

MEMORANDUM

TO: UUA Board of Trustees

FROM: Linkage Working Group

RE: Linkage Proposed Charter, Issues for Consideration, and Plan Example

DATE: September 20, 2009

Attached to this document are several documents for Board consideration:

1. The proposed charter of the Linkage Working Group (page 2)
2. In keeping with the proposed charge to “create and maintain” a linkage system, a working draft of a Board Linkage Plan based on the following steps identified in “CONNECT: A Guide to Ownership Linkage” by Jannice Moore (page 3):
 - Step 1: Clearly identify your ownership [Sources].
 - Step 2: Clarify the purpose of [Source] linkage.
 - Step 3: Select a representative sample of [Sources].
 - Step 4: Ask the right questions.
 - Step 5: Choose the most appropriate methods for each group of [Sources]
 - Step 6: Implement the plan.
 - Step 7: Keep track of the information gathered.
 - Step 8: Apply the input to Ends decision-making.
 - Step 9: Communicate back to [Sources]

A sample detailed plan starts on page 4.

3. One of the issues identified in our initial work was the dual role played by congregations, one of our Sources, of both “customer” and “owner [Source]”. Page 6 is from the CONNECT Toolkit that lays out some differences. We found it very easy to go to the “customer” discussion when thinking about linkage, which is really the prerogative of the President and staff.

A second issue was around insuring the information collected is from a representative sample. We will be proposing a more rigorous selection process for our trustee/source discussions for topics that need a higher standard of representation.

The third issue will be a Board discussion around what topics we will choose for formal linkage. Our proposal is to investigate Policy 1.0.4: “These are all at equal priority and are to be achieved within a justifiable cost.” This suggests working with our Sources to determine which Ends, if any, have a consistent higher priority than other Ends.

Charge to the Linkage Working Group

The Board of Trustees governs on behalf of and is accountable to our Sources of Authority and Accountability (“Sources”), which we have defined as:

1. Our member congregations
2. Current and future generations of Unitarian Universalists
3. The heritage, traditions, and ideals of Unitarian Universalism
4. The vision of Beloved Community
5. The Spirit of life, love, and the holy

To govern accountably on their behalf, the Board must maintain meaningful connections, or Linkage, with these Sources, including constructive dialogues concerning the Sources’ values and the UUA’s Ends. The focus of linkage is not “telling” or “reporting” but rather “listening” to the Sources’ perspectives regarding their needs and what benefits the UUA should produce. Completion of the linkage loop requires us to let the Sources know what has been achieved on their behalf, i.e., to be accountable.

The Board’s Linkage Working Group therefore is charged to create and maintain a system that insures the UUA's Ends reflect the Sources' values and desired outcomes. The system must include

1. representational linkage with our Sources, including methodology for linking with each Source;
2. the necessary training and tools to Trustees to enable them to achieve meaningful linkage with our Sources;
3. Analysis of feedback from the linkage work with recommendations for appropriate follow-up action; and
4. Board accountability for achieving meaningful linkage and acting on the results.

**Sources Linkage Plan EXAMPLE
PLAN OVERVIEW**

Source group(s) Selected	Method	Questions	Notes
YEAR 1:			
A representative sample of congregations (88 at a confidence interval of 10)	One on one discussions by trustees with congregation leaders	TBD by Board, focusing on “at what cost” (priority)	Questionnaire and methodology created for board approval by Linkage WG
A representative sample of congregations (278 at a confidence level of 5)	Online survey	TBD by Board, focusing on “at what cost” (priority)	Survey created by LWG, approved by Board
YEAR 2:			
A representative sample of congregations	TBD	TBD by Board, focusing on accountability	
Analyze feedback from previous years and set priorities	LWG to analyze and make recommendations	Board to set priorities	
Current and future generations of UUs	TBD	TBD	Need to determine who it is we are actually talking to
The heritage and traditions of UUism			
YEAR 3:			
A representative sample of congregations	TBD	TBD by Board, focusing on potential Ends revision	

The Vision of
Beloved
Community

The Spirit of life,
love, and the holy

DETAILED PLAN YEAR ONE

Educate Board on what linkage is and what is required to get accurate input	Linkage WG	Oct 09	Board
Identify who we talk with in each source	Linkage WG, approval by Board	Jan 10	Linkage WG, consultant
Develop questionnaire for trustees to do linkage around "at what cost"	Linkage WG	Jan 10	Linkage WG, consultant
Select sample for trustee linkage	Linkage WG	Jan 10	LWG
Test questionnaire with Texas congregations at board meeting as "fishbowl"	LWG	Jan 10	LWG
Set up collection methodology for both formal and incidental linkage, i.e.: unscripted feedback from "sources" (two separate databases)	LWG	Jan 10	LWG
Create online survey on "at what cost"	LWG	Apr 10	LWG

Select representative sample of congregations	LWG	Apr 10	LWG	
Analyze feedback from congregations	LWG	Oct 10	Board	present recommendations for priorities at October board meeting
Feedback to interviewed congregations on monitoring reports	LWG to identify key reports and/or provide summary	Jan 11	Trustees to make personal contacts to share information with interviewed congregations	