



Deanery Needs Assessment

Purpose: To identify critical service needs in a deanery that may be addressed by local parishes, or through collaboration with Catholic Charities; to provide meaningful opportunities for Catholic parishioners to engage in service to those in need in their community.

Process: **STEP 1: Assemble a Parish Needs Assessment Committee (PNAC)**

The pastor of each parish within the deanery assembles a group of 5-7 parishioners to serve as the Parish Needs Assessment Committee (PNAC), responsible for coordinating the local needs assessment process. The pastor designates a chairperson for the committee, and discusses the Deanery Needs Assessment concept with them.

STEP 2: Schedule a PNAC Meeting

The pastor provides the context for the Deanery Needs Assessment by sharing Bishop Bonnar's Pastoral Letter, *Testify to the Light*, noting specifically the priority of service.

Chairperson outlines the needs assessment process, explaining that *assistance from Catholic Charities can be requested at any point in the process*:

- Data Collection – Parish level
 - Focus group sessions
 - Survey
 - Parish/Community Forum
 - Review of Existing Resources (other recent needs assessment surveys for the parish's geographic territory, if available)
- Formulation of Priorities – Parish level
 - Parish identifies a maximum of three (3) priority needs/concerns, based on the data collection methods and committee discussion
- Presentation to Deanery – Deanery level
 - Each parish in the deanery presents their priority needs/concerns
 - Areas of overlap are identified
 - 3-5 deanery priority needs/concerns are designated, and rationale for the selections are developed
 - Leadership teams for each priority are formed to address the needs/concerns designated for action
- Development and On-going Evaluation of Action Plan – Deanery level
 - Action plans are implemented and developed as needed. The leadership teams charged with oversight of the action plans evaluate the execution of the plans on a periodic basis to ensure effectiveness in meeting the priority needs.

STEP 3: Data Collection

One or more methods may be used. Suggestions include the following:

Focus Group Meetings

The PNAC, working with the pastor, identifies 8-10 individuals from the parish to participate in each of the 3-5 focus group discussions. Each focus group should consist of people who share something in common. For example, one focus group may include older adults (age 65+). Other groups may include working professionals, youth, first responders, business owners, etc. The goal of the focus group process is to obtain a breadth of perspectives on community assets, concerns, and opportunities. Each focus group session should be about 1½ to 2 hours in length. The PNAC chairperson serves as the facilitator of the focus group sessions, and members of the Committee agree to assist with note taking and other responsibilities as necessary.

Suggested focus group agenda:

- Opening prayer/faith sharing (see *Testify to the Light* for more information)
- Pastor provides the context for the focus groups and Deanery Needs Assessment by sharing Bishop Bonnar's Pastoral Letter, *Testify to the Light*, noting specifically the priority of service.
- Pastor introduces the facilitator (chairperson)
- Focus group participants introduce themselves (this can also be incorporated into the faith sharing exercise at the beginning of the meeting)
- Facilitator describes the Deanery Needs Assessment process
- Facilitator encourages participants to be open and honest, and asks that all information shared be kept confidential among the participants
- Facilitator or scribe records responses to pre-determined questions on newsprint or in some other format that can be viewed by the entire group. Suggested questions might include:
 - What does our parish do to reach out to those in need?
 - What resources are available in the community to help those in need?
 - What could our parish or community be doing better to help those in need?
- Facilitator summarizes the discussion, including the main points that were articulated
- Facilitator informs the group that after all focus group sessions are held, a survey will be developed to solicit further input from parishioners (and members of the community, if desired).

Survey

After all focus group sessions have been held, the PNAC compiles feedback from all groups, identifies common themes or concerns, and prepares a survey. The survey should contain at least 10-15 objective questions, as well as open-ended questions regarding available resources and needs/concerns in the community. The survey should also attempt to capture demographic information about the person completing the survey, which is another way to identify service trends not identified through the focus group process.

The survey can be administered to all parishioners as a bulletin insert (with instructions for returning completed surveys), as a survey on the parish website (provided the parish has a survey-creator application), or in some other designated format.

The pastor and PNAC may wish to send the survey via U. S. Mail or email to a select number of people in the community who are not parishioners in order to get feedback from neighborhoods included within parish boundaries. Keep in mind that additional background information about the purpose of the parish needs assessment will need to be included with surveys to those people who are not parishioners.

