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Archdiocese Launches New Service To Help You Plan For Future

One of the primary services that CFC provides is assisting parishes and schools in the strategic planning process for new capital projects. There are many factors that must be considered and CFC's expertise is primarily in project economics. The quality of our assistance is about to take a quantum leap due to a new service being launched by the Archdiocese.

While CFC can help parishes and schools answer questions about project affordability, this question is really best addressed after an earlier discernment process has occurred. As part of the initial discernment process, a parish or school needs to ask several interrelated questions. The first questions are "What is our mission?" and "How is our mission reflected in our ministries?" The second questions are "Whom should we be serving?" and "Whom does the Church call us to serve?" The answer to the second two questions can be framed by both hard data and anecdotal evidence.

Changes in parish demographics can have a profound impact on the delivery of ministry. As an anecdotal example, a parish that shifted from being a white, middle class parish to a largely immigrant Hispanic parish within the last three years has had to make dramatic changes in the way it does sacramental preparation, its school curriculum and teaching processes, how it prepares its liturgies and perhaps its social justice ministries.

Although numbers do not tell the whole story, anecdotes need to be verified by numbers. When a clear picture of the current membership and demographic data supporting ministries is gathered, more informed decisions can be made.

To address the questions of whom we should serve, we need data that is accurate, presented attractively, easy to use with a group that has diverse experience with data, and which is focused on the specific needs of the community. The major problem with demographic data is its breadth and abundance. Too much of it exists to be useful, unless filters are applied to narrow it down to the essentials that support the questions being asked.

According to Jim Lundholm-Eades of the Archdiocese, "the planning function of the Archdiocese has been based on one simple assumption - that most planning is done at the local level, rather than the diocesan level. It makes sense then, for the Archdiocese to focus its planning efforts on supporting and building the decision-making capacity at the local level." There are certain economies of scale that the Archdiocese can enjoy that an individual parish or school cannot. For

this reason the Archdiocese will be launching a new service to facilitate data-based decision-making at the local level.

The Archdiocese has historically provided planning support at the request of parishes and schools. The Archdiocese has now acquired access to software which can provide the most current demographic data available, drilling down to the level of specific parishes and neighborhoods, and present results in accurate, attractive formats. This new service will be provided by Jim Lundholm-Eades. Jim's new duties include raising the capacity of the Archdiocese at all levels to carry out the essential functions of planning and decision-making and to appropriately use demographic data to further that process.

CFC has had an opportunity to work with Jim and utilize this new service. We have found both the static data and the trend data that he provides to be not just informative, but also insightful. To access this service, all you need to do is call Jim Lundholm-Eades at 651.291.4512.

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