

# Report of the 2013 General Service Conference Inventory

## “The General Service Conference Takes its Inventory — Our Solution in Action”

As suggested by the 2013 General Service Conference theme, taking inventory, in the best sense of the word, is a fundamental aspect of A.A.’s program of recovery. As cofounder Bill W. reflected in *A.A. Comes of Age* (page 231), “Just as each A.A. must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole society if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well.”

An inventory, then, at the level of general service is a natural outgrowth of that which is done to maintain individual sobriety throughout the A.A. Fellowship. However, when applied to A.A.’s general services and for the purposes of the General Service Conference inventory, the “Twelve Concepts for World Service,” not the Twelve Steps for Recovery, provide the lens through which to evaluate current Conference practices and procedures, to determine how they relate to the original plan, purpose and structure of the General Service Conference, now in its 64th year.

As noted in the Keynote Address at the opening of the 2013 General Service Conference, “Self-assessment is a pervasive part of our A.A. program; fully half of our Steps are directly related to it. Inventory of the Conference and personal inventory in the Steps are not quite the same, however. At the Conference, the emphasis will be on effectiveness in carrying out the purposes of the Conference, not on ‘character defects.’”

“Honesty, both with ourselves and with others, is a core value of A.A.... We don’t take inventory simply because it is, in and of itself, a good thing (like kindness, or generosity), but rather because it is an important element of our continued sobriety. The same holds true for our service inventories, including the Conference inventory which we are now undertaking. We are not here to take pride in doing the responsible thing by taking an inventory. We are here to help assure the unity and effectiveness of A.A. in its mission to carry the great message of hope to anyone, anywhere, who has a desire to do something about his or her drinking problem.”

In terms of the General Service Conference Inventory, the question could be asked: why now? In response, one delegate wrote in a 2013 Conference presentation titled “The General Service Conference Inventory — Why Is It Necessary?” “Alcoholics Anonymous is on the precipice of change. In the new Grapevine title, *Happy, Joyous & Free*, there is a great quote. ‘There are just two things an alcoholic doesn’t like — the way things are, and change.’”

“Our primary purpose hasn’t changed, but there are things that are changing. Our self-support model has been shifting. The logistics of publishing, commerce, distribution and communication — these are changing. Significantly.”

“We have choices that we need to make to ensure that we use our precious resources prudently. Our inventory is an invitation to participate in a transparent, honest and loving dialogue about how we go about making these choices. It’s an opportunity to review the logistics of leadership, while preserving our beautiful Concepts.”

## History

In his introduction to the *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, Bill W. wrote about the importance of the Concepts as an interpretation of A.A.’s world service structure. “They reveal the evolution by which it has arrived in its present form, and they detail the experience and reasoning on which our operation stands today,” he said. “These Concepts therefore aim to record the ‘why’ of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.”

In that spirit, in 2005 the General Service Board began the process of taking an inventory of itself, including its two operat-

ing corporations, the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. and Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. As the inventories continued throughout 2006, the chairperson of the General Service Board appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Inventories to review the three Board inventories (A.A. Grapevine, A.A.W.S., and the GSB) and to prioritize suggestions for Board consideration. As this process was nearing completion, in April of 2008, a sitting regional trustee suggested to the General Service Board that the inventory process might also expand to cover the General Service Conference itself, examining its structure, processes and procedures.

Some of the possible items that could be given thorough study, it was suggested, were: the effectiveness of the current committee system, the impact of new technologies on A.A.’s group conscience process, a creeping politicization of the Conference process versus the policy of delegation and trust, and the role of the trustees in the Conference process — as principal planners and administrators or mere order takers?

A General Service Board subcommittee was formed in August 2008 to discuss this proposal for a General Service Conference Inventory and presented a final report to the GSB in February of 2009. After reviewing the history of other Conference inventories, the conclusion of the subcommittee was that while presentations and workshops had been held at the 1963, 1981 and 1993 Conferences, where the theme of each Conference was “A.A. Takes Its Inventory,” an actual inventory of the General Service Conference itself had never been conducted, and the subcommittee agreed that it seemed reasonable to conclude that “a thorough and soul-searching examination” of the GSC was warranted.

