

Advanced Formal A and Beyond training sessions



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We held our third Advanced Formal A and Beyond training session Oct. 16-21. That was the last session for 2016.

We have now had 238 NALC activists who have been through this training program. Each person who attended this training filled out an exit survey. The general comments from these surveys reflect the fact that, from the participant's point of view, this is an excellent training program. I fully agree.

One of the questions we ask each participant is if he/she would recommend this training to others. Every single participant thus far has answered this question in the affirmative using words such as "yes,"

"absolutely," "definitely," "for sure," etc. One participant wrote, "Yes, and I would give them a heads up that it is a lot of work—but definitely worth the effort." I think that sums it up nicely.

In order to be accepted to attend this training, applicants must have some current experience presenting grievances at the Formal Step A level of the grievance procedure and be able to bring a laptop computer (that is *not* an Apple product) to the training.

Some of you may not consider attending this training because you are already an experienced representative and think it would be a waste of your time and branch resources. I would suggest that you think again. We have had participants in the first three classes with anywhere from a few months to 28 years of experience processing grievances at the local level. I can report that there hasn't been one of the 238 participants who left this training thinking that it was a waste of their time or branch resources.

We have also made adjustments to this training program after each session based on comments and suggestions from the participants. These have made it a little better each time.

The Advanced Formal A and Beyond training program is built for 80 participants per class. The goal of the program is to help experienced activists sharpen their skills to process grievances at Formal Step A more effectively. After all, what do we do that is more important than using the grievance procedure to protect and enforce the contractual rights of our brothers and sisters?

This training program takes the participants from the point of receiving an Informal Step A grievance appeal

through all aspects of processing a grievance at Formal Step A to the point of writing a Step B decision.

Each Advanced Formal A and Beyond training session begins on Sunday afternoon and ends on Friday at noon. This training is conducted at the Maritime Institute just outside of Baltimore. This is a union facility that is located just minutes from the Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) Airport. A free shuttle to and from the airport is available.

The expenses associated with attending this training are paid by the branches that decide to send the participant(s). There have also been a few instances where participants have paid their own way to attend. The cost for the week is \$1,097.45 for a single room and \$1,646.90 for a double room. This price includes room, tax, all meals and refreshments during breaks each day. I can report that participants will find the food there to be good and plentiful.

The question we have now is whether we should offer the Advanced Formal A and Beyond training program in 2017 and, if so, how many sessions should we plan for? This will be decided based on the number of applications we receive.

Currently, we have more than enough applications to fill one class, so we plan to offer this training at least once next year. If you are reading this and are interested in attending, applications can be found in the Contract Administration section of the NALC website. Just fill out an application and mail it back to me. As I have said in the past, the branches that decide to send participants to the training can expect to enjoy a great return on their investment.

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I once again thank everyone who helped me put this training together and all of the participants who attended in 2016 for all your efforts. Special thanks go out to the facilitators who helped present this training. The main facilitators were Regional Administrative Assistants James Henry (Region 1), Steve Lassar (Region 8), Javier Bernal (Region 10) and Rick DiCecca (Region 14). Tonya Detrick (Branch 443), Greg Dixon (Branch 1119) and Mark Sims (Branch 203) also made guest facilitator presentations during each session.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to wish all of you and your families a happy Thanksgiving!