

**2023 Conference Committee on Literature**

**ITEM H:** Review progress report regarding the translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language.

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**Background Notes:**

*Excerpt from the January 28, 2023, trustees' Literature Committee report:*

The committee reviewed and **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature a progress report regarding the translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language. The committee noted that a print copy of the available plain language chapters will be provided for review by Conference members during the 2023 General Service Conference in a room that will be hosted by members of the trustees' Literature committee. The committee also agreed that the draft plain language chapters will be presented in its current English plain language version.

*Excerpt from the October 29, 2022, trustees' Literature Committee report:*

The committee reviewed a report regarding the translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language that included the progress and challenges of the work being done by the writer and the subcommittee. The committee expressed their gratitude for the ongoing work and looks forward to a progress report at the January 2023 meeting.

*Excerpt from the July 30, 2022, trustees' Literature Committee report:*

The committee reviewed a progress report regarding the translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language. The committee initiated a conversation on respecting A.A.'s spiritual foundations by keeping the Twelve Steps intact and in place in Chapter 5 and placing a possible differently formatted/designed plain language translation afterwards. The committee requested that the discussion be continued at the October 2022 meeting.

The committee looks forward to reviewing a progress report at the October 2022 meeting.

## CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

*Excerpt from the January 29, 2022, trustees' Literature Committee report:*

The committee reviewed and agreed to forward a progress report, including an addendum dated January 18, 2022, from the Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature regarding translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language.

*Excerpt from the October 30, 2021 trustees' Literature Committee report:*

The committee reviewed the subcommittee progress report including the development of a plan for consultation and oversight which will be updated at the next meeting. The committee also received a verbal update from the Publishing department regarding ongoing work with the Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee on recruiting from a wide pool of plain-language professionals for this project.

**NOTE: This agenda item emerged from another agenda item which, after January 2019 until April 2021, was as follows:**

\*Consider if proposed agenda items for plain language, simplified language, accessible translations and large print versions of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* as well as workbooks to help study the program of *Alcoholics Anonymous* can be addressed with a common solution.

(\*For reference to history and actions of the trustees and Conference Literature committees)

### *2021 Conference Advisory Action*

It was recommended that a draft version of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition), be translated into plain and simple language and be developed in a way that is accessible and relatable to as wide of an audience as possible and that a progress report or draft be brought back to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.

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### **Background:**

1. TABB subcommittee January 2023 Progress Report
2. TABB subcommittee Progress Report October 2022

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3. 2022 Progress report subcommittee on Plain Language version of Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition)
  - a. Addendum\_TABB Subcomm Report - ***Dashboard Files***
4. Progress report subcommittee on Plain Language version of *Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition)*-
  - a. TABB subcommittee Roadmap\_10-27-21 - ***Dashboard Files***
5. Feb 2022\_Publishing Dep Reprt\_ Plain\_Lang\_ BB project

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Progress report regarding the translation of the book  
Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition) in to plain and simple language.

A formal agreement between AAWS and the writer was finalized on May 28, 2022. The writer has submitted chapters to Publishing, as well as the preface, the foreword, and the beginnings of a glossary.

The TABB subcommittee has requested to review final drafts of whatever completed material is available on a quarterly basis, after editorial review and revisions. Each committee member provided feedback including suggested changes, with an expectation of additional rounds of refinements to ensure the tone and tenor of each chapter is faithful to the guidance and suggestions contained in the Big Book.

This is no ordinary translation. The enormity of the task and the importance of getting it right is not lost on the subcommittee.

The Publishing Department has committed to providing the subcommittee with written updates monthly.

The Publishing Department's estimate is for the completion of one chapter a month. The writer has kept to that pace across the year. That would mean a final draft of the project by May/June of 2023.

Given the fellowship's deep and wide interest in this project, the subcommittee has given great consideration to how to balance well-defined delegated authority with unity and transparency. In consultation with the Trustees Literature Committee, we recommend that the Conference Literature Committee be provided with all available chapters that are completed by March 31 for their restricted review during pre-Conference hours.