## The Idea Moves to the Conference

The subcommittee recommended that the General Service Board forward a recommendation to the 2009 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions proposing that a comprehensive inventory of the GSC be undertaken. The GSB accepted the subcommittee’s recommendation and forwarded such a proposal to the 2009 Conference. Provided as background were the full report of the subcommittee, including some detailed suggestions for conducting a GSC inventory, and the original proposal for a Conference Inventory.

The 2009 Conference Policy/Admissions Committee reviewed the material and recommended to the full Conference that: “The General Service Board develop a plan for the General Service Conference to conduct an inventory of itself that includes a planning committee consisting of representatives of delegates, trustees, directors, nontrustee directors, and staff, and that a progress report be presented to the 2010 Policy/Admissions Committee.”

The recommendation was passed as a Conference Advisory Action, and in August 2009 the GSB established a subcommittee to fulfill the charge of putting together a process or procedure by which a Planning Committee with representation from all membership segments of the General Service Conference could be established. The subcommittee determined that representation should be proportional, as representation is at the GSC, and that participants be selected by lot, with consideration given to other responsibilities and ability to serve. These conclusions were accepted by the GSB, along with some additional suggestions regarding the establishment of a Conference Inventory Planning Committee, and were referred back to the Conference Policy/Admissions Committee in 2010.

After evaluation and discussion by the 2010 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions and deliberation by the entire Conference, a detailed Advisory Action was passed recommending that “The General Service Conference conduct a thorough inventory of itself and that a Conference Planning Committee be established to develop a comprehensive inventory plan to bring

forward to the 2011 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions for consideration, along with an estimated cost for conducting the inventory." The Advisory Action also included directions articulating the specific composition of the proposed planning committee.

## Planning Committee Takes Shape

Once constituted following the 2010 GSC, the Conference Inventory Planning Committee (made up of 17 individuals: 11 Panel 60 delegates, one Class B regional trustee, one Class B general service trustee, one Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, one non-trustee director, one G.S.O. staff person and one Grapevine staff person, along with a nonvoting G.S.O. staff member to serve as secretary to the committee) began to conduct its business in early June 2010, breaking the work up into a series of subcommittees whose task, collectively, was to answer the "Who, What, Where, When and How" of conducting an inventory of the Conference.

Four subcommittees were charged with looking into the mechanics of doing an inventory (Participation, Logistics, Reporting and Finance) and four additional subcommittees were charged with developing proposed inventory questions (Structure, Concepts, Communications and Leadership). All subcommittee recommendations were discussed and voted on by the full committee during monthly conference calls and eventually, after several months of deliberation and reporting, the committee had a set of approved recommendations from which to begin drafting the overall inventory plan.

At this time, the eight subcommittees were pooled together and two larger subcommittees were appointed to develop the overall specifics of "mechanics" and "content" for the proposed inventory. Similarly, these two subcommittees presented their conclusions for discussion and approval by the Planning Committee as a whole, ultimately creating a consensus document — the Conference Inventory Plan — which was forwarded to the 2011 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions for review.

The 2011 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions reviewed the inventory plan and proposed to the full Conference "that the General Service Conference conduct a thorough inventory of itself in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan formulated by the Conference Inventory Planning Committee." The areas covered by the inventory plan were:

- I. **Logistics** (suggesting that the inventory be conducted at three consecutive Conferences: 2013, 2014 and 2015);
- II. **Participation** (outlining the categories and terms of rotation of Conference members to serve on the Planning Committee);
- III. **Reporting** (detailing a methodology for reporting the Conference inventory, including publication of a thorough report in the *Final Conference Report* of each year of the inventory, along with summaries of each years' inventory for publication in the A.A. Grapevine, La Viña and *Box 4-5-9*, and a separate comprehensive report of all three years' input to be prepared after the inventory process is completed);
- IV. **Finance** (developing a cost structure for conducting and reporting the inventory);
- V. **Inventory Questions** (covering the overall effectiveness of the Conference and the Conference process; the composition of the Conference; the committee system; the effectiveness of the yearlong process; Conference preparation, in terms of background, content, delivery, etc.; the Conference week schedule; the General Service Board and corporate boards; and the question of leadership and what might be the most desirable qualities considered for leaders in A.A.)

