

COMPREHENSIVE HR SYSTEM IN “CO-WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD”

“You too go into my vineyard.” (Matthew 20:4)

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved a document called “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry” in November of 2005. It culminates with a promotion of a comprehensive human resources system for a diocese and for parishes. We would like to present that system in this issue, assess the progress that has already been made in this Archdiocese, and prepare the pathways for a more complete adoption of this HR system.

You may find the document at www.usccb.org/laity/laymin/co-workers.pdf. It is structured as follows:

Part One - Foundations

- A. Describing and Responding to New Realities
- B. Understanding the Realities in Light of Theology and Church Teaching

Part Two - Pastoral Applications

- A. Pathways to Lay Ecclesial Ministry
- B. Formation for Lay Ecclesial Ministry
- C. Authorization for Lay Ecclesial Ministry
- D. **The Ministerial Workplace**

Context

*Some Human Resource Areas in a
Comprehensive Personnel System
Resources and Outcomes*

Conclusion

We would like to present and discuss Section D of Part Two—*The Ministerial Workplace*. The bishops start in the *Context* subsection by acknowledging the diversity among dioceses in the US, and stating that their comments aren’t intended to be prescriptive or normative. Then they name the challenge of establishing policies and procedures that integrate Gospel values and best organizational practices. They speak of the development of comprehensive personnel systems in dioceses as a response to the growing presence of lay ecclesial ministers and other lay workers in Church institutions, and qualify it as having “beneficial results.” The task is to “create consistent policies, coming from the same basic philosophical stance, which takes into consideration the needs of all...groups, and indeed the interests of the entire Church.”



In the next subsection, *Some Human Resource Areas in a Comprehensive Personnel System*, the bishops list six areas typically addressed in such a system: 1. Recruitment & Selection; 2. Orientation & Support for New Lay Ecclesial Ministers; 3. Evaluation & Feedback; 4. Compensation; 5. Transitions & Terminations; and 6. Grievance Procedures.

1. **Recruitment & Selection**—As the bishops say: “This area frequently addresses the value of posting job openings, having written position descriptions, and when appropriate, using search committees of people who are trained in interview skills, know which questions are permissible and not permissible in an interview, make careful use of references, and are familiar with anti-discrimination laws.” It is a vital area where professional handling here sets the tone for the rest of the employment relationship.

- *Progress*—In the Archdiocese of San Francisco, we have made good strides in the areas of posting job openings, using search committees when appropriate, encouraging reference and background checks appropriate to the position, and training & educating on anti-discrimination laws. This Office wrote five brief training publications (called **HR Connect**) “*Do We Really Need to Fill This Position: Tools for Staffing Analysis*” (Issue 1); “*Position Description*” (Issue 2); “*Hiring the Best Person*” (Issue 3); “*Checking References*” (Issue 16); and “*What Belongs in Personnel Files*” (Issue 19), to the pastors, principals & agency heads to support these strides.
- *Pathways*—We could improve in the areas of encouraging and coaching toward written position descriptions for positions at each site and enhancing interview skills of those that do the interviewing.

2. **Orientation & Support for New Lay Ecclesial Ministers**—As the bishops say: “People new to any organization need to understand its mission, culture, and history and need to meet other workers in order to bring their gifts to bear on the organization.” Orientation, support, and appropriate training all help the new employee succeed and help the parish or school more fully receive what they hired the new employee for.

- *Progress*—The **HR Connect** entitled “*New Employee Orientation*” (Issue 13) has provided suggestions and ideas. Also, anecdotally, it seems that parishes are more attentive to giving new employees what they need to understand and do their jobs, instead of making them figure it out for themselves. To support this, our Office provides a bi-annual workshop series to train Site Administrators in HR & benefit matters. Lastly, this Office spearheads the on-line training for Sexual Harassment Prevention for supervisors (fulfilling the California state requirements of AB1825).
- *Pathways*—We could do more to promote specific plans at each site for effective orientations, support and appropriate training for new employees. In fact, we are presently working on an on-line training for employees and volunteers with regular contact with children in support of the USCCB’s Charter for the Protection of Children. This should be ready for roll out by Fall 2006. This will cover some of the training needs at the parishes.



3. **Evaluation & Feedback**—As the bishops say: “Documentation of honest and constructive feedback about deficiencies and subsequent steps for improvement is important, as is both formal and informal recognition of generous, Christ-centered, and effective service.” We do an injustice to employees when we don’t give them the

time and effort it takes to let them know how well they are doing their jobs. This process, when done professionally and constructively, also gives employees a chance to give us feedback on how well we are doing our jobs in supervising their meeting the goals of their position.

- ❑ *Progress*—This Office wrote an **HR Connect** entitled “*Performance Management*” (Issue 17) and another entitled “*Solving (Not Exacerbating) Performance Problems*” (Issue 10). We’ve also provided individual coaching of pastors when the performance of an employee has not met basic expectations. Additionally, the **HR Connect** entitled “*Document Is a Verb!*” (Issue 42) offers a resource for effective documentation of performance concerns at the time that they occur.
- ❑ *Pathways*—We could do more training of pastors, principals and supervisors interested in developing their performance management skills and coaching in implementing an effective periodic employee evaluation system. We could also beef up our contributions to ongoing new pastor workshops.