We also recommend that chapters be made available to all Conference member who may wish to read them. That said, we believe the only way to ensure confidentiality in the process was to have that happen in a highly controlled environment. As in a proctored test, with no cellphones or recording devices. Individuals can sit and read the proposed chapters in a room monitored by members of the Trustees Literature Committee.

While admittedly highly unusual, we felt that this translation merited an unorthodox approach.

## CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

A committee member asked for clarity about plain language translation and whether gender changes are part of the inferred scope of the work in the Conference Advisory Action - for example when 'men and women' are changed to 'people'.

At a February 15, 2022, meeting the topic was discussed and the TABB subcommittee noted that plain and simple language does not always lend itself to referring to individuals or groups by gender. It was also noted that using various gender terminology inconsistently throughout the book would be challenging for the reader.

It was emphasized that there is no intent or desire to remove gender from the text. It was agreed that where there is a reference to someone who has a gender in the text the use of gender should be retained (examples included mother and father, reference to males such as Bill, Bob, Jim etc. as he or him).

Article 3 of the Conference Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board make clear that the Steps themselves should not be modified, altered, or extended. The subcommittee expects the final treatment of Chapter 5 to be consistent with that guidance.

We have had only the most preliminary discussions on how to approach coming up with what the translation should be titled. It's a fraught topic and will be given considerable thought in the months to come.

### **Addendum to TABB Subcommittee Report January 18, 2022**

The TABB Subcommittee and members of the GSO Publishing Department met today to discuss the plain language translation samples received from the prospective vendors and consider the selection of a vendor. After comprehensive review and thoughtful consideration, a vendor was selected.

It is requested by the TABB Subcommittee that the Trustees Literature Committee consider making the following examples of plain language translation available to the Conference Committee on Literature. It should be noted that these are only examples, excerpts pulled from the initial submissions of prospective vendors. The process will involve multiple drafts, and ongoing feedback from the GSO Publishing Department and the TABB Subcommittee resulting in editing and revisions. None of this has taken place with the material included here. These are raw samples from a vendor's first attempt to translate this text, without guidance or input.

One could question the decision to share such unrefined material with the Conference Committee on Literature, however the rationale for offering this early material is that the TABB

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Subcommittee knows that there is a high level of interest in the process for the plain and simple language translation; and that there are those with concerns regarding the intent of this project.

It is hoped that this early transparency, and of sharing materials that have yet to even be edited, will serve to provide the Conference Committee on Literature the opportunity to see exactly where this project is at this point in time and offer any early feedback that they may have.

<b>Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book)</b>	<b>Excerpt (from unedited raw sample material)</b>
We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is the manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.	We believe that alcohol affects chronic alcoholics differently than it affects average drinkers. It interacts with their bodies almost like an allergy, forcing them to behave in unusual and unpredictable ways. The intense cravings that chronic alcoholics experience almost never happen for occasional drinkers. For anyone with this alcohol “allergy,” though, cravings may be constant and hard to control. This means chronic alcoholics can never safely use alcohol in any form at all. Once they have experienced alcohol’s affects, they will form a drinking habit quickly and struggle to stop. They will lose self- confidence, neglect their relationships, and watch their problems pile up, feeling totally unable to solve them.
Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices.	Begging these people to stop drinking never helps.
And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God. Here difficulty arises with agnostics,	It also means that we are going to talk about God. If you aren’t sure that God exists—in other words, if you are an agnostic— this may worry you.

<b>Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book)</b>	<b>Excerpt (from unedited raw sample material)</b>
Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to take certain steps.	Many of the stories we share in this book describe the experiences that we had as AA’s founders. What we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you want what we have— and are willing to work hard to get it—then you are ready to get started.