The recommendation was accepted by the full Conference and passed as an Advisory Action of the 2011 General Service Conference.

With the process and procedures for the inventory finally set, the 2012 Conference Agenda Committee made a series of recommendations, accepted as Advisory Actions, suggesting that the theme of the 2013 GSC be "The General Service Conference Takes Its Inventory — Our Solution in Action"; selecting presentation/discussion topics for the 2013 GSC; and presenting the specific inventory questions to be taken up by the 2013, 2014 and 2015 Conferences.

## 2013 General Service Conference

To address the 15 inventory questions proposed for the 2013 GSC and to allow for an equitable and representative cross-section of Conference members, three different groupings were created to address questions 1-5, 6-10, and 11-15, with each segment further broken down into 5 subgroups for each set of questions. Conference members were then assigned to one of the 15 different workshop groups, each with a moderator and reporter, and each containing 9 total participants. Meeting for two-and-a-half hours during the Conference on Wednesday, April 24th, the full range of inventory questions was covered by Conference members, with reports prepared from each workshop group.

Subsequently, each group reported directly to the full Conference on Friday, April 26th, with additional discussion held after each grouping of workshop reports.

## Summary of 2013 Inventory

### Question 1:

#### **Reflecting on Concept I, how well does the Conference ensure that it is the conscience of A.A. as a whole?**

The Conference, as designed, is highly effective in ensuring the conscience of A.A. as a whole, taking the place of Bill W. and Dr. Bob; communication has to travel in both directions — from trustees/delegates to the groups, and back; as the Conference becomes more transparent it allows delegates to better collect the area's voice and ensure that the groups can weigh in on topics they feel are important.

Under the guidance of the Concepts, the collective conscience of A.A. is achieved through full and open debate, minority opinions, right of decision, floor actions, right of participation and other similar practices; however, we could do better at reaching out to our membership regarding the Conference process; the Conference meets to "take A.A.'s temperature," but there are concerns about how informed the Fellowship actually is due to inadequate background material, arbitrary agenda deadlines and language barriers; there is not sufficient delegate participation in development of Conference agenda items and the year-long Conference process concept needs to be highlighted to better serve the needs of the local A.A. communities.

### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Encourage groups to participate more fully in the Conference process.*
- *Feedback from the areas is very important to delegates and the current schedule for distributing background material and the agenda makes it difficult to have area membership discussions; reevaluate timing of current schedule for developing, selecting and submitting agenda items.*
- *All Conference members should have information in their mother tongue; Conference communications with the Hispanic community need to be more inclusive; if it is too unwieldy to do it beforehand, consider translating agenda items and background material after the agenda is distributed.*

### Question 2:

#### **How well is the use of floor actions serving us?**

Floor actions can provide a failsafe mechanism to get an issue back on track or provide an opportunity for an issue to be heard;

floor actions emphasize that everyone has a place to express their opinion; they are a protection for the minority voice; however, there are very few emergencies in A.A. and the Conference has the power to decide whether or not to hear a floor action.

Not being on the agenda, floor actions bypass the committee system and often need time for thought, consideration, input from the Fellowship and pertinent background information; floor actions should generally be discouraged, but in certain instances are needed.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Provide background information to delegates on floor actions and the process by which they are handled at the Conference.*

#### Question 3:

#### **Reflecting on Concept X, how well is the authority of the Conference defined?**

Overall, the Conference Charter and the scope of Conference authority are clear, with checks and balances defined by tradition and spiritual principles; sometimes, though, there is a difference between definition and application, with a fine balance between too little definition of the Conference's authority and too much; the Conference and the General Service Board are interdependent and need to work closely together to avoid creating given responsibility without commensurate authority.

