

Special Forums Collected Experience

FAQ's on Special Forums

Q: What is a Special Forum?

A: Special Forums are designed for remote, sparsely populated or urban areas to serve A.A. members who would not normally be able to attend a Regional Forum as well as when there is an expressed need based on culture, language or geography.

“Extra” Forums to the regularly scheduled Regional Forums were held as early as 1979. Ten “extra” forums were held up until 1996 when the concept of Special Forums was formalized. In 2006, after 22 more Special Forums were held, the General Service Board decided to discontinue Special Forums by the year 2008. In 2017, the GSB decided to re-implement Special Forums for 2022.

Special Forum programs reflect Regional Forum programs and include Forum presentations, sharing sessions, and workshops to address topics such as:

- Structure and responsibilities of the General Service Board, AAWS and the AA Grapevine Boards
- Services provided by the General Service Office and the AA Grapevine
- The A.A. Fellowship's upside-down triangle structure
- How groups are connected to A.A. beyond the group level

Q: Who is responsible for Special Forums?

A: Special Forums are hosted, coordinated and financed by the General Service Board. Special Forums are supported by volunteer efforts of A.A. Welcome Committees formed at the local level where the Special Forums are to be held. Special Forums are not intended to replace or be a substitute for local service workshops.

Welcome Committees are responsible for any kind of hospitality suite onsite at Special Forums.

Q: What support is provided by the General Service Board/General Service Office?

A: GSO helps with the following:

- Coordinating attendance of Board representatives and staff members
- Producing and distributing the Special Forum flyer
- Special Forum literature displays
- Publishing and distributing a Special Forum Final Report

Q: Is there a registration fee for Special Forums?

A: No, Seventh Tradition contributions to the General Service Board finance Special Forums as a vital 12 Step service provided by the GSO.

Q: What is the anticipated format of a Special Forum?

A: Special Forum formats are typically a two-day event. Presentations, general sharing sessions and workshops can be arranged in various ways to suit the overall format.

Q: Is it possible that an ice cream social or other hospitality related activity may be part of the Special Forum?

A: Yes, based on a Welcome Committee's group conscience decision.

Q: Does the General Service Board get input for Special Forum programming?

A: The General Service Board/GSO receives input from the Welcome Contact and the Welcome Committee related to the theme and program content of Special Forums.

Q: Explain the request process for Special Forums.

A: Special Forums are A.A. events put on by A.A.s for A.A.s about A.A. Special Forums are to be requested by Special Forum Committees using the Special Forum Request Form. This form is to be forwarded to regionalforums@aa.org by April 1st **two years prior** to the year the Special Forum will be held.

GSO will forward a copy of the request to the Area Delegate and the Regional Trustee. The Regional Trustee informs the Delegates of the region about the request during the annual Regional Luncheon at the General Service Conference.

Special Forum Committees are welcome to work with their area, district and any local A.A. entity to initiate a Special Forum request. Members may create an autonomous committee to initiate a Special Forum request. After the Regional Luncheon the trustee forwards the Special Forum request with comments or notes, if any, to the secretary of the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums for the committee's consideration at their July meeting.

Q: What are the criteria for acceptance of requests?

A: The trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums approves up to two Special Forums annually, with no more than one Special Forum in a region every four years. All requests will be considered with the rotation of geographic locations in mind.

Q: **What is the role of the Area Delegate?**

A: GSO receives the Special Forum Request Form and forwards a copy to the Area Delegate and Regional Trustee for their discussion purposes. All Delegates in a region have an opportunity to comment on Special Forum requests at the annual Regional Luncheon held during the General Service Conference. The Regional Trustee forwards the Special Forum request, with comments and notes from Delegates to the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums for consideration at their July meeting.

Q: **Would Area Assemblies be involved in the request process for Special Forums?**

A: Not necessarily. The trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums anticipates that areas, districts, regions, ICYPAA committees, Indigenous communities or committees and any members and service entities may wish to create a Special Forum Welcome Committee to present a Special Forum request to the General Service Office.