

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

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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.
3. <i>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 th 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).

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.

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 th 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

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
January 2022			<p>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</p> <p>TABB Subcommittee report to TLC for inclusion in background to CLC</p>	<p>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</p> <p>GSO Publishing Dept report to TLC</p>
February 2022			<p>Joint Meeting (TABB and GSO PD) with selected vendor to discuss project path forward including communications, timelines, and milestones.</p> <p>Update Roadmap to reflect plan established with GSO Publishing and vendor for review at the Q3 TLC meeting</p>	<p>Joint Meeting (TABB and GSO PD) with selected vendor to discuss project path forward including communications, timelines, and milestones.</p>
April 2022	<p>Receive progress report from TABB Subcommittee, and report from GSO PD.</p>		<p>Attend Joint Meeting with CLC to answer any questions and hear any feedback.</p>	
May 2022		<p>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.</p>	<p>TBC</p>	

**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 72nd 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 72nd 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 73rd 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 70th 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 5th 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 72nd 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 5th 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.

**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 5th 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 5th 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 72nd 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 71st 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.