The Conference is the place where business and spirituality mix, and the current composition of the Conference continues to provide an adequate balance of authority and responsibility.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Delegates should stay better plugged into board activities throughout the year.*
- *Concerns exist regarding the unequal authority of the GSB to set the Conference agenda; review how agenda items are developed and consider greater inclusion of delegates in this process.*

#### Question 4:

#### **How well does the Conference fulfill the General Warranties of Concept XII?**

The Conference is excellent at encompassing a wide variety of abilities, shows impartial restraint and is an honest and open process — ever evolving, ever changing — and the Conference structure itself provides an adequate safeguard to protect A.A. from any misuse of authority, whether actual or perceived; the Warranties provide us with a dock of safe return, teaching us how to treat one another, guiding us away from "us" and "them" and tying us together as one.

Rotation helps to avoid accumulation of power; democracy, fairness and equality ensure that all levels of service are the same; substantial unanimity and insistence on the minority opinion are highly valued principles; the Conference exercises stewardship, not governance; however, politics can enter into the picture and there is room for improvement in reducing the influence of past trusted servants on current Conference members.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *In response to an expressed concern about the disenfranchisement of groups and A.A. as a whole from the general service structure, consider holding the Conference at a less expensive location, perhaps rotating it around the US and Canada to reduce costs and increase participation.*

#### Question 5:

#### **Should delegate areas be more consistently based on actual membership numbers?**

Conference composition should not rely on rigid proportional representation by population alone; a variety of factors should be considered, all with the collective goal of good communication within the area.

Small areas and large areas face different challenges; large areas may want to consider the value of breaking down into smaller pieces to spread out necessary service work, while some

smaller areas, perhaps, might want to consider merging.

There is a cost in time and money to unity that is different for each area; high and low population density, geography, cultural differences and diversity must all be considered by areas evaluating a change.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Further discussion is needed on the question of whether or not our largest member centers should consider resizing.*
- *When evaluating the possible resizing of areas, the "domino effect" that changing areas would have on groups, districts, regions, boards, committees and the Conference should be considered.*
- *The redistricting of delegate areas is not thought to be feasible or necessary at this time and if it is to be considered in the future a clear census and rationale should be provided.*

#### Question 6:

#### **What improvements could be considered to make sure the agenda selection is more effective?**

Agenda selection is a year-long process which could be enhanced by more education at the group level regarding the ability of groups to participate in the formulation of items; agenda items need to be for the good of the whole Fellowship.

The Fellowship could be better informed about trustee discussions — some trustees supply minutes from their meetings, though this is not universal and the G.S.O. reporting is seen as too general; the role of the regional trustee is vital in developing awareness of agenda items that may be coming up throughout the year.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Increased communication throughout the Fellowship is necessary for an informed Conference; create/distribute a simple "how to" description or FAQ outlining the process of getting agenda items submitted.*
- *Agenda selection should be emphasized as a year-long process, with more involvement from the Conference Agenda Committee.*

#### Question 7:

#### **How well do all Conference members communicate to the Fellowship about why we have a Conference and how the committee system works? How could we improve in this communication?**

Most Conference members are informed about the committee system and how it works; the difficulty is in reaching those who are "not part of the choir."

Increasing participation in the Conference process throughout the Fellowship is a primary concern, with some areas having great success and others finding it more difficult to engage and educate members; areas with mock-Conferences, mini-committees, or pre-Conference assemblies find this an effective way to educate the Fellowship about the Conference; the use of technology could be helpful in reaching out to D.C.M.s and G.S.R.s, especially through videos.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *While we encourage areas to come up with agenda items, if they're not "selected" it can be very discouraging for those at the local level. Perhaps agenda items that don't make it to the Conference should go to the appropriate Conference Committee anyway, for discussion at a time outside the week-long duration of the Conference.*
- *Make Conference agenda information and background material available to the Fellowship and continually update throughout the year.*
- *Develop/distribute guidelines that explain exactly how a Conference committee operates and what their options are when they meet.*

#### Question 8:

**How well do the delegates balance their preparation for the Conference, especially in keeping with Concept III and Article Three of the Conference Charter? How could we improve in the practice of our rights and responsibilities under Concept III and Article Three of the Conference Charter?**

Delegates sometimes feel overwhelmed with the amount of information that must be gone through and so must prioritize; Concept III acts as a reminder that the job of the Conference is to set policy, not set practice.

