

Quintessentials

Top 5 insights for ministry from our team in the field



Catholic Leadership
INSTITUTE

5 Steps to Forming a Parish Team

Building successful teams is vital to all kinds of parish work. From operating outreach ministries, to coordinating capital campaigns, to planning and implementing community-building events, and more, teams of priests, pastoral leaders, and volunteers are constantly planning, organizing, and leading activities and projects to build up and serve their communities.

What makes a successful parish team, and how do you create one?

Effective teams don't just happen. They take intentionality and preparation in order to make sure you increase the chances of bearing fruit and lowering frustration. To be successful, rely on the combined knowledge and efforts of the pastor and other clergy, employed leadership and staff, and engaged parishioners.

Based on our extensive experience guiding parishes through the *Next Generation Parish* process - underway in more than 100 parishes across the country - and other efforts, Catholic Leadership Institute suggests five things to keep in mind when creating a focused and engaged parish team.



“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

– 1 Peter 4:10

1. Set Clear Expectations

Building a team upon a proper foundation is vital to success. It's important to make sure everyone understands the objectives and shared vision of the team and each person's role and responsibilities.

- Begin with a sponsorship document and a team charter.**
 - Clearly define the purpose for the team before you convene the members.
 - Describe the team's sponsorship structure: To whom it is responsible? When and how should it report its progress? How does it receive any necessary funding and resources?



APPENDIX I
Sample Team
Charter

- ❑ **Engage the team in defining their own values and understand how they align with the parish’s values, as well as the team’s norms and ground rules. These could include things such as:**
 - Respect for each other’s opinions
 - Be flexible and appreciate differing perspectives
 - Respect for each other’s time
 - Arrive on time and be prepared with pen, paper, agenda, etc.
 - Active listening
 - Do not have devices out during meetings
 - High level of engagement
 - Aim for equal contributions to the discussion from all members

- ❑ **Clearly state roles, responsibilities and time commitments:**
 - Nominate a meeting leader – will the leader be the same for each meeting, or rotating?
 - Select a note-taker who records meetings, and distributes the meeting minutes in an agreed upon timeframe.
 - Rules around discussions. Should you adopt a formal meeting structure, such as Robert’s Rules of Order*, or something less official?
 - Raise your hand to be recognized. Don’t interrupt other speakers. Listen with your head and your heart. Be sure to speak slowly and clearly so everyone can hear and understand.
 - Expectation for everyone to contribute thoughts, ideas, and insights.
 - Expectations for work between meetings.
 - Expected time commitment – hours, days weeks, months.

2. Widen Your Net

When building a team, the pastor or other parish leader may be tempted to reach out to a list of reliable, longtime parishioners – the people who seem to serve on every committee and be involved in every project. While these individuals bring stability and comfort, the new team could be missing out on fresh perspectives and new ideas.

- ❑ **Rather than always engaging the “usual suspects” of parish ministry leaders to be on the team, ask them to recommend members.**
 - Engage “influencers” from across the parish – not just those who lead ministries, but the informal thought leaders who help to drive opinions and actions.
 - Don’t be afraid to invite “squeaky wheels” onto a team. A team functions best when it considers a variety of viewpoints and ideas. (However, be sure to avoid people with their own inflexible agendas.)
- ❑ **Consider people's charisms beyond their obvious skills and their profession.**
 - For example, a CFO may bring talents beyond financial acumen to a new team.



HOW FORMAL SHOULD YOU GO?

When planning how to run your meetings, consider what level of structure you need. For more official or formal gatherings with bigger crowds, Robert’s Rules of Order are an option. For more creative, brainstorming sessions, keep the structure light and the crowd smaller.



Scan the QR to learn more about the meeting procedures associated with Robert’s Rules of Order.



- ❑ **Avoid the temptation to include only members of the parish staff on your teams.**
 - While the parish staff can provide continuity across teams, it can be challenging for them to leave behind their day-to-day responsibilities and engage in visionary thinking.
 - Have an unconventional team member (e.g., a young adult) solicit participation by speaking at Mass.

- ❑ **Any team should accurately reflect the makeup of the parish, particularly in terms of ethnicity.**
 - Make an effort to include a variety of demographics – new mothers, middle school parents with kids on sports team, people with disabilities, people with varied cultural backgrounds, even non-English speakers.
 - Consider how a real-time translation app, such as iTranslate, can make your meetings more inclusive.



3. Make it Personal

The personal touch helps distinguish a parish team from a corporate committee. Whenever possible, use person-to-person contact to create a team and build rapport.

- ❑ **Have the pastor reach out to each individual invited to become part of the team; or at least have the pastor ask the appropriate team leader to do so.**
- ❑ **Use ice-breakers to help team members get to know each other. For example:**
 - Before the first team meeting, ask members to share via a group email or group chat who their favorite saint is, and why.
 - At the first meeting, ask members to talk about their favorite church or holy site – other than their own church.
- ❑ **Encourage the pastor (or other team leader) to be positive and lead with enthusiasm. The leader sets the tone for each meeting and for the overall project.**



4. Make Participation Meaningful

Team members want to know that their participation is making a difference in the parish and for fellow parishioners. It's up to the team leader to help them see that their valuable time is being used appropriately.

