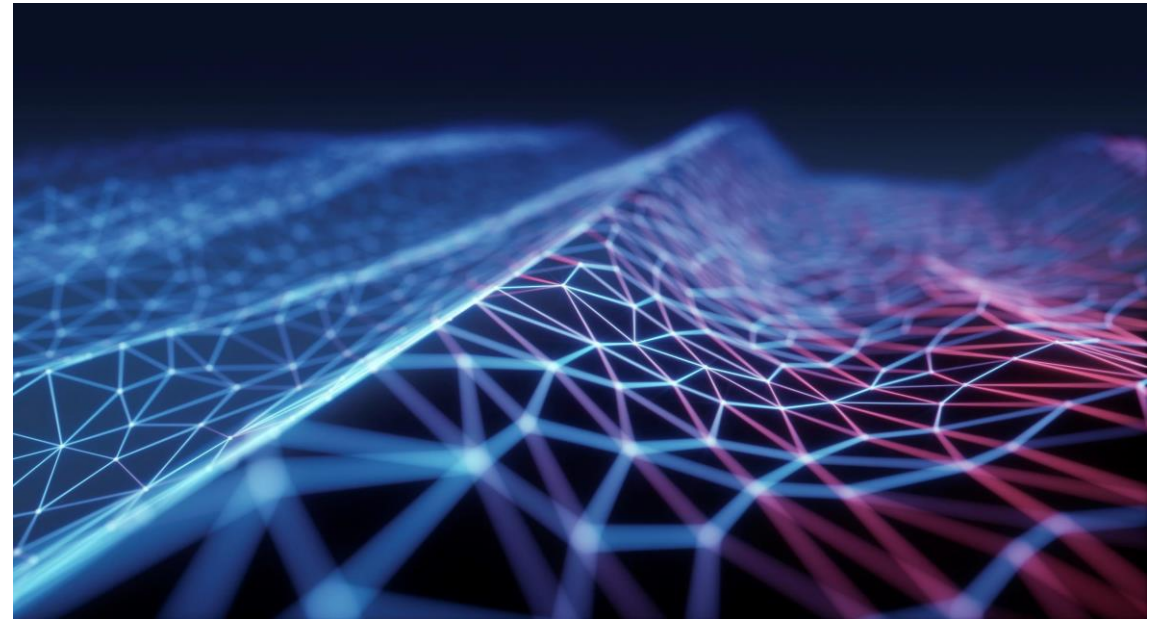


# ITEM E

## *2022 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions*

### ■ **Section 2 – Current Database Information**

As of December 6, 2022, the GSO database had 883 listings for virtual groups in the U.S./Canada general service structure. Of these 883 groups, 587 of them have a GSR as their primary contact. In April 2022, there were 595 active virtual groups in the database. That is a steady increase in the number of groups. There are currently two virtual districts that are listed in the GSO database: District 20 in Area 48, and District 25 in Area 72. Other areas may be in the process of forming or accepting virtual districts, but only two are currently listed by GSO. Both of the virtual districts have seen a steady increase in the number of virtual groups joining them.

