

New Resource Aids Discernment of the Critical Relationships in Sponsorship



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God has created me to do Him some definitive service.

He has committed some work to me which

He has not committed to another.

I have my mission.

I may never know it in this life.

But I shall be told it in the next.

I am a link in a chain,

a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for nothing.

I shall do good. I shall do His work.

—Cardinal John Henry Newman

In May, CHA published *Core Elements for Sponsorship: A Reflection Guide*, a resource that builds on previous sponsorship-related works distributed by the association. Although originally intended to articulate elements/competencies necessary for current and future sponsors, the guide is primarily being used as a tool to educate—and open channels of communication between—sponsors and trustees.

At the guide's heart is the recognition that although sponsors do have works that they alone are accountable for, they are also partners in the ministries they serve; links in the chain between the Holy See and Catholic ministries committed to caring for each person—body, mind, and spirit—with respect and dignity.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESOURCE

The reflection guide is the result of more than a year of work by ministry members. Initially a committee of theologians, canonists, and sponsors met to discuss possibilities for future models of sponsorship. However, their review of existing models—from health care, education, and lay associations of the faithful—resulted in a consensus that current models are serving the purpose of a canonical link between a ministry and the Roman Catholic Church.

Moving forward, the committee redirected its

work toward creating a tool that sponsors could use to self-assess their personal competencies. (The guide also offers a suggested process to assess the model of sponsorship—to make sure that it is doing what it was created to do: protect, nourish, extend, and guarantee the mission and ministry into the future.)

Although serving as the canonical link to the church remains the sponsor's central role, other responsibilities and roles have been evolving. Congregations and other sponsors—such as dioceses, public juridic persons, and some health systems—continue to evaluate their ability and/or desire to sponsor complex, institutional ministries like health care systems. Sponsors, both religious and lay, look to each other to collaboratively develop methods of continuing the sponsorship function in new and inclusive ways. Thus the second part of the reflection guide—a series of three-column charts that flesh out examples of each core element being lived out by sponsors, boards, and management—was created at the request of many of the guide's initial reviewers, because they wanted more clarity in “who” serves in “what” role in a “typical” sponsored work. The guide emphasizes the need for sponsors to adapt the guide and the three-column charts to reflect its current reality. A CD containing portions of the guide was included in the resource for easy adaptation.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

At CHA's 2006 Sponsorship Program Preceding the LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) Assembly, Sr. Katherine “Kit” Gray, CSJ, president, Sisters of St Joseph of Orange, and chair, Board of Trustees of St Joseph of Orange Health System, described her use of the guide with the board and with the sponsors of another health care system. In her presentation, she elicited additional ideas for further use.

Sr. Kit, who was a member of the committee that conceived the core elements in the reflection guide, explained how the guide builds on previ-

ous sponsorship resources—especially *Toward a Theology of Catholic Health Care Sponsorship: A Work in Progress*—and will be the link between those works and a new sponsorship resource on sponsorship of multiple ministries, to be published in spring 2007.

Sr. Kit suggested that sponsors first read (or reread) the theology document, which is included in the form of an executive summary in the reflection guide. She said it offers three key aspects that are important for sponsors to keep in mind when discussions among themselves and with those in governance:

- The definition of sponsorship

■ Three theological underpinnings: The church is communion founded on relationships; the church is sacrament and sacramental; and church hierarchy structures church governance

- Sponsorship as a ministry in and of itself

Building on that document and a 2004 study of models in health care (*A Research Study of Successful Practices/Learnings from a Sample of Sponsorship Models*) published and distributed along with the theology, the reflection guide provides a venue for assessing the mission and ministry in light of the current model of sponsorship.

In it, users can find a brief history of sponsorship from the health care perspective, the executive summary of the theology, a set of current challenges facing the ministry, and sponsorship's core elements: mission-oriented, animated, theologically grounded, collaborative, church-related, and accountable.

Sr. Kit was joined in the Sponsorship Program by Sr. Judith Carey, RSM, PhD, vice president, mission integration, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Hartford, CT, who provided attendees with an outline of possible uses. They included:

1. Review the six core elements with articulated roles and responsibilities typically found in sponsored ministries.

■ Ask whether sponsors, boards, and management have a clear understanding of areas of responsibility, authority, and accountability.

■ Ask whether the articles of incorporation and bylaws align with the roles and responsibilities as outlined. For example: Who approves the articles of incorporation and bylaw changes?

2. Revise the charts in the reflection guide to match your organization's mission and ministry.

3. Devote a portion of a board retreat to education on the role of the sponsors and board mem-

bers in relation to each of the core elements. A possible process for this education might include the following:

■ Prior to the retreat, have each group choose one of the core elements (and that element's possible roles, as outlined on the chart) and conduct a self-evaluation that can be a basis for discussion at the retreat

■ At the retreat, mix sponsors and board members at tables to further discussion.

■ Have each table take one element and discuss its meaning and how it is implemented by the organization.

4. Integrate the sponsorship theme in board meetings.

■ Prior to a meeting, send out a worksheet that includes the three-graph chart of one of the six core elements, the meeting agenda, and other board materials.

■ At the board meeting, dedicate 15 to 20 minutes to addressing how board members live out the core elements and the suggested roles and responsibilities.

■ Have board members break into small groups in which they share their thoughts and then identify actions to be taken.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

At the end of the Sponsorship Program, the presenters offered several other ideas for adapting and using the reflection guide, including adding a fourth column in the charts that would be used for the congregation as a whole. This idea was suggested by a sponsor who had learned that the members of her congregation sometimes had difficulties distinguishing between "sponsor" as an individual person and "sponsor" as a group of people (typically, members of a congregation's leadership). The usual practice is to say that sisters are members of the sponsoring congregation but not *the* sponsors.

Another attendee suggested that the guide could be used as a tool in strategic planning. Planners might look at each of the six core elements and design organizational goals in accordance with them. Sponsors could in this way participate in the organization's strategic planning activities. ■