- ❑ **Set meeting agendas, and stick to them, to give each meeting a clear direction and purpose.**
 - For weekly meetings, send an agenda 24 hours in advance. Monthly meetings, 72 hours in advance. Quarterly or special topic meetings, one week in advance - especially if there are materials to review.
 - Include action items so members can see how they can contribute both during and between meetings.
- ❑ **Consider meeting logistics:**
 - Place and time reserved
 - Enough parking?
 - No major calendar conflicts
 - Nametags
 - Any A/V needs
 - Enough handouts?
 - Meeting invitations sent out enough ahead of time, with same-day reminder
 - Someone identified to lead opening and closing prayers

- ❑ **Encourage participation by everyone.**
 - Give introverts the time and space to listen, observe and reflect, so they can offer their unique insights when asked.
 - Allow everyone to contribute to the conversation and consider a time limit to keep the group focused.
- ❑ **Set term limits for ongoing team assignments.**
 - Consider engaging new team members every 2-5 years to keep ideas fresh and energy levels high
 - Clarify whether terms are renewable and how best to stagger turnover so not all transition happens at the same time
- ❑ **For longer projects, change things up to keep it fresh.**
 - Rotate locations from a board room to an outdoor space, from the office to a restaurant, etc.
 - Alternate the meeting structure so different topics are discussed and/or different people contribute

5. Share Feedback and Express Gratitude

Regular communication with team members helps keep them engaged and committed to the work of the team. Consider ways to let them know how the team is doing on its goals.

- ❑ **During the course of the project, look for interim “wins” and share them with the team to show progress.**
 - Follow up with an update after each meeting and every project milestone.
 - Share how the project is already having an impact on the parish and its members.
 - Communicate how the work already accomplished and underway dovetails with other parish initiatives.
- ❑ **Be sure to thank members for their ongoing participation and for their contributions of time and talent.**
 - When possible, call out specific comments or actions that the team member contributed to the success of the initiative.
 - To publicly thank and recognize the team – even in the midst of its work.
 - Consider having the pastor provide an update to the whole parish through a bulletin note, email newsletter, social media posting and/or pulpit announcement.

By following these five guidelines, a parish can ensure that teams achieve their objectives in service to the people of God.

Fostering an effective team within the parish is not merely a goal, but a mission of responsibility and servant leadership in the Church. Through open communication, personal connection, and a willingness to serve, parishes can form teams that strengthen our parish community and reflect the boundless love and grace of the Faith.



This *Quintessentials* ministry resource is produced in collaboration with our Leadership Consultants, Tricia Cellucci and Rosemarie Banich.

**APPENDIX I
SAMPLE TEAM CHARTER**



Team Name	St. Paul Cathedral Envisioning Team
<u>Purpose Statement</u>	Our team purpose is to discern, define and proclaim a mutually shared vision for our parish so that our people can grow spiritually and enable the St. Paul Cathedral to attract new parishioners. Accompanying the mutually shared vision will be a set of priorities and related outcomes that chart a course in service to the Kingdom of God. The results of our work should generate both hope and excitement for the future of our faith community.
<u>Values</u> Rank order and define the values by which your team will operate	<p><u>Faith</u></p> <p>Faith is belief in Jesus Christ and his teachings without physically witnessing based upon the Scriptures and Catholic Tradition. Faith is a lived relationship with Jesus Christ and the fullness of life in his Church.</p> <p><u>Community</u></p> <p>We are people joined together in supporting each other in our faith journey through fellowship, engagement and service.</p> <p><u>Evangelization</u></p> <p>To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through joyful witness, lasting hope, loving works and behaviors to all peoples, so they can know Jesus' great love and the salvation He offers to enter the Kingdom of God.</p>

Parish Envisioning Team Charter

Team Norms and Ground

Rules

How will you communicate and share feedback, deal with commitment and involvement of members, set tone and celebrate successes?

1. **Pray together.** Invite the Spirit to journey with this team and process.
2. **Balance the workload.** Make sure all team members share the load.
3. **Come prepared.** Do the reading and analysis of materials given before the meeting.
4. **Respect each other's time.** Start on time, stay on time, and end on time. Use the meeting time wisely.
5. **Stay focused.** Don't drift in the meeting—no multi-tasking; cell phones on silent; be present.
6. **Respect team members.** Be open to new ideas. Respect—not simply tolerate—differing viewpoints. Listen for what you don't know and don't prejudge.
7. **Give the benefit of the doubt.** Try not to take comments personally.
8. **Don't talk about team members outside the meetings.** Respect your teammates. Talking behind their backs only fosters discord.
9. **Make and keep commitments.** If you promise to do something, do it!
10. **Have fun.** Remember to laugh at yourselves and with each other.

Additional Ground rules:

11. **No phone usage during meetings (and have them on silent)**
12. **Attend all meetings**
 - With the understanding that sometimes conflicts are unavoidable
13. **Be present**
14. **Be flexible**

Team Roles and Responsibilities

What are the collective, paired, and individual responsibilities?

Assign these specific roles:

Team Leader: Larry Clapper

Meeting Facilitator: Rosemarie Banich