

DPA 2004.11.05 Breakout Group

Envisioning District Services Delivery for the Future We Desire

History

To Be of Use Report 1999: The goals of providing district services are that they be “Fat, Flat and Flexible.” “Fat” meaning rich in services, “Flat” meaning available broadly and evenly across the district, and “Flexible” meaning offering the promise of customization to the needs of individual congregations rather than “off the shelf”. The acceptance of this report in some districts was less than enthusiastic.

Two years later UUA Moderator Denny Davidoff and EVP Kay Montgomery steered a follow up task force on Structure and Services that involved interviews and focus groups conducted across the association. At GA in 2001 (Cleveland) the Task Force presented its final report.

Key findings of the *Task Force on Structure and Services related to districts:*

1. Districts to remain as centers of governance and service delivery.
2. Delivery of services not to be bound by district “borders” but rather to establish *centers of expertise in geographically dispersed locations*.

Five goals:

1. Develop a culture of communication and collaboration that did not exist.
2. Develop standards for infrastructure and support.
3. Support ongoing initiatives: a) disperse UUA HQ staff members (not all located at 25 Beacon Street), b) create a comprehensive leadership development plan.
4. Strengthen the district structure.
5. Create centers of expertise. Establish a staff team on each subject. Create relationships with existing programs. Provide technology to create distance learning...

Identified Tripartite Mission of Districts

Growth in numbers

Connecting congregations to each other and to the larger faith movement

Have our voice become more prominent and prevalent in the world

The district’s job is to support and nurture healthy congregations, establish new ones, identify congregations that both want and need redevelopment, and continue to tailor services to the needs of individual congregations.

Possible district activities include:

Sharing of the learning and experiences of breakthrough/leadership congregations.

Action plans, ‘investment in success’ covenants. Co-responsibility.

The centers of expertise would be responsible for benchmarks.

We need an evolutionary approach.

One model is as follows:

The district board identifies needs and hires consultants.

The district staff accesses resources.

The district knows who the executive is (may be shared with other districts).

The executive taps into centers of expertise, arranges training, sees that goals are accomplished.

In any case, the board’s job is to maintain resources and the vision.

Should we be discussing rearranging districts into socio-economic regions of similar needs?

Before we address any of these ideas, we need to explore the following questions with the UUA Board and UUA leadership:

1. What is a working definition of what the purpose of a district IS, in the language of our vision, mission, and purpose?
2. What would a good relationship between the UUA Board and district boards look like? Also the relation between districts?
3. *Are we centers of governance and service delivery as per the recommendation of the Task Force on Structure and Services Report?*
4. How do we best serve and most fairly fund districts and/or district services?
5. What is the UUA Board's position on the recommendations from the *Task Force on Structure and Services Report*?
6. What centers of expertise do we envision? What are our priorities?
7. Is there a process to identify whether or not we have the resources to achieve 5% per year growth?

We want to make sure our purposes are aligned. We want to partner and be of use. We want to ride this wave to the fullest without losing sight of our goals and jumping on each new ship that happens by.