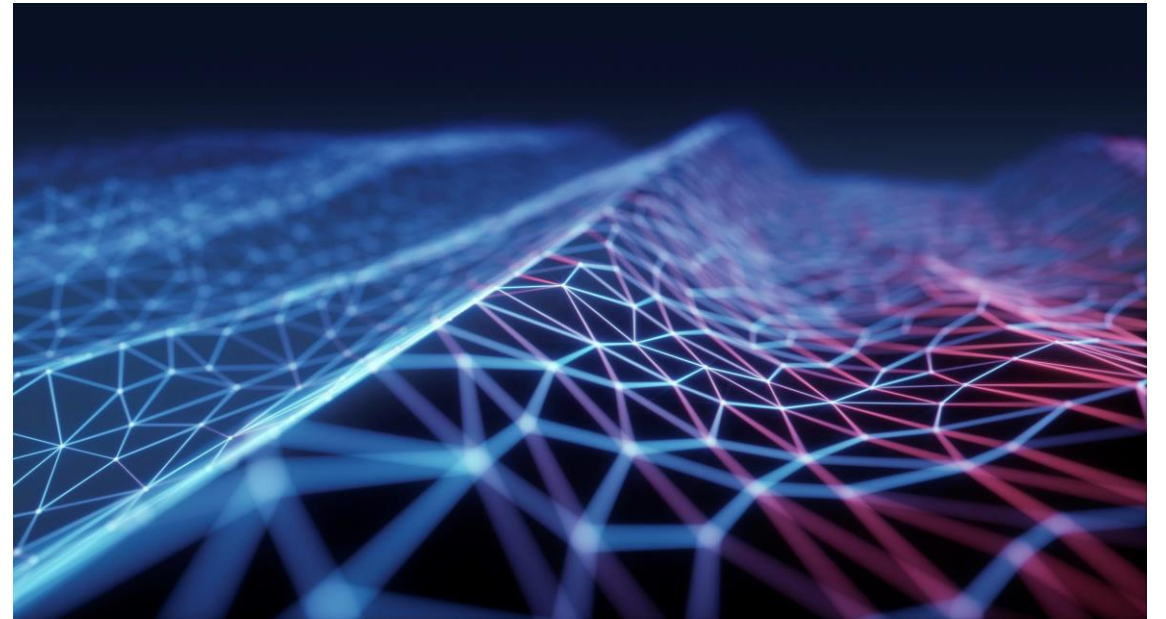




# ITEM E

## *2022 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions*

- **Section 3 – Delegate Survey**
- **A – Survey Data**
- The ad hoc crafted a series of questions for the Delegates. The initial survey was sent out on September 28/22 and 67 responses were initially received. A reminder notice went out on October 8 and an additional 4 responses were received. Total responses were therefore 71, for a 76.5% return rate. A follow up survey was sent out on November 4, seeking additional information about question #6 in order to try and get some clarity about the composition of virtual groups. 51 responses were received.



# BACKGROUND NOTES:

## PAI 181 and ADDITIONAL AREA APPLICATION:

Reviewed by the Trustees' General Conference Committee and Trustees' Ad Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada General Service Structure not forwarded to Conference as a separate agenda item.

*"To create a Delegate Area for Online Groups."*

This proposal was 96 pages in total, was prepared by a group of approximately 20 people from 15 groups throughout the U.S./Canada General Service Structure after considerable effort on the submitters' part in gathering information from online groups.



Some of the points made in the submission:

*Online groups have existed for over 25 years, but still lack access to the service structure if the existing structures do not accommodate online participation. They are existing outside the current Service Structure.*

*An Online Area would “restore the full Right of Representation to online groups.”*