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<p>Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.</p>	<p>If this is your first time reading through these steps, they may seem difficult ... or even impossible. Do not be discouraged. No one has ever carried out these steps perfectly. We are not saints. We are simply people who are willing to grow, both spiritually and personally. These principles are here to guide our progress. And our shared goal is spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection.</p>
<p>In trying to make these arrangements our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous. He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. One the other hand, he may be mean egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits.</p>	<p>And as they try their best to control all the parts and players, they may seem kind, patient, generous. On the other hand, they may seem mean, selfish, and dishonest. Since they're human, they most likely show a mix of these traits.</p>
<p>We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think that spirituality is the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage.</p>	<p>And we are not ashamed of relying on God, or of needing God. We know that our faith and trust isn't a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength. Faith is a kind of courage, just as trusting God is a kind of courage.</p>
<p>With few exceptions, our book thus far has spoken of men. But what we have said applies quite as much to women. Our activities in behalf of women who drink are on the increase. There is every evidence that women regain their health as readily as men if they try our suggestions. But for every man who drinks others are involved – the wife who trembles in fear of the next debauch; the mother and father who see their son wasting away.</p>	<p>So far, this book has spoken only to alcoholics themselves. But every person who drinks involves other people in their alcoholism. There may be a spouse who dreads the next drinking spree, children who fear their drunk parents, or mothers and fathers who see their grown children getting sicker and sicker.</p>

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**TABB sub-committee report - October 2022**

The current TABB subcommittee was formed after the 72nd General Service Conference. The subcommittee consists of John W., chair, Jimmy D., and Clint M.

The sub-committee met four times (May 27, June 21, August 17, and September 22). David R., Julia D., and Ames S. from the Publishing Department joined our June meeting, as did “the writer”. David and Julia joined again for our September meeting.

**Progress Report**

A formal agreement between AAWS and the writer was finalized on May 28. The writer has submitted five chapters to Publishing, as well as the preface, the foreword, and the beginnings of a glossary.

On August 31, four chapters (*the Doctor’s Opinion, Bill’s Story, There is a Solution, and More About Alcoholism*) were shared with the TABB subcommittee after editorial review and revisions.

Each committee member provided feedback at the September 22 meeting. We will be submitting further feedback, including suggested changes, with an expectation of additional rounds of refinements to ensure the tone and tenor of each chapter is faithful to the guidance and suggestions contained in the Big Book.

This is no ordinary translation. The enormity of the task and the importance of getting it right is not lost on the subcommittee.

**Next Steps**

The TABB subcommittee has requested to review final drafts of whatever completed material is available on a quarterly basis, so we can provide timely reports to the Trustees Literature Committee.

**Project Completion**

The Publishing Department’s current estimate is for the completion of one chapter a month. That would mean a final draft of the project by May/June of 2023.

**Recommendations**

Given the fellowship’s deep and wide interest in this project, the subcommittee has given great consideration to how to balance well-defined delegated authority with unity and transparency.

To that end, we recommend that the Conference Literature Committee be provided with any fully edited chapters that are completed by December 31 for their restricted review



and feedback.

We also recommend that Chapters 3 and 5 be made available to any Conference member who may wish to read them. That said, we believe the only way to ensure confidentiality in the process was to have that happen in a highly controlled environment. Basically, as if one was taking a proctored test, with no cellphones or recording devices. Individuals can sign out a chapter and read it in a room monitored by members of the Trustees Literature Committee. We would work with the Trustees Conference Committee to schedule hours and location during Conference week. While admittedly highly unusual, we felt that this translation merited an unorthodox approach.

### **Gender**

A committee member asked for clarity about plain language translation and whether gender changes are part of the inferred scope of the work in the Conference Advisory Action - for example when 'men and women' are changed to 'people'.

At a February 15, 2022 meeting the topic was discussed and the TABB subcommittee noted that plain and simple language does not always lend itself to referring to individuals or groups by gender. It was also noted that using various gender terminology inconsistently throughout the book would be challenging for the reader. It was emphasized that there is no intent or desire to remove gender from the text. It was agreed that where there is a reference to someone who has a gender in the text the use of gender should be retained (examples included mother and father, reference to males such as Bill, Bob, Jim etc as he or him).

