Balancing Legal and Traditional Authority at the Area Level

Have you ever wondered how Tradition Nine, which states, "Our groups, as such, ought never be organized ..." applies to your group, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS), District, or Area? What does this mean when your group wants to open a bank account? How can an Area avoid organizing the groups while adhering to Concept One, which explains that "The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups"?

With many Areas, AISs, Districts, and even groups considering whether to organize to obtain insurance for events or meeting locations or to complete financial transactions, the balance between traditional and legal authority and responsibility becomes an important discussion topic. Thankfully, the *2026–2029 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) offers helpful guidance from member experience, especially on group finances. The section "Group Bank Accounts" in "Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work" offers insights for groups and other non-incorporated service entities.

For service arms, which are typically larger, such as Districts and Areas, the "Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter" in the *Service Manual* offers a possible blueprint for balancing traditional and legal authority and responsibility. Trusted servants can consider studying the Charter and simply substituting the word "Conference" with "Assembly" (or another description of the traditional voting group) and "Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc." with the local corporate entity. The World Service Office is available to help with questions about bylaws and incorporation.