4. **Compensation**—As the bishops say: “In a comprehensive personnel system, this area includes salary plans that may establish ranges through which individuals may progress, as well as benefit plans (e.g., health insurance, family leave, child care assistance, funding for ongoing education). These issues can be particularly challenging when resources are limited.” We want our salary and benefit packages to be competitive enough to attract high quality and committed candidates, retain them and provide for them while they are in our employ, and to help them prepare for retirement or their next steps in service.

- ❑ *Progress*—This Office has developed Parish Pay Guidelines, updated annually, that hopefully serve as a touchstone for consideration as pastors make salary decisions for their new and existing employees. The **HR Connect** entitled “*Employee Compensation 201: Implementing the Parish Pay Guidelines*” (Issue 8) offers meaningful suggestions for implementation. We also provide an excellent and extensive benefits package, and make every effort to manage benefits efficiently and cost-effectively.
- ❑ *Pathways*—We are all greatly challenged to provide just wages and sufficient benefits to all of our employees in the increasingly expensive Bay Area, given the limited resources of the Archdiocese as it emerges from the sexual abuse scandal. And, like every other employer in the country, we are challenged by the sheer expense and rising costs of providing health insurance coverage to our employees.

5. **Transitions & Terminations**—As the bishops say: “When a lay ecclesial minister is the one making a transition or ending service, such practices as exit interviews can help the parish or diocese learn from the lay ecclesial minister’s experience. Outplacement and severance assistance can make the time of transition less stressful for the individual.”

- ❑ *Progress*—This Office wrote an **HR Connect** entitled “*Termination Guidelines*” (Issue 41) which along with the other one entitled “*Document Is a Verb*” (Issue 42) may help guide the process fairly. Also, in the event of a downsizing of operations leading to a reduction in force, we have a severance policy suggestion for the pastor to consider on pgs. 36-37 of the Parish Employee Handbook.



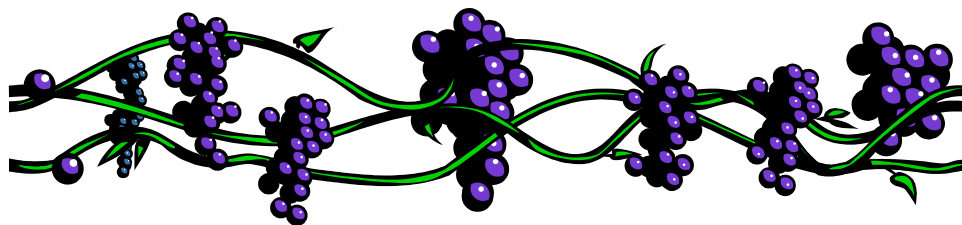
- *Pathways*—We could do more to make outplacement services and other helpful resources available to departing employees.

6. **Grievance Procedures**—As the bishops say: “This area usually includes resources for dispute resolution that—when used early enough and made available in the Church workplace—can often reduce or resolve tensions that might lead to voluntary departure or dismissal. Grievance procedures provide an objective process for addressing good faith claims by those who think they have been unfairly treated.”

- *Progress*—The Parish Employee Handbook includes a section on Dispute Resolution (pgs. 38-39) for use at the parish level. Also, this Office handles certain employment issue investigations when requested as a service to the pastors.
- *Pathways*—We could evaluate how well disputes are being handled at the local and Archdiocesan levels, and what our response really is to early warning signs and tensions, before they become disputes that are difficult to resolve.

The bishops end their discussion of a comprehensive HR system with the subsection *Resources & Outcomes*. They speak of how a diocese can be a model for the parishes in human resource administration. They highlight the role dioceses can play in offering guidance to the parishes. And in returning to the theme of integrating Gospel values with best organizational practices in HR management, they say: “Such integration can bring about many outcomes: improved morale among lay ecclesial ministers, savings of time and money and avoidance of fracturing the community in the resolution of employee disputes, and the successful recruitment and retention of qualified and committed lay ecclesial ministers. Most importantly, they will provide a model where the People of God are nourished in their faith and where the Catholic diocese and its parishes witness, for the local community, to a workplace that integrates Gospel values and best organizational practices.”

If you feel that any of these areas need more attention in your parish, please call us at (415) 614-5540 and we will do our best to assist you. Also, consider using our website as a resource. You will find it at www.sfarchdiocese.org, then scroll down to the bottom list and click “Human Resources.” Recent **HR Connects** and up-to-date info sheets may be found there, along with our email contact info. Or just call us and ask for encouragement and/or our prayers for your special HR issues and situations. As “Co-Workers in the Vineyard,” we are in this together!



Many Members, One Body

Many Gifts, One Spirit