### **Other outstanding items**

Article 3 of the Conference Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board make clear that the Steps themselves should not be modified, altered, or extended. The subcommittee expects the final treatment of Chapter 5 to be consistent with that guidance.

We have had only the most preliminary discussions on how to approach coming up with what the translation should be titled. It's a fraught topic and will be given considerable thought in the months to come.

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report  
Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022**

At their July 2021 meeting, the Trustees Literature Committee formed a subcommittee with the scope of the subcommittee is as follows:

*Request TLC member Carolyn W, with fellow members John W and Mike L, serve on a subcommittee that will research various study guide workbook tools as directed by the Conference Committee on Literature (CCL) and related agenda submissions and track the development of the Plain & Simple Language Big Book. The subcommittee will note the CLC's request that the book be "developed in a way that is accessible and relatable to as wide of an audience as possible".*

*The subcommittee will strive to:*

1. *Research various study guide workbook tools and report back to the TLC.*
2. *Review feedback from the Fellowship on RIPTAB video*
3. *Coordinate with the GSO Publishing Department (GSO PD) to oversee and develop feedback related to:*
  - *Topics of direction and scope as requested by GSOPD*
  - *Content of RFP/RFI (desired samples)*
  - *Any limits to the content to be translated.*
  - *Review of samples and GSO PD recommended vendors*
  - *Other work as needed to support the GSO PD and implementation of the advisory action*

The subcommittee adopted the name "TABB" (Tools to Access the Big Book). The TABB Subcommittee has met 10 times from August to December 2021 and has 2 additional meetings scheduled in January 2022.

At the August TABB Subcommittee meeting, the work was prioritized as:

- In collaboration with the GSO Publishing Department establish a roadmap for the Plain Language Big Book that reflects key project timelines and roles of the General Service Conference, Trustees Literature Committee/General Service Board, TABB Subcommittee, and the GSO Publishing Department and provide this roadmap to TLC at the Q4 meeting.
  - The roadmap was updated at the meeting of the TABB Subcommittee and the GSO PD on December 8, 2021 and the revised version is attached to this report (pages 3-5).
- Initiate work with GSO PD on vendor selection for the Plain Language Big Book, with an aim to have sample translation materials available for review to TLC for the Q1 2022 meeting.
  - On track for sample reviews in January 2022 and vendor selection by GSO PD and TABB Subcommittee on January 18, 2022.
  - TLC to discuss and determine process to share sample translations with the CLC.
- Once the vendor selection process is in motion, concurrently work on the above items #1-3 of the subcommittee's objectives as stated by TLC.
  - See below

**CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background**

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report  
Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022**

ITEM	STATUS	FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED
1. Research various study guide workbook tools and report back to the TLC.	Completed. See attached report (page 6).	Pending TLC action.
2. Review feedback from the Fellowship on RIPTAB video.	Completed in August 2021, prior to initiating the subcommittee's work. See attached summary (page 7).	None.
<i>3. Coordinate with the GSO Publishing Department (GSO PD) to oversee and develop feedback related to:</i>		
a) Topics of direction and scope as requested by GSO PD	Ongoing when and as requested by GSO PD	None
b) Content of RFP/RFI (desired samples)	Completed. RFI was directed to identify and select vendors who can translate to plain language with the objective of comprehension at a 5 <sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The RFI was sent to vendors with experience in various sectors such as health care, education, and spirituality.  Desired samples were determined to be Chapter 5 (in its entirety) and selected additional portions of the text.	None
c) Any limits to the content to be translated.	Apply the standard GSO PD practice of translation of the abridged version (preface, forwards, Doctor's Opinion, Bill's Story, Chapters 1-11, Dr. Bob's Nightmare, Appendices. (Excludes the other personal stories.)	Determine how to present the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions in accordance with Article III of the Conference Charter.  Consider pros and cons of translating Bill's Story and Dr. Bob's Nightmare.
d) Review of samples and GSO PD recommended vendors	In progress January 2022	Aiming for Vendor selection to be completed Jan 18, 2022
e) Other work as needed to support the GSO PD and implementation of the advisory action	TLC delegated review and consideration of proposed agenda items pertaining to the work of this subcommittee to TABB.	Reviewed by TABB Subcommittee. See attached summary report (pages 8-10).

**CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background**

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022**

**TABB Subcommittee Roadmap**

The plain language Big Book is a translation process, and there are existing workflows to guide the GSO Publishing Department processes. This roadmap is intended to align the TABB Subcommittee and the Trustees Literature Committee with these processes and document any modifications deemed necessary for this project. It is recognized by all involved that while we can draw from prior translation experience this project has unique elements. The TABB Subcommittee has determined that clarity regarding the process, timelines, and the roles of the GSC/CLC, GSB/TLC, TABB Subcommittee and the GSO Publishing Department are essential.

Date	General Service Conference	Trustees Literature Committee and GSB	Subcommittee (TABB)	Publishing Department
April 2021	Advisory Action: A draft version of the book, <i>Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition)</i> , be translated into plain and simple language and be developed in a way that is accessible and relatable to as wide of an audience as possible and that a progress report or draft be brought back to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.			
August 2021		Trustees Literature Committee (TLC) created a "Subcommittee to Track development of the Plain Language Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous and Research Workbooks" this subcommittee was denoted as the Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.	Initial meetings to review scope, discuss approach to the assigned work and discuss RFI.	Initial meetings to review scope, discuss approach to the assigned work and discuss RFI.

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**CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background**

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report  
Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022**

Date	General Service Conference	Trustees Literature Committee and GSB	Subcommittee (TABB)	Publishing Department
September 2021			Reviewed RFI, provided input (5 <sup>th</sup> grade reading level, include vendors with plain language experience in various sectors) Drafted Roadmap. Discussed proposed portions of the BB to be included for sample requests.	Finalized and distributed RFI to prospective vendors.
October 2021		Verbal report from TABB Subcommittee and acceptance of Roadmap; and received report from GSO Publishing Dept	Review and discussion regarding workbooks and study guides. Proposal drafted for presentation to TLC at their Q1 2022 meeting	Report to TLC
November 2021			Vendor selection discussions with GSO Publishing Dept and TABB: Consider RFI Responses Review objectives and timelines	Vendor selection discussions with GSO Publishing Dept and TABB: Consider RFI Responses Review objectives and timelines
December 2021			Vendor selection discussions with GSO Publishing Dept and TABB: Shortlist for sample requests Discuss project budget Update Roadmap  Consider and discuss proposed agenda items referred to TABB by TLC	Vendor selection discussions with GSO Publishing Dept and TABB: Shortlist for sample requests Discuss project budget Update Roadmap

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**CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background**

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report  
Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022**

<b>Date</b>	<b>General Service Conference</b>	<b>Trustees Literature Committee and GSB</b>	<b>Subcommittee (TABB)</b>	<b>Publishing Department</b>
<b>January 2022</b>			Vendor samples due, to be reviewed by GSO Publishing Dept and TABB Subcommittee with the aim of vendor selection by January 18, 2022 and samples from the selected vendor available to share with TLC  TABB Subcommittee report to TLC for inclusion in background to CLC	Vendor samples due, to be reviewed by GSO Publishing Dept and TABB Subcommittee with the aim of vendor selection by January 18, 2022 and samples from the selected vendor available to share with TLC  GSO Publishing Dept report to TLC
<b>February 2022</b>			Joint Meeting (TABB and GSO PD) with selected vendor to discuss project path forward including communications, timelines, and milestones.  Update Roadmap to reflect plan established with GSO Publishing and vendor for review at the Q3 TLC meeting	Joint Meeting (TABB and GSO PD) with selected vendor to discuss project path forward including communications, timelines, and milestones.
<b>April 2022</b>	Receive progress report from TABB Subcommittee, and report from GSO PD.		Attend Joint Meeting with CLC to answer any questions and hear any feedback.	
<b>May 2022</b>		TLC Chair to advise regarding composition of 2022/2023 TABB Subcommittee and ensure that Roadmap updated Feb 2022 is provided to the new TABB Subcommittee members.	TBC	

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## CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

### Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022

#### WORKBOOKS AND STUDY GUIDES

The Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee met to discuss possible approaches to study guide workbook tools, and we reviewed previous work by the 2019-21 subcommittees on Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access to the Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (RIPTAB) as well as Fellowship feedback on the RIPTAB report/video. One reason for the initiation of the RIPTAB subcommittee was to consider an approach to the ongoing requests for a workbook and/or study guide and this discussion has continued in the current TABB subcommittee.