Right of Decision is a great responsibility, carrying with it the importance of providing reasons why a decision was made; explaining the “reasoning” behind conclusions reached at the Conference is helpful throughout the Fellowship.

Importance of Concept III in making distinction between sharing experience and lobbying; put Conference decision-making experience in personal terms when sharing with the Fellowship.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Use technology to develop a secure electronic location where delegates could share and store pertinent Conference information online, clustering information more effectively.*
- *Have a brief delegate orientation at the start of the Conference, similar to the new trustees orientation; might be helpful in generating a more even level of preparedness for delegates (delegate luncheons do not necessarily fulfill this purpose, as they are not uniform and may all cover different topics).*

#### Question 9:

**How can we improve the way time is allotted during the Conference for reports, presentation/discussion/workshop topics, and thorough discussion of agenda items?**

Committee time is precious and there may be too many other Conference activities that draw away from the primary business at hand; it may be helpful to dispose of routine information throughout the year rather than taking actual Conference time.

Conference week is laid out well, has evolved and been improved upon by the process of natural selection; however, Conference could be more dynamic, with presentations eliminated or shortened on the basis of the Conference workload at the time.

Conference is amazingly efficient at cramming a lot of stuff in, but there is a delicate balance between moving the Conference along and ensuring thoughtful, deliberative and inclusive discussion; Conference members need to be concise and respectful of the limited time the Conference has to do its work; stick to the topic, don’t repeat sharing; having a clear understanding of time allotted and work to be covered helps committees reach an informed conscience with all voices heard from.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *If a floor action doesn’t pass, wait at least one year to resubmit.*
- *Reevaluate the comparative value of area service highlights and consider fewer presentation/discussions or regional lunches, which would allow for more Conference business; perhaps have area highlights recorded throughout the year and made available electronically, or have them available in a separate room at the Conference or presented at the Delegates Only Meeting.*
- *Set aside time at each Conference to look at future agenda items so that post-Conference reports could be forward-looking to generate year-long sharing.*
- *Consider distributing minutes of all trustee meetings to all delegates.*
- *Consider moving the first “sharing session/what’s on your mind?” slot to later in the week, where it might be more valuable.*
- *Utilize technology for electronic voting/tabulation at the Conference.*

- *Consider moving the 2014 and 2015 inventory to a time slot after the Conference to allow for full discussion of current agenda items.*
- *Regional trustees might consider ways to standardize their reports to allow for equally informed delegates, perhaps holding more Q&A sessions at the regional level throughout the year.*

#### Question 10:

**How are leadership and participation affected by late night work sessions?**

Late night work sessions may create a negative “badge of honor” that belies the reality that cognitive processes regress and personality conflicts increase as sessions go late, decreasing ability to make informed decisions.

The pace of the Conference should be even, not rushed at the end of the week; Conference members are here to conduct A.A.’s business and while that may take additional time on occasion, we need to reduce repetition: “Is the comment serving me or is the comment serving the body?”

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Implement a time limit for different sessions and close them when the time is up.*

#### Question 11:

**Could the committee process be improved to more effectively introduce change in the Fellowship, and if so, how?**

Change should come from the Fellowship and be introduced in a measured way, keeping the flow of information positive; flexibility is a key ingredient in change, and not everything has to be in black and white.

Good communication with the Fellowship is key to dispelling the perception that something is “hidden”; better communication following the Conference and before the July board meeting between the Conference committees and their corresponding trustees’ committees could help in the development of appropriate agenda items and background material; cross-pollination between committees could help to alleviate workloads; more involvement from delegates in the development of the agendas would be beneficial; Conference materials needs to be made available in other languages to accommodate diversity and facilitate change.

#### **Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- *Review the scope of all Conference committees — new committees may be needed.*
- *Sharing between committees throughout the year can help facilitate better understanding of the issues and help introduce change; cross-pollination between committees could ease workloads.*

#### Question 12:

**Is the current makeup of the board (numbers and proportions) still the most effective? If not, what changes should we consider?**

The current ratio of board members (Class A/Class B) is adequate, and the continuity of the “pathway” from appointed committee member to nontrustee director to general service trustee is beneficial, especially for those with professional backgrounds; Class A trustees could benefit from more training on the Concepts and Traditions, and service sponsorship for board members, including Class A trustees, can be helpful.

