

**Ends Monitoring Accompanying Memo
Learnings and Future Steps
December 23, 2014**

Introduction:

The data collection and assessment design process prompted by developing Ends Monitoring reports have resulted in many levels of learning about how we can better assess the impact of UUA programs and resources. We welcome fuller conversation with you about these approaches. Below is a summary of our learnings at this stage.

Congregational Self-Assessment

The Congregational Self-Assessment process will be a core component to tracking progress toward Ends. There have been a number of attempts to use this kind of instrument in the past, and none of them have been particularly successful. We have been analyzing these past efforts to learn how we might do this better, and are proceeding carefully with several planned stages of constituent input and beta-testing in order to increase the potential of congregational buy-in.

There are also a number of technical issues to sort out in terms of how data about such subjective subjects could be gathered effectively, and also in terms of who would represent the voice of the congregation. We fully expect to have a process tested in early spring and available by General Assembly.

As mentioned in the monitoring report, this effort will also provide an evaluative structure for us to align our programmatic priorities across staff groups, thereby giving us more consistent data to collect.

Universal Evaluation

One of the challenges we have encountered in gathering impact data, is that while each staff group assiduously gathers evaluations for each of its programs, there are not consistently and universally framed impact questions across the board, making it impossible to gather this information in a comprehensive way. A new standardized set of questions is being developed to be implemented by all staff groups in the spring.

This problem is one of the hallmarks of siloization and isolation among staff groups and affirms our strategic priority of regionalization of field services and the development of our Program and Strategy leadership team bringing all our program departments together.

Database improvements

Another result of previous siloization is that we have failed to develop one comprehensive data base providing us with full data about congregations and their leadership and their involvement with various UU entities. Each staff group developed its own special data base for its own special needs with no consistent technical structure, making merging these collections almost impossible until recently.

New developments in software applications that allow for substructures of consistent data but also customization of programmatic need give us a new opportunity to share and learn from robust data about congregations. This new system should be largely in place by June, 2015.

Website Development

Our new Drupal based website (an open source content management system) is due to be launched in February 2015. This site will allow us to curate resources and aim them much more intentionally at different constituent needs related to fulfillment of Ends. It will also eventually also congregations and individuals to create profiles on the site that will give us a chance to learn much more information about what they find useful, as well as give us a way to “push” information to them related to their particular interests.

Creating an Evaluative Culture

As mentioned above, our staff constantly conduct evaluations of individual programs. But with a lack of technical substructure that consistently gathers data across groups, we have, until recently, been unable to compare results. The process of gathering data for this report allowed us to create a tracking process that can be more fully populated and enhanced by the other technologies described above. When data is analyzed according to a variety of variables it allows us to adjust our programming accordingly. For instance, the fact that small congregations have been less likely to become Welcoming Congregations steers us toward a new kind of development of that program.

Inadequate Interpretations

And finally, it became apparent to us through this process that our interpretations don't quite allow for the kind of analysis that would be helpful to all of us. The interpretation of policy 1.4, for example, stands out as an interpretation that steers us much more toward a report of activities rather than results. We will be presenting you with new interpretations in the next cycle of Ends Monitoring.

We welcome conversation about any of these reflections as well as any suggestions you may have for strengthening our efforts.