Subsequent to the TABB subcommittee's initial discussion there was an additional proposed agenda item (PAI) submitted for the 72<sup>nd</sup> General Service Conference (GSC) to create "a Big Book Workbook to assist in understanding and accessing the content". In the PAI it was stated that this should be instead of the Plain Language Big Book. The Trustees Literature Committee (TLC) took no action on this PAI but forwarded the proposal to the TABB subcommittee for review to ensure that the rationale and suggestions offered by the submitters could be considered by the subcommittee.

After review of the work done by the prior subcommittees and careful deliberation, we suggest the following approach (if there are no Recommendations or Committee Considerations regarding workbooks or study guides at the 72<sup>nd</sup> GSC):

1. TLC seek shared experience through the Delegates, also encouraging broad Fellowship feedback (perhaps via the Meeting Guide app) regarding which of the following options are most in keeping with the needs of wishes of the Fellowship:

Option 1 - Take no action, as suggested by the 1985 advisory action which reaffirmed previous Conference actions that there was no need for a Step study guide.

Option 2 - Turn to the Grapevine and leverage its ample archive of articles on practicing the Steps to show variation in approach and style. Future Grapevine podcasts could serve a supplemental role and help enrich this effort.

Option 3 – Create a General Service Conference approved study guide workbook to aid in studying the Twelve Steps. Possibly with inclusion of the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.

Note: We envision Options 2 and 3 to primarily be a print-based product, with the potential of supporting and/or companion material via digital, video, and/or podcast.

2. TLC forward an agenda item to consider these 3 options to the 73<sup>rd</sup> GSC for their consideration or action, and that the Fellowship feedback received be included with any other background material required to support an informed group conscience.

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee**  
**Report Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee**  
**January 2022**

**RIPTAB VIDEO FEEDBACK SUMMARY**

At the 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, the Conference Committee on Literature requested the trustees make available the presentation “The Big Book: Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access”. A video of the presentation was produced and distributed to the Fellowship with a request for feedback. The Fellowship responded, and the following summary represents the comments received. Respondents included individuals, groups, districts, and special events scheduled to view and discuss the video. There were four questions asked:

- *Should the Trustees’ Literature Committee explore possible solutions that could help make our message more available?*
  - Overwhelming support from respondents (79% affirmative).
- *If so, what additional information would be helpful to determine if additional items are needed to increase accessibility and relatability to the A.A. program?*
  - Research on the literacy rate of the general A.A. population.
  - Information on the cost of a plain language translation.
  - More information on literacy needs of people in custody.
  - A Group-type inventory with a report back to the Fellowship.
  - Examples of outcomes from previous efforts, both good and bad.
  - A comprehensive look at who is not here and why.
- *Would a translation into modern or simple language help?*
  - Support for a translation from those who submitted feedback (66%).
- *What tools would help others understand our program of recovery? Workbooks? Dictionaries?*
  - Footnotes in the Big Book.
  - Conference approved Workbooks.
  - Akron Topic Guide.
  - Short videos.
  - Dictionaries.
  - Easy to read guide to the Steps.
  - Pamphlets.
  - Addendum on gender terms.
  - Multi-media approach.
  - Graphic art.
  - Updated stories in the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.
  - Podcasts.

There was a consensus from the respondents that regardless to the development of additional tools or translations the first 164 pages of the Big Book should remain unchanged. If needed, footnotes or addendums could be added to the text, either on the specific pages referenced or in a Forward to the book. There were several respondents who expressed they were initially opposed to any plain language translations or workbooks, but once they learned more about the accessibility issues identified in the presentation, they changed their opinions and were either supportive of a translation or open to the idea of a translation.



