

# NERAASA Takes Its Own Inventory

## Report at NERAASA Business Meeting 02/27/21

### INTRODUCTION

At our 2020 Business Meeting in Nashua, New Hampshire, NERAASA voted to take an inventory of itself. The Northeast Regional Trustee, Francis G., then appointed a geographically diverse committee with 7 members:

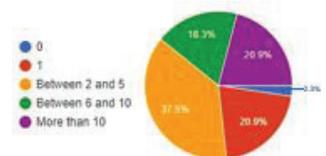
Don B. (Co-Chair, P68 A29 Past Delegate)  
Rose S. (Co-Chair, P68 A45 Past Delegate)  
Denise M. (Secretary, P70 A50 Alternate Delegate)  
Bill W. (P66 A48 Past Delegate)  
Margie S. (P69 A60 Past Delegate)  
Alison H. (P70 A61 Alternate Delegate)  
Peter B. (P70 A28 Alternate Delegate)

The committee developed a two-phase approach: First, administration of the NERAASA Inventory Questionnaire between December 1, 2020 and January 4, 2021; and second, two virtual open discussions to review the questionnaire results with a forum for comments and questions on January 24 and 27, 2021.

### WHO RESPONDED TO THE INVENTORY QUESTIONNAIRE?

There were 346 responses to the questionnaire in English and 7 in Spanish. A 24% response rate was determined based on the 1470 unique emails of 2019 and 2020 NERAASA registrants to whom the survey was sent directly multiple times. Our 18 delegates were contacted and asked to encourage participation from members in their areas, and a link to the survey was placed on the NERAASA website.

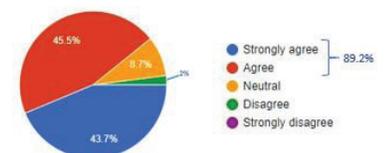
21% of those who responded to the survey had attended 1 NERAASA. 21% had attended over 10 NERAASAs. 129 respondents, or 38%, had attended between 2 and 5. GSRs and their alternates, combined with DCMs and alternates accounted for 47% of the responses (81 GSRs and 80 DCMs). Past delegates completed 16% of the responses. All 18 areas of the region participated, with the most responses from Area 59, Eastern Pennsylvania.



### QUESTION SUMMARIES

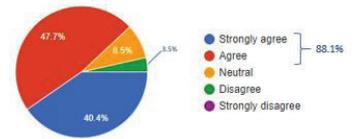
#### 1) NERAASA fulfills its purpose of discussing General Service Conference related issues.

The responses were overwhelmingly positive with 89.2% of respondents agreeing with this statement and only 2% disagreeing. Responses focused on time limitations, based on the time available during NERAASA to cover an agenda item in full and have sufficient time for discussion; and limited time between distribution of final Conference agenda items and background and the timing of NERAASA. Additionally, NERAASA's ability to fulfill the purpose of discussing Conference-related issues depends largely on the Host committee and how, when, and which topics are selected, as well as preparation and adherence to the topic by speakers and panelists.



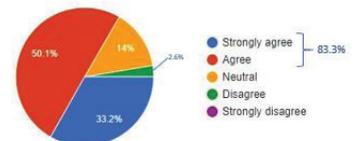
## 2) NERAASA fulfills its purpose of discussing concerns affecting A.A. as a whole.

The responses were overwhelming positive with 88.1% agreeing and only 3.5% of respondents disagreeing with this statement. The comments suggested two follow-up questions: (1) Is NERAASA's ability to discuss concerns affecting A.A. as a whole impeded by the time and focus spent on Conference items? and (2) Could and should NERAASA spend more time on items that touch the AA membership as a whole?



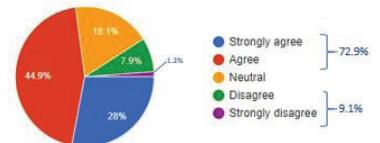
## 3) NERAASA fulfills its purpose of discussing pertinent aspects of recovery, unity and service common to the Areas of the Northeast Region.

Despite an 88.3% positive response rate, 12 of the 38 comments pointed out that the focus is mainly on service and AA as a whole rather than on issues of recovery and unity within the Northeast Region. A few comments stressed the need for more racial diversity and discussion of special needs. A half dozen comments praised the roundtables, while one favored the presentations for fulfilling this purpose. Another pointed out the original NERAASA purpose of preparing our delegates for the Conference.



## 4) The purpose of NERAASA is communicated clearly.

Even though there was a 72.9% positive response rate, a strong plurality of the 52 comments stressed the need for improvement in this area. Comments included: "NERAASA clearly fulfills its purpose, but it fails to communicate its purpose clearly." "The purpose could be clarified and simplified." "We have much work to do here." "You get the best understanding of NERAASA by attending with someone who has been there before." Suggested improvements included creating a "Bring a Sponsee" program; partnering with local service structures; repeating the "Mission Statement" frequently; and posting a skeleton agenda on the website. The most memorable negative comment called it "Neraasic Park," because "it's where the A.A. dinosaurs go."