Professional expertise is an important qualification for trustees, though it can also be beneficial to lean on Conference committees for input and suggestions.

Some feel the corporate boards are still not effective and that the numbers and proportions could be revised.

**Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- Trustees need to focus on bigger issues and concerns for the Fellowship and not get caught up in administrative details better handled by staff.
- Consider increasing the role of nontrustee directors and better describe their purpose to the Fellowship.
- Are there still too many *Grapevine* board members?

**Question 13:**

**How could we improve the methods used to solicit trustees and directors to get the most appropriate people interested in the positions?**

C.P.C. committees can be helpful in recruiting new Class A (non-alcoholic) trustee candidates, and broadly advertising board openings is necessary to cast a wide net; International Conventions can provide good “auditions” for potential Class A positions; Forums are also extremely helpful.

Balance needs to be struck between vision/leadership skills versus professional background when soliciting trustees.

**Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- When soliciting for new trustees and directors, send a mailing to all GSRs regarding openings, don't just rely on delegates.
- Focus on the social sciences, technology, finance, publishing, journalism and media worlds for new Class A candidates, with lesser emphasis on the medical and religious fields.
- Consider the trustee-at-large positions for inclusion on the corporate boards.
- More nonalcoholics could serve as appointed committee members to increase the pool of Class A candidates.
- Seek younger candidates for trustee positions, and focus on language/cultural diversity.
- Consider shorter terms of service for trustees.

**Question 14:**

**What more could be done to insure the General Service Board remains transparent and thorough in their reporting to the Fellowship?**

Good communication is the key to transparency at the board level — let the Fellowship know what's really going on, keep the at-large A.A. member in mind when transmitting information; recording the reasoning behind board decisions helps keep the GSB transparent; transparency brings trust.

Regional trustees need to be more consistent in passing on information to their delegates — an uneven flow of information to delegates can create ill will and lack of trust toward the GSB; continuity in reporting will help the Fellowship better understand what goes on at the board and Conference level.

Communication needs to flow both ways and members need to recognize that all information cannot always be made available due to business concerns, privacy, matters of confidentiality and such, and sometimes information must be held until discussion has been completed on a particular topic; in such cases, patience and trust must be relied upon.

**Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- Create continuity on how and what board minutes and reports are distributed to delegates.
- A graphic presentation on how the GSB does its work could be prepared/distributed to help the Fellowship better understand what goes on at the GSB level of service.
- More articles by trustees in the *Grapevine* to help familiarize the Fellowship with the board's vision.
- Consider regional teleconferences with delegates/regional trustees after board meetings to increase communication and help with transparency issues.
- Utilize technology to disseminate information through the G.S.O. Web site or perhaps provide an interactive live webinar to connect members with G.S.O. staff or trustees.

**Question 15:**

Reflecting on Concept IX, are the qualities of leadership, as identified in the leadership essay in *The A.A. Service Manual*, still the qualities that we should try to encourage in Conference members? If so, how successful are we in encouraging those qualities? If not, what changes should we consider?

Leadership, integrity, conviction — we need these qualities now more than ever; sponsorship is a key ingredient; humility and working with others.

“Leadership” is not a bad word in A.A. — there must be some for A.A. to function effectively at all levels; we should encourage each other to lead and be willing to follow as well.

Leadership in A.A. should not be a competition; passion and desire are as important as professional background; we should not fear challenging authority; leadership must listen to criticism.

The Conference needs more of the vision quality and a continued willingness to look at what is good overall, not just what may be good for one particular area or segment of the Fellowship.

**Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- To avoid “reading between the lines” by members, it would be helpful for trustees’ committees to include more of the motivation behind their proposals, the reasons why they might make a particular suggestion or recommendation.
- More awareness of the Concepts throughout the Fellowship will benefit individuals, groups, districts, areas, regions, the Conference and our boards. Consider ways to make these principles more widely understood and available.