**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee  
Report Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee  
January 2022**

**The Trustees Literature Committee received 11 Proposed Agenda Items (PAI) for the 72<sup>nd</sup> General Service Conference pertaining to translation of the book Alcoholic Anonymous into plain and simple language. While the TLC “took no action” on these proposals, they forwarded them to the TABB Subcommittee for review and consideration.**

The TABB Subcommittee reviewed all PAIs in their entirety, including all additional background material included with the submissions when applicable. It is not the role of the TABB Subcommittee to debate the points made by the submitters and we will not attempt to do so in this report. But it is important to note that careful review of each of these proposals has served to guide and inform the subcommittee, and to affirm some of the decisions made thus far. The TABB Subcommittee wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude for these submissions. Some examples of how, exactly, some of these concerns are being addressed are included below. Note that this is not intended to be a direct response to each individual PAI. Rather, this is an effort to identify where there have been specific actions taken that relate to PAIs received.

A summary of the PAIs is attached at the end of this report for your reference. The PAIs included several different ideas. For the ease of reporting, the TABB Subcommittee has grouped them as follows:

**1) Discontinue, rescind, or stop the development of a draft plain and simple language Big Book**

8 of the 11 PAIs requested that the translation be discontinued, rescinded or to stop the development of a draft version. The TABB Subcommittee felt that the Conference Literature Committee could provide direction regarding the future of this project upon their review of the progress report.

Of note in these proposals were concerns regarding political intentions, eradication of God, and removal of all gendered language. The TABB Subcommittee can affirm that the objective is to achieve a translation into plain language that meets the accessibility needs of those with a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The RFI that was sent to prospective vendors noted specifically that we are seeking “simplification of vocabulary, syntax and style to bring it into alignment with current plain language guidelines” and that “sensitivity to A.A.-specific language will be key”. Further it was stated that “a considerable level of collaboration and frequent communication throughout the process will be expected”. The goal of the project was described to the prospective vendors as being that “the final work product must be accessible to readers at a fifth-grade reading level. The translation as a whole must capture the welcoming and inclusive spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous and inspire a sense of belonging and hope in the alcoholic seeking help”.

It is hoped that sharing this information will address some of the concerns expressed by the submitters of these 8 PAIs. There were additional comments within some of these 8 PAIs suggesting workbooks, dictionaries, and study guides instead. Please refer to the “workbooks and study guides” portion of this report (page 4) for information regarding the TABB Subcommittee’s work on those topics.

The TABB Subcommittee also wishes to acknowledge that some of these submitters expressed serious concern for the future of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the disunity that they believe having a plain and simple language Big Book will cause.

## CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

### Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee Report Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee January 2022

#### ➤ Project approach/methods

- **Use a side-by-side format.** While this format is not under consideration, the suggestions and rationale of the submitter have been reviewed and noted.
- **Should be written by AA members.** To ensure that plain language standards are met for accessibility for those with 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level a professional translator method has been chosen. AA members through the Subcommittee, GSO, the Trustees Literature Committee and ultimately the General Service Conference will guide the process. Note: additionally, this PAI included several concerns similar to those expressed by those requesting that we do not proceed with this project.

#### ➤ Clarity/Communication

It is the hope of the TABB Subcommittee that this progress report, including the attached Roadmap provide the desired clarity that the intended use/audience/scope of the translation is to meet accessibility needs defined as a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. Please refer to #1 above for further details.

Additionally, the touchpoints with the General Service Conference (GSC) are noted on the Roadmap.

Further details regarding the timeline and milestones from May 2022 onward will be made available after the Q1 2022 General Service Board (GSB) meeting, and after the 72<sup>nd</sup> GSC and will reflect the input of the GSC and the GSB, including the Trustees Literature Committee (TLC). Further input is needed from the vendor, once the vendor is selected, regarding their timelines to complete the work to provide the requested clarity. The updated Roadmap will be completed in collaboration with the GSO Publishing Department and submitted from the TABB Subcommittee to the TLC for their Q3 2022 meeting.

