

University of Notre Dame Alumni Association Catholic Community Professional Assistance Program

A Notre Dame Senior Alumni (NDSA) Initiative

Suggestions for Putting the Program into Practice

What It Is

This program is intended to assist a Notre Dame Alumni Club use its members business and professional skills, acquired through education and experience, to provide needed professional services to the Catholic Community on a 'no fee' basis. Catholic Community is defined to include the Diocesan administrative offices, individual parishes, Schools including Pre K thru 8th grade, High Schools, Mission Parishes, and Schools, and individual or all components of Catholic Charities, Seminaries and orders of Religious. The program can also be used to assist other not-for-profit community service organizations.

Benefits of the Program

The program benefits the Catholic Community, the Alumni Club, and individual alumni.

- To the Catholic Community it provides a professional service at no cost, potentially freeing up monies for other needs. It may also introduce management techniques the Catholic Community might be unaware of.
- To the Alumni Club it provides an opportunity for more of its members to be involved, it can lead to favorable publicity for the Club, and may attract new members.
- To the individual alumnus it provides an opportunity to use his/her expertise in a meaningful way, particularly senior alumni who may not physically be able to participate in certain 'hands-on' types of community service projects.

Getting Started

The first step is deciding which of two ways the Club will put the program into practice

- Determine needs of a segment of the Catholic Community and put together a team to address them; or
- Put together a team having specific skills and offer their services to a Catholic Community entity.

Laying the Groundwork

Having decided on which approach to use, the Club's next step is either to

- Meet with the entity to explain the program and jointly explore areas where the Club's services may be both useful and welcomed; or
- First select an area of expertise (e.g. finance, marketing, management, etc.), then build a team having the necessary skills, and finally meet with the entity to offer the service and explore areas where the Club members' services may be both useful and welcomed.

Approaching the Entity

- A way to approach the entity is to contact the head of the organization or as an alternative it may be helpful to have someone on the 'inside' introduce the program in very general terms. The initial goal is to arrange a meeting to explore needs. The Club Chaplain, a parish priest, or a lay person working for the entity might be a good choice. If such a person cannot be found, ask a Pastor or other person who knows the inner workings for suggestions.

- Arrange the initial meeting. Don't expect them to come to you.
- At the initial meeting, introduce the program in broad, general terms. If a team is in place, explain the specific skills the team has available. And most importantly, *listen* to the explanation of the need(s).
- Determine what they see as the next step. If a contact person has not been identified, ask who the Team is to work through.
- Be mentally prepared for a certain amount of 'foot dragging.' This does not signify a lack of interest. Non-business organizations often don't react as decisively as for-profit businesses.
- Following the initial meeting distribute a *brief* written summary in which specific goals for the project are stated, and a 'next step' is outlined. Invite additions and corrections.

Building the Team

- Through personal contact, appoint a chairperson for the project. If possible, appoint co-chairpersons.
- Survey the Club membership and non-Club-member ND alumni to determine the areas of member expertise. This can be done in different ways: a brain-storming session by Club leadership to identify persons with needed skills, a telephone survey, an e-mail or direct mail survey, etc.
- Prepare a 'position description' which lists goals of the project, a general timetable, and other pertinent information for use when talking to a member about participating in the project.
- Personally contact (in person or by phone, *never* by e-mail) each Club member having the necessary expertise. Explain the project, its goals, a general idea of the time required, and stress that no person will be asked to work alone. Ask if they are willing to consider participating in the project.
- Personal contact is best. A person who fails to respond to a call for volunteers, often readily will agree to participate when asked in person.

Getting Everyone Together

- Arrange a meeting to discuss goals, timing and other project-specific information between entity personnel and Club members willing to consider participating in the project.
- Following the meeting ask the Club members to commit to the project.

Conducting the Project

- As a first step prepare a Project Schedule that lists critical steps, decision points, and a timetable for completion. Review with entity personnel and obtain their agreement.
- Conduct the project using the 3-step Plan-Execute-Review process.
- At the conclusion of the project, prepare a written summary of recommendations (action plan) for the entity. Review the plan with the entity personnel at a final meeting.

Some Other Suggestions

- Organize project volunteers into teams within the Team. This will enable the project to proceed smoothly in the event of illness or other absence, and allow for travel and other personal needs.
- During the project the Team should act as consultants, *not* become involved in day-to-day implementation details.

Further Information

For more detailed information about the Catholic Community Professional Assistance Program click on “Full Details” about the initiative on NDSA’s website at www.ndsenioralumni.org or phone Tom Monaghan at the Alumni Association office, 574-631-2724.

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