

Mandala Governance and Structure Working Group

Preliminary Structure Report

Summary

This report presents preliminary findings from the subgroup that is addressing critical tasks and services in the mandala. Findings are based on conference calls and surveys conducted to date with centers in North America. Additional survey work is in process for practice centers, Europe and South America.

*Mandala Governance and Structure Working Group
Preliminary Critical Services Report*

Subgroup #2: Critical Tasks and Services

Interim Report

Objective

From working group objectives:

1. Develop a realistic model that identifies and prioritizes the critical tasks and services in the mandala, and identifies where responsibility and authority for managing these could most effectively reside.

Some basic critical tasks continue to be performed, such as bookkeeping and minimal practice and study support. Others can be added as debt is paid off. This subgroup is working to define priorities as to which services are most needed in the larger mandala, and how those would fit into a new structure.

Members

Subgroup includes Jane Arthur, Brian Callahan, Debbie McCubbin and Jan Watson, with participation from working group chair, Joe Inskeep.

Process

Eighteen North American center directors participated in conference calls that elicited lists of services and support needed by their centers. Twenty-six centers and group responded to a center-talk request to choose their top five priorities from the list, in priority order. The choices were then weighted in a points system based on how high or low a center ranked them.

A conference call with retreat centers to begin a similar process is scheduled for July 6th. Conference calls with European centers will happen in the second half of July, coordinated by Chris Tamdjidi. A process for getting feedback from South America, where conference calls are difficult, is being worked on—likely some combination of email, and personal interviews at the July conference.

Findings so far

The North American centers have the following priorities in terms of services, support or mandala resource allocation—the top eight in order of priority are:

1. More teacher training—MI's, Shambhala Guides, SSBS teacher, ST, ngondro MI's
2. "Best practices"—i.e. put effort and resources into identifying which centers do which things well, and circulate their knowledge or materials, instead of many centers re-inventing the wheel
3. More frequent visits from the Sakyong and from the Acharyas
4. Centrally developed publicity materials that are locally customizable.

5. Central “help desk” function where people can ask any question and get either an answer or get directed to the right person

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6. Ongoing practice and study support for both ST and SSBS, including curriculum development, question answering, etc. (currently Carolyn Mandelker's function).
7. Updated and expanded practice manual, including guidance on chants, etc.
8. (Tied) Centralized database of members and teachers -and- More curriculum for tantrikas.

Though the priority order of the list changes as you go from groups to small centers to large centers, these items still represent the key "needs" being expressed by all sizes of center/group.

Continuing work

We will continue the information-gathering process with South America, Europe and the retreat centers.

We will attempt to contact some of the groups and centers that haven't participated. There is a concern that groups and centers that have the resources and energy to participate in the international dialogue may not represent the complete picture - "unheard from" groups and centers may have a different set of needs. There will an attempt to explore this.

With the requests that have emerged and continue to emerge in this process, our working group will make recommendations as to how those needs could best be met in terms of structure and responsibility. Whatever is put into place should be viewed as meeting current needs but not 'cast in stone' for the future. We feel it's important that this kind of evaluation process and 're-implementation' of services happens regularly, recognizing that center needs and priorities change as the mandala matures and changes.

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