#### **SUMMARY OF PAIs**

***Agenda Item 36, PAI #26*** Consider request that work on the plain language book, Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition), be discontinued: *The committee discussed the proposed agenda item regarding a request that work on the plain language book, Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition), be discontinued and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.*

*The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the TABB subcommittee.*

***Agenda Item 38, PAI #36*** Consider request that the plain language Big Book approved for development at the 71<sup>st</sup> GSC be produced as a "side-by-side": *The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language of the book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.*

*The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the TABB subcommittee.*

**Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) Subcommittee  
Report Submitted to Trustees Literature Committee  
January 2022**

**Agenda Item 41, PAI #41** Consider request to cancel the publication of an English-to-English Plain Language translation of our basic text Alcoholics Anonymous: The committee discussed the proposed request and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.

The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the TABB subcommittee.

**Agenda Item 50, PAI #73** Consider request to cancel the plain language translation of the book Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition): The committee discussed the request and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.

The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the TABB subcommittee.

**Agenda Item 51, PAI #74** Consider request to provide clarification on the plans to create a plain language version of the book Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition): The committee discussed the request and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.

The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the TABB subcommittee.

**Agenda Item 63, PAIs #166-167-168-169-170**

Consider requests to stop the development of a draft version of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition), being translated into plain and simple language: The committee discussed the requests and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.

The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the TABB subcommittee.

**Agenda Item 65, PAI #176**

Consider a request that the proposed plain language Big Book should be written by a member or members of A.A.: The committee discussed the request and took no action. The committee noted that oversight of the development of the plain language book is within the scope of the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.

The TLC requested that these observations inform a future progress report from the Tools for Access the Big Book (TABB) subcommittee.

**Plain and simple language Big Book project:**

***Publishing Department Update – January 2022***

The Publishing department has worked closely with the TABB (Tools for Access to the Big Book) Subcommittee to establish process and roles in this process, and continues to follow through on what is jointly decided.

*From the Publishing department:* Publishing Director David R., Executive Editor Ames S., and Managing Editor Julia D. (serving as point person with the TABB Subcommittee of Trustees' Literature)

Using five (5) publishing-industry plain-language translator / writer talent search vendors, the Publishing department obtained eighteen (18) candidates, whose credentials and previous work could be reviewed. These professionals demonstrated experience across a wide range of subject matters, including self-help, spirituality, health/wellness, recovery, education, government and public policy, and more.

After review and discussion, from this original candidate pool of eighteen (18), the TABB Subcommittee and David R., Ames S., and Julia D. selected six (6) candidates. These candidates were contracted to submit writing samples comprised of plain-language translations of Chapter 5 "How It Works" and other Big Book excerpts chosen by the TABB Subcommittee. Candidates were hired on a freelance, work-for-hire basis to complete this work by January 10, 2022. All met the assigned deadlines, and samples were shared with TABB members.

David R., Ames S., and Julia D. reviewed all sample submissions and met with TABB Subcommittee members and Trustees' Literature Chair Deborah K. on January 18.

***Results***

At the January 18 meeting referenced above, participants selected one writer candidate to be moved forward. Publishing has initiated discussions regarding an interview with the writer via Zoom in early February, in efforts to contract the writer and establish a timeline for deliverables.

***A Note on Anonymity and Confidentiality***

Throughout this sensitive process, maintaining confidentiality has been an overarching focus. Our specific and customary Assignment of Copyright (AOC) and confidentiality clauses in work-for-hire agreements have been signed by all vendors and writers.

***Professional Fees***

*Expenses:* Total expenses for the vendor talent search and for six (6) work-for-hire agreements with writers totaled \$16,800 and were invoiced against the 2021 Budget. The approved 2021 budgeted expense for this project was \$15,000. Approval for the \$1,800 project fees overage was obtained from the General Manager.

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