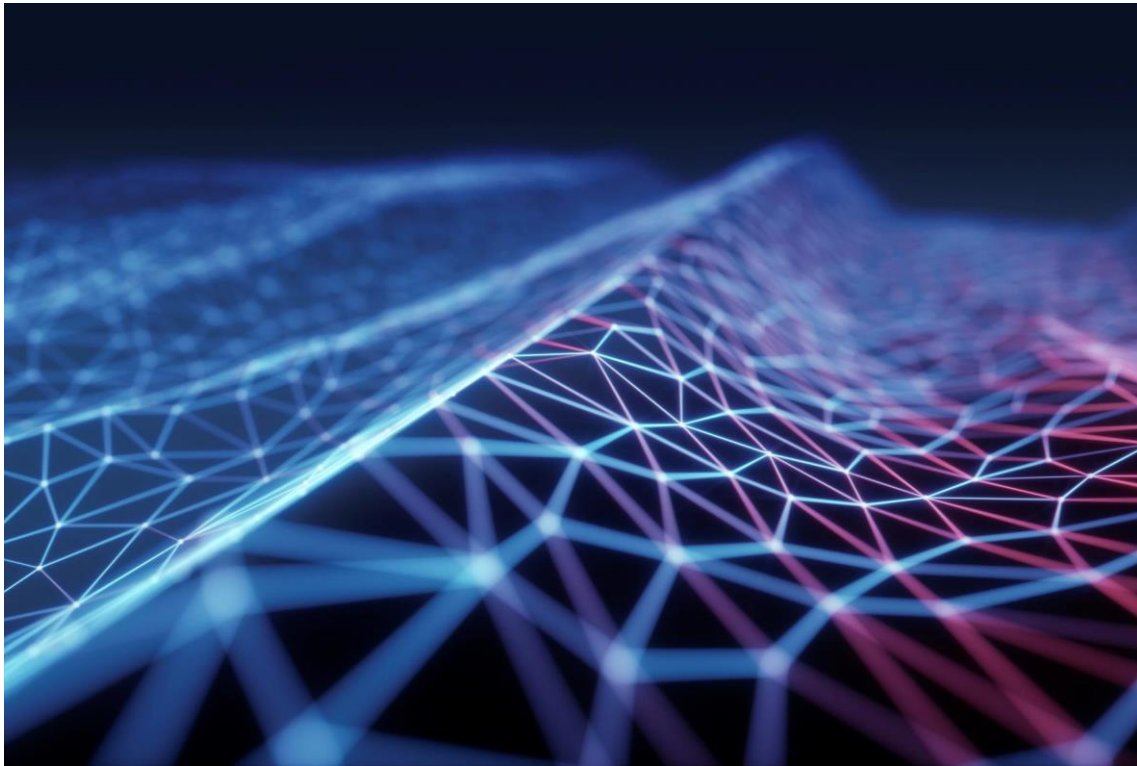
*The exclusion of an online delegate affects the Conference’s ability to be fully informed.*

*This Area would bridge the gap for members excluded by accessibility barriers including members who are elderly or in residential treatment, people unable to get to meetings because of inclement weather, the voices of diverse minorities and groups unable to afford the costs associated with physical meeting space.*

*The submission of the Additional Delegate Area Application for Online Groups is the culmination of the effort to learn if online groups have an expressed widespread need for general service participation.*

## **BACKGROUND NOTES:**

# 2023 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON POLICY/ADMISSIONS



- **Section 7 – Suggestions Going Forward**
- More Shared Experience Needed Regarding Online Groups While Conference-Approved literature needs to go through the Conference process to be updated, service material has fulfilled the important role of providing shared experience to groups and members when there is a need for timely sharing of information. However, the magnitude of change A.A. has gone through in the last few years has sometimes outpaced our ability to collect shared experience, especially in areas related to online groups. It is clear from the survey responses, sharing at workshops, and correspondence from A.A. members and groups, that there is a desire for more information regarding online groups. Below are links to materials currently available on the aa.org website, in the Group Handbook, and in service kits that have information related to online groups.

- Anonymity Online and Digital Media
- A.A. Guidelines on the Internet MG-18
- GSO New Group Listing Guidelines/Form
- Is Your Group Linked to A.A. as a Whole?
- Frequently Asked Questions on Practicing the Seventh Tradition at Virtual Meetings
- Serving All Alcoholics: Making the A.A. Message Accessible



## ITEM E



- While they offer helpful information, more shared experience needs to be gathered from online groups on their practices and procedures, the challenges they've faced and the solutions they've found so that it can be integrated into these service pieces. Sharing from one group to another, one GSR to another, one DCM to another, and one district to another will do a great deal to fill the need.





- **Section 8 – The Ongoing Conversation**
- There are still, as there were with the first progress report, more questions than answers. However, the shape of the questions continues to evolve and change. It is apparent that many conversations are happening at Area, District and Group levels, and that there is a need and an appetite for continued shared experience. There are voices that we continue to need to seek out and hear from in this still-evolving picture and process. It is a remarkable one to be a part of.



- My Question to the Groups:

What suggestions can your group offer on incorporating online groups into our service structure?



THANK YOU!