



# **Structure Modernization Discussion Guide**

**December 10, 2014**

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# The Structure Modernization Process

## *Introduction*

At the 2014 Conference, we voted to set aside our usual conference agenda for the 2015 Conference, and focus on using this time to convene a strategy summit for NOW. Subsequently, the NOW Board voted to combine the strategy summit with a bylaws convention. As a result, in 2015, NOW's membership will debate and vote on recommendations for changes in NOW's policies and/or bylaws to modernize our organization's structure.

In the months leading up to the 2015 Conference, the National Action Center will host a series of six webinars to lay the groundwork for this strategy summit and bylaws convention. Approximately two weeks prior to each webinar, an invitation to register for the webinar will be sent out from the National Action Center. Each of the webinars will cover a specific topic of focus and have a corresponding online discussion board to further facilitate debate and discussion.

<b>Webinar Title</b>	<b>Date and Time of Webinar</b>	<b>Discussion Board Opens</b>	<b>Discussion Board Closes</b>
Introductory Webinar	12/10/2014 at 8pm ET	12/12/2014	5/15/2015
Size of the Board, Number of Officers	1/14/2015 at 8pm ET	1/16/2015	2/9/2015
Sub-units and their Relationship to One Another	2/4/2015 at 8pm ET	2/6/2015	3/2/2015
Voting at National Conferences	2/25/2015 at 8pm ET	2/27/2015	3/23/2015
National Conference Themes and Resolutions	3/18/2015 at 8pm ET	3/20/2015	4/13/2015

Each topic also has an assigned board committee consisting of five members, one of whom is the chair, who will assist in facilitating conversations around each of these topics via phone and in-person at state and chapter meetings. In addition, you are encouraged to have discussions within your own chapter and state.

It is critical that chapter members fully participate in the webinars and discussion board so a wide variety of perspectives are included and solutions are developed to make NOW more effective, efficient, and impactful.

Following the closing of each discussion board, the Structure Modernization Working Group will review all comments and draft proposals. All discussion boards will be reopened for sharing of thoughts and comments June 1-June 10.

## ***Chapter and State Discussions***

Discuss these topics within your chapter and state to ensure everyone has an opportunity to further explore NOW's challenges and possible solutions. These smaller, local discussions will give each member an additional opportunity to actively participate in the discussion of each topic and possible solutions; listen to the perspectives of members you have worked with; and build on each other's thoughts and ideas. Your discussion may uncover concerns or ideas not discussed in the webinar that may add to NOW's understanding of the topic and most appropriate solution.

## ***Recommendations for Proceeding***

1. **Share the webinar invitation** link widely and encourage each of your chapter / state members to register and attend. Call activists to encourage their attendance, and to inform those for whom you don't have email addresses. See the link at the end of this document to order a membership list for your state or chapter.
2. **Schedule a discussion** shortly following each webinar. You might want to set the dates ahead of time, like one week after each webinar at 7 pm. Schedule it as an in-person discussion at your chapter or state council meeting or schedule a conference call. Be sure to schedule each discussion before the related discussion board closes. See Resources for a free conference call service.
3. **Select people for the roles of: facilitator and recorder.** The facilitator will guide the discussion and make sure all voices are heard. The recorder will document key points of the discussion and share them on the discussion board.
4. **Welcome** participants and have participants **introduce** themselves.
5. To set the tone, **review the Participant Guidelines** in this Discussion Guide.
6. **State the purpose** of the discussion – get their ideas about the possible solutions. Emphasize that a diversity of perspectives is an essential part of the process.
7. **State the agenda** – how much time will be allocated to discuss each solution and how much time at the end for additional comments.
8. **Discuss each proposed solution.** Each webinar (except the introduction) will provide some background information about the topic and possible solutions. Remind participants of key information and the possible solutions. For each possible solution, ask about the:
  - a. Pros
  - b. Cons
  - c. Ways to improve it.
9. **Ask if there are additional concerns or suggestions** related to the webinar topic.
10. **Have the recorder review the key points** and ask if anything was missing or incorrect. State that their thoughts will be added to the discussion board.
11. **Thank everyone** for participating.
12. After the discussion, ask the recorder to **post the comments** on the Discussion Board: <http://nowconference2015.wordpress.com/>

## ***Participant Guidelines***

The following guidelines are intended to create a safe space in which all participants can share ideas, feelings, and experiences. Review these Participant Guidelines at the beginning of the discussion to set the tone.

As a participant I:

- Acknowledge that every person is of equal worth and value
- Will speak in “I” language: “I think,” “I feel” “It has been my experience”
- Uphold that in an empowering environment “no one gets to be wrong”
- Agree to keep cell phones off or on vibrate
- Will avoid the tendency to respond to new ideas saying “yes, but” and instead will respond “yes, and”
- Recognize all opinions have value and should be expressed
- Agree to respect the confidentiality of our discussions and will maintain confidentiality after the meeting
- Will not rehash things that have already been discussed.
- Will stick to the agenda and won’t launch into discussions about irrelevant information
- Agree to listen to everyone with respect and not interrupt participants when they are talking, agree to wait for someone to finish their thoughts before talking
- Will not make personal attacks for any reason; that means no ZAPS, personal or personalized digs. Anyone who hears or perceives a ZAP whether directed at them or someone else is invited to respond by saying “ouch”.
- Agree to bring my sense of humor to the process and to use it!

## ***Facilitation Tips***

### ***Encourage participation by***

- Asking the contributor for further clarification and/or elaboration.
- Paraphrasing the idea and asking follow-up questions.
- Encouraging others to react to an idea or build on someone's comment.

### ***Handle potential problems***

- If a participant talks too much, redirect the discussion to ask another person what they think.
- If a participant hasn't contributed, ask a question like "How do you feel about this?" or "What has been your experience?" This may encourage participation by letting them know that you value their input; and it may reduce the fear of not having a new idea or not knowing as much as others.
- If the discussion turns into an argument, prevent participants from interrupting each other or speaking simultaneously. Remind participants that we are looking for a diversity of perspectives and can post multiple opinions on the discussion board. If needed, ask participants to focus on ideas rather than people and to resist being judgmental.

## ***Resources***

Structure Modernization forum and discussion website with information, resources, webinar PowerPoints, and Discussion Boards for proposals.

<http://nowconference2015.wordpress.com/>

Order a membership list for your state or chapter at:

<http://now.org/leaderdoc/request-for-membership-lists/>

Free Conference Call: All you need is your email address to receive an instant conference call account that enables you to easily set up conference calls for free! The only expense is participants' cell phone minutes or their normal long distance phone charges.

<https://www.freeconferencecall.com/>