

Summary of the Cultural Landscape Survey for the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas

Background Information

To better understand the cultural landscape of the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas, the Strategic Planning Committee contracted with Holy Cow Consulting to conduct a diocesan wide evaluation. Between August 22 and September 15, 2016, a confidential online survey was sent to diocesan clergy, church staff members, and rectors who were asked to forward it to their vestries. A total of 388 responses were received, from 61 out of the 68 parishes/missions/parachurches that were invited to participate. The Strategic Planning Committee believes that it received a representative sample from across the Diocese, and wishes to thank those who participated.

The survey data provided four types of information to the Bishop and the Strategic Planning Committee:

1. Absolute data – Participants were able to rank their priorities and relative agreement with statements, such as “Our Diocese helps members become engaged by finding roles for people that fit their gifts.” on a scale of 1-6, (strongly disagree, disagree, tend to disagree, tend to agree, agree, strongly agree).
2. Relative data – Holy Cow compared EDOD with 30 other religious regional associations (RA’s), 80% of which had recently undergone a leadership transition, to help us understand where EDOD’s responses were normative vs. outliers. These responses show up as percentiles.
3. Comparative data among different participant groups – For several participant groups (clergy staff, deacons, vestries, etc.), both relative and absolute data were provided. This enabled a comparison of responses and rankings. The committee noted some striking differences between the perceptions of clergy staff vs. laity (represented by vestry responses).
4. Commentary – Participants had two free response questions, the results of which were shared with Bishop Sumner, Canon Gilton and the Strategic Planning Committee. However, identifying data, such as position (lay, clergy) or congregation, was not associated with the responses that the committee reviewed, to maintain confidentiality. These two questions were:
 - a. What is the most important thing you would like the Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas to know about your congregation?
 - b. What additional comments would you like to share?

Survey Conclusions

As compared to the 30 other Regional Associations, at the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas:

1. The overall satisfaction with our Diocese is at about the 35% percentile
2. The overall energy level within our Diocese is at the 75% percentile

Per Holy Cow, organizations with high energy and relatively low satisfaction are often struggling to structure and channel their energy into a direction they feel good about. This highlights the need for EDOD to have a unified vision of our strategic direction and execution plan.

When survey participants were asked where they believed additional energy needed to be applied to expand or improve the work of the Diocese, they indicated the following priorities:

Rank	Priority to Apply Additional Energy to	Mean*	Rating
1 st	Take a leadership role in working with churches that are struggling.	3.76	Average
2 nd	Equip Pastors and other leaders in congregations with strategies that enable them to reach new members.	3.73	Average
3 rd	Cultivate a higher level of trust within the Diocese.	3.60	High
4 th	Equip Pastors and other leaders in congregations to help members become growing, vital disciples.	3.49	Average
5 th	Equip congregations to be more effective in addressing problems affecting their surrounding communities.	3.48	Average

Compared to the 30 other RA’s, EDOD’s third priority, which deals with trust issues within the Diocese, ranked higher than average. This implies that most organizations do not find trust issues to be among their highest opportunities to improve the work of their organizations, but EDOD does. The comments in the free response sections support this conclusion.

The survey noted that the **five most critical success factors for improving satisfaction**, in priority order are:

1. The Diocese is effective in recognizing trends in the larger society and in helping us adapt in order to deal with those changes.
2. Among most of the members of our Diocese there is a healthy tolerance of differing opinions & beliefs.
3. In important decisions in our Diocese, adequate opportunity for consideration of different approaches is usually provided.
4. The Diocesan leadership has done a good job of developing a shared vision that unites us.
5. Persons serving in various Diocesan endeavors exhibit a genuine hospitality toward one another & new persons entering into our Diocese (new clergy, staff, boards, committees, collaborative ministries, etc).

The goal of the strategic plan is to address item #4 – developing a shared plan that unites us. In order to better understand areas that are dividing us, especially the concerns about trust and a lack of collaboration, we compared the responses of clergy and laity (vestries) across the following metrics. Each of the indexes noted below contained three to five survey questions. These questions and their absolute and relative responses can be viewed in the consolidated report, which is available upon request.*

The percentiles noted in the chart below are relative data. A score at the zero percentile indicates that our overall average absolute score (1-6 on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree) was the lowest relative to the group of 30 organizations that EDOD was compared to.

Index	EDOD	Clergy Staff	Lay (Vestries)
Collegiality	14%	0%	32%
Conflict Management	19%	5%	32%
Engagement	30%	11%	50%
Governance	8%	5%	18%
Leadership	17%	0%	37%
Morale	48%	32%	58%
Support to Congregations	41%	32%	47%

In all indexes, EDOD scored below average, versus the group of 30 other regional associations with which we were compared. The table above points out the obstacles we must overcome to have a shared vision and momentum. Without exception, the survey responses are lower among the clergy, indicating that a more urgent need exists to address the concerns of this group.

The lack of collegiality, lack of engagement, pervasive feeling that decisions are made without considering a representative viewpoint (governance index) and low scores in shared vision (leadership) are substantial obstacles to the success of a strategic plan. With this understanding of the current cultural landscape within the Diocese, the Strategic Planning Committee believes that presenting a finalized strategic plan at this time would be premature. Rather than focusing on areas where we disagree, members of this Diocese must work to improve trust, collegiality and find common ground in a shared vision. At the 2016 Diocesan Convention, Bishop Sumner will roll out the process for achieving this goal.

*For comments and questions regarding this summary or to view the report in its entirety, please contact Cathleen Dolt at tadpole110@sbcglobal.net.