

Transition Process Overview

By Craig Talmage

Overview

The Arizona Ecumenical Council (AEC) in anticipation of the retirement of its current executive director, Jan Flaaten, has asked Craig Talmage to serve on the transition team. Mr. Talmage will leverage his consulting skills and background in Industrial/Organizational Psychology to help create and facilitate a healthy transition that ensures the future success of the AEC and its stakeholders.

Primary Goals

The purpose for the Transition Committee will look at and recommend how to staff the mission of AEC. The primary high-level goals of the transition process are to analyze the organization's current structure, create job descriptions for the executive director, other staff, and board members' positions, establish and facilitate a selection process for the new executive director, and ensure adequate funding for the position and fulfillment of AEC's mission and vision.

Process

Team Formation (completed)

Organizational Analysis (currently)

- Review of governing documents
- SWOT Analysis (see below)
- Compilation and review of other similar organizations' structures
- Compilation of all programs sponsored / planned by AEC
- First meeting of the planning team / introduction to process

Organizational Mission / Vision Review (October)

Organizational Structure and Funding Sources Review (November)

Staff and Board Job Description Creation / Selection Process Creation (December / January)

Search Process Begins (February)

Interviews (March)

Initial Job Offering (April)

Negotiation and Acceptance of Job Offer (May)

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SWOT Analysis Results

How does the council currently partner with your denomination / organization to fulfill its mission?

- Place for dialogue (Middle-Man / Go-Between / Networking / Connects Ecumenical Partners)
- Dissemination of knowledge / forum for issues / education and awareness
- Representation for Organizations
- Shares resources (i.e. office space with Grand Canyon Synod / finances / clergy / members / training)
- Body of support for joint advocacy / voice for Christian community (i.e. social justice, poverty, and immigration)
- Holding events for members to join in (often put on by commissions)
- Springboard for Other Agencies (i.e. AZIPL)
- Promotional agency for other agency events* (i.e. Promoting events of the Franciscan Renewal Center)

What other methods can the council use (that are not being used already) to fulfill its mission in partnership with your denomination / organization?

- Holding a conference / seeking ways to connect urban congregations like already done for rural congregations
- Better communication on the part of liaisons of denominational bodies; better communication with congregations regarding programs
- Offer workshops for clergy and lay leaders
- Working with other groups (not just denominational groups) on projects, partnering with larger AEC
- Ensuring that smaller denominational bodies' voices are heard
- Attending public policy meetings and getting people on local / state boards
- More and better opportunities for ecumenical prayer
- Publishing accomplishments of the AEC (updates on the State Legislature decisions)
- Strengthen marketing of the organization (more presentations of AEC and key policy issues, increase staffing, using social media [facebook, skype, etc.]
- Lowering costs for events and making sure to send out reminders for events
- Change meeting structure (hold two retreats a year instead of series of meetings)
- Assisting in helping congregations / groups find funding opportunities / resources

At this time, what are the council's greatest weaknesses?

- Dependency on executive director
- Sheer number of programs being sponsored or offered
- Funding
- Communication with congregations
- Participation of churches and denominations
- Conducting of business (i.e. long meetings)
- Representation of minorities
- Dependence on leaders that already are overcommitted
- Size of geographical area being covered
- Small staff
- Low level of political influence
- Current marketing strategies / use of social media
- Lack of lay person involvement
- Lack of knowledge of AEC accomplishments or deliverables

What do you see as the greatest opportunities for this council to pursue at this time?

- Working with the legislature and other groups on
 - Public Policy Issues
 - Environmental Issues
 - Health Care and Education Issues
 - Justice Issues
- Cultural understanding
- Mergers and acquisitions of current bodies that can work together
- Disaster relief
- Theological Discourse
- Connections with Native American community
- Interfaith Connections
- Power and Light
- Stewardship
- Ecumenism in general / Common Mission
- Strengthening current council commissions
- Increased denominational involvement
- Connecting with those not already involved
- More events that will bring in these persons
- Strategic planning for the future

How does the council currently find resources it needs to fulfill its mission?

- Annual Banquet
- Networking / Invitations to Contribute for AEC staff (Executive Director and Assistant), bishops, and council / commissions
- Communicating with denominational bodies and other groups
- Grants
- Volunteers
- Individual donors
- Community entities
- Speaking engagements

What other methods can the council use (that are not being used already) to find resources it needs to fulfill its mission?

- Increase membership base / increase denominational giving
- Finding and utilizing people with fundraising and grant-writing gifts / assess available talent and gifts of lay and ordained leaders
- Promote smaller gatherings of groups
- Marketing (newsletters, newspapers, bulletin inserts, newscasts and personal contacts)
- Utilizing lay people not just professionals
- Connecting with younger / emerging church types / groups without denominational ties
- Obtain single secure funding sources from the community
- Ensure work being sponsored is not already being done by individual denominations
- Establish a think tank to solve issues

What are the greatest strengths of the Arizona Ecumenical Council?

- Diversity
- Unity
- Executive Director (Jan)
- Administrator (Lita)
- Bishops/Judicatory Leaders
- Commissions
- Council
- Members
- Mission / Issues that are focused on
- Individual events (Donahue forum)
- Ability to connect churches and groups (that may not work together otherwise)

What are the greatest threats posed to the council at this time that may prevent the council from fulfilling its mission?

- Lack of buy-in from ministry partners and leaders
- Staffing / Problems with a new executive director
- Funding and shortage of resources (volunteers / commitment of members)
- Isolationism of denominations / fear of commitment or involvement
- Apathy of persons and groups
- Being perceived as a single issue group (i.e. immigration)
- Lessening interest in ecumenical matters by local leaders / Failure of AEC to be relevant
- Lack of business focus for the AEC organization
- Lack of knowledge of the mission and accomplishments of AEC / Failure to market
- Too much influence by groups of particular theology or political alignments

On a personal level, what do you get out of your involvement with the Arizona Ecumenical Council?

- Awareness / Knowledge
- Interpersonal Relationships / Networking / Fellowship
- Empowerment / Personal Challenge
- Place to Share Expertise / Be Heard