The PNAC compiles the results in a similar way as with the focus group feedback, identifying common trends, themes, needs/concerns and opportunities. About 3-5 needs/concerns are chosen for consideration at the Parish/Community Forum

Parish/Community Forum

The PNAC, working with the pastor, hosts a forum to present results from the focus groups and surveys. The forum may include parishioners only, or a combination of parishioners and members of the community at large. The forum should last approximately 1 to 1½ hours.

Suggested parish/community forum agenda:

- Opening prayer/faith sharing (see *Testify to the Light* for more information)
- Pastor provides a welcome and briefly shares the background of the parish needs assessment, including the specific section on service in Bishop Bonnar's pastoral letter, *Testify to the Light*.
- Pastor introduces the PNAC chairperson, who provides a summary of the focus group and survey processes, and serves as the forum's facilitator.
- The top 3-5 identified needs/concerns determined by the PNAC are each printed on a separate sheet of newsprint and placed in the front of the room.
- The facilitator introduces each need/concern and asks for feedback on any of the identified needs/concerns presented.
- The chairperson then asks for suggestions on how the parish might address the needs (*note: if attendance allows, break participants into small groups. Ask each group to consider one need at length and present a summary of their small group discussion to the larger group. The facilitator then notes comments on the corresponding sheet of newsprint at the front of the room*).
- The chairperson then asks how the participants or other individuals might get involved in helping the parish address the need; moving from what the parish can do to "how can I help?" (*note: this can be done in small groups and shared in the large group, if desired*).
- The facilitator concludes the forum by reviewing next steps (compiling information from focus groups, survey, and local parish/community forum, and presenting it at a deanery meeting where priorities will be established).

Existing Resources

The PNAC obtains copies of other credible community needs assessments and related documents that may have been completed in recent years. These materials can be reviewed and considered during the data collection process.

STEP 4: Formulation of Priorities

The PNAC meets to formulate a maximum of 3 parish priority needs/concerns, along with rationale for each selection, based on the results of **STEP 3**, as well as any outside needs assessments or reports obtained during the data collection process.

STEP 5: Presentation to Deanery

Each of the deans sets a meeting in his respective region to assemble all pastors and PNAC chairpersons. The deanery meeting should last approximately 2 hours. *A representative from Catholic Charities should be invited to participate in this meeting to provide insights and observations about priority concerns.*

Suggested deanery meeting agenda:

- Opening prayer/faith sharing (see *Testify to the Light* for more information)
- Dean provides a welcome and introduces the representative from Catholic Charities, and the facilitator, who has been identified in advance of the meeting. The facilitator could be the dean himself, a pastor, one of the PNAC chairpersons, or the Catholic Charities representative.
- The facilitator explains that each parish will have five minutes to present up to 3 needs/concerns discovered through the local parish needs assessment process.
- Each unique need/concern is written at the top of a piece of newsprint, along with the name of the parish introducing the need/concern, and affixed to the wall. Duplicate needs/concerns are noted on the same piece of newsprint, along with the name of the parish. The process continues until each parish has had the opportunity to present.
- The facilitator asks the group if any of the needs/concerns could be further grouped together. The sheets of newsprint for similar needs/concerns are grouped together. Geographical similarities with regard to needs/concerns are identified, if applicable.
- The facilitator asks if there are any questions about the topics presented, or if anyone would like additional information from a particular parish regarding a certain need/concern presented.
- When there are no further questions, each person present at the meeting is given color-coded "Post-It" notes to vote for their first, second, and third priority choices. Each color represents "first," "second," or "third" priority. The 3-5 topics with the most votes are the ones to be carried forward for further discussion and action.
- A leader and work group of 3-5 people is designated for each priority area.
- Facilitator concludes the meeting by reviewing next steps (work groups are charged with creating action plans to respond to their priority need/concern, and are provided with a timeline for initial implementation, as determined by those at the deanery meeting)

Facilitator is responsible for scheduling subsequent work group meetings to ensure progress toward development and implementation of action plans.

STEP 6: Development of Action Plan and On-going Evaluation

After action plans are developed the leadership teams (with or without involvement from Catholic Charities) outline a plan for project growth/expansion, if needed, and a method for evaluating the project's effectiveness/success. Catholic Charities can assist with the development of evaluation criteria and contingency planning, if requested.