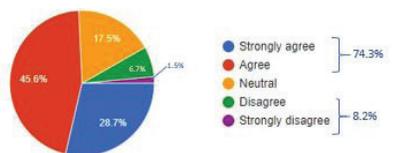


## 5) What is YOUR purpose in attending NERAASA?

300 people answered this question and the overwhelming reason given was to learn about service and the Conference. Many respondents also mentioned meeting other AAs, AA friends, and fellow trusted servants. 17 people simply gave their service position, and 1 respondent, perhaps more honest than others, admitted, "It was required as an officer of my area."

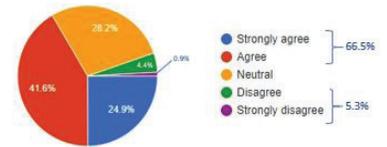
## 6) The service roundtables meet my needs.

The 342 responses indicated a fairly high level of discontent. While most agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, many had reservations. 24 people mentioned that the effectiveness of the roundtables depended on the facilitator, some of whom were not perceived as particularly effective or knowledgeable; 20 complained about the late hour that the roundtables are held; 5 mentioned that the number of people at the GSR/DCM roundtables is too high and the room is too crowded; 4 spoke of the need for Spanish interpretation at the roundtables; and 1 commented that it was impossible to attend more than one roundtable since they were all at the same time. Other than comments about the facilitators, time, language, and crowd, there were no complaints about the format or content.



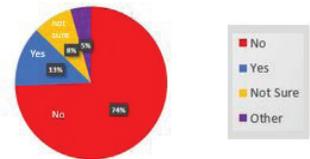
**7) The NERAASA Business Meeting gives all members the opportunity to participate.**

There were 348 responses and 66 comments. The overall response was positive for this question, although 5.3% felt it needed improvement. Many stressed the time limitation, or that they had no interest in attending, or that they felt it was boring. On the positive side, others felt a good job is done with the time allotted and that they look forward to it. It is the opportunity for newer trusted servants to experience the forming of a large group conscience. It was noted that translation services are present, and time is given for their use. All who desire to share have an opportunity to do so within the time constraints.



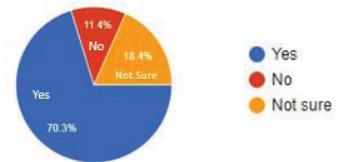
**8) Should NERAASA have purposes other than those set out in the Guidelines?**

There were 210 responses to this question. Although 74% felt there was no need to change the NERAASA purpose, 26 comments suggested additions, such as AA members, roundtables, NERD, and GSO. It was mentioned that what happens at NERAASA is fine, but does not reflect the statement of purpose.



**9) Does one NERAASA per year meet our needs?**

There were 347 responses to this question and 66 comments. 70% of respondents answered “Yes,” 18.4% “Unsure,” and 11.4% answered “No.” Quite a few comments favored a second NERAASA, perhaps in a virtual format. Some liked the idea of roundtable participants being able to meet virtually throughout the year. Those who wanted an in-person event suggested having it in the fall and focusing on the needs of our trusted servants. There was concern that areas are autonomous and too many regional events could homogenize viewpoints on critical or sensitive matters.



**10) How can we attract the diversity of our Northeast Regional A.A. membership to NERAASA?**

287 provided responses to this question. Diversity was defined in different ways by the respondents, with some focusing on race and linguistic barriers, others on gender, some on disabilities, and some on positions in the fellowship. Many proposed that outreach is the answer, and stated the best place to do this is at the home group. It was also suggested that the membership survey be completed and short and long-range plans to tackle diversity be developed.

**11) What can we do to ensure that all A.A. members interested in service are able to attend an accessible and affordable NERAASA?**

149 of the 248 responses said attendees should be subsidized if needed. 100 called for scholarships, mostly undefined in source, while 49 said that areas, districts, and groups should provide assistance to their respective members. 27 indicated that the event is too expensive. Of these, most highlighted lodging cost; a few thought registration too expensive; and one complained about meal prices. 7 people asked about physical accessibility issues such as mobility, hearing, and lighting. 7 criticized travel distance, suggesting that NERAASAs should be held at the edges of the region, or all in the center, or that the region itself should be split in half. 52 advocated a virtual component—all virtual; or hybrid; or alternating video years with in-person years; or each NERAASA including virtual and physical events. 7 responses called for better communication, especially convincing groups of the importance of NERAASA. One thought that NERAASA was too elitist, just for service junkies.

## 12) Is there anything you would like to add?

46 of the 133 responses were “No.” Various comments complained about mic hogs and late-night roundtables. Some notable comments: “An inventory of NERAASA is long overdue. This inventory survey is just the start of the inventory process, but the survey results should produce some clearly expressed needs, lead to some policy changes and actions warranted for future improvements.” “I think it is important we keep NERAASA evolving and growing to meet the needs of AA as a whole.” “NERAASA awakened me in a way I never expected or could consider. I enjoy it more than conventions or roundups.” “This ‘inventory’ is more like a survey, and does not lend itself to discussion and the presence of a Higher Power.”

## NEXT STEPS

A full written report, including minutes from the two virtual discussion sessions with the fellowship, is available at [neraasa.org/inventory](http://neraasa.org/inventory).

THANK YOU!

### NERAASA Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA) is for GSRs, DCMs, Area Committee Members and Intergroup and Central Office Representatives of the Northeast Region to discuss General Service Conference related issues and concerns affecting AA as a whole, as well as pertinent aspects of recovery, unity and service common to the Areas of the Northeast Region.