



Story and Strategy 2019 – 2021

During the next three years, CVN will strive to articulate *why* faith-based service is compelling to potential volunteers, the Church, and partners – and *how* to ensure continued growth and impact. We will discern new approaches with a commitment to: 1) *marketing*; 2) *transition*; 3) *diversity*; and 4) *fundraising*. This process will educate us about the combination of prophetic leadership, services and benefits, and pastoral supports our members need. It will also inform a longer-term vision:

Faith-based service is the catalytic start of a commitment to becoming spiritually-grounded leaders who use positions of influence to transform the world. CVN will empower this trajectory in the formative years after service. We will partner with members and other sectors to offer structures and opportunities that foster skills-building, discernment about vocation and career, and understanding about strategies for promoting the common good. Participants will be cultivated to envision – and live out – better ways to address pressing needs in communities, politics, business, ministry, and more.

Marketing

Sharing our story and being more visible will improve: recruitment and member supports; fundraising; recognition as a thought leader; promotion of service; and relationships with partners. Goals are:

- Assess and strengthen CVN’s branding, messaging, and reach.
- Enhance targeted communication efforts that engage donors, partners, and CVN members.
- Improve social media strategy and coordination with other efforts.
- Advertising (mainly online) that uses different messages to target different audiences.
- Search engine optimization and data analytics.
- Improve online approaches to recruiting. Better strategies for reaching Millennials and Gen Z.
- Outreach to the disaffiliated and seekers.

Actions

- Contract with online marketing consultant to perform audit and develop plan to acquire new supporters, nurture them, and turn them into applicants, supporters, and/or donors.
- Use online efforts that are part of current grants to inform next steps.
- Leverage capacity of new database system.
- Deepen partnerships with an expanding range of campus stakeholders.
- Represent the faith-based service perspective in national conversations and campaigns (*e.g.* Service Year Alliance’s [Campaign for Universal National Service](#); Center for Responsible Lending’s [student loan debt efforts](#); [Voices for National Service’s](#) efforts).
- Establish a CVN board Communications Committee.

Measurement

- More volunteer profiles created. More applicants are better educated about member programs.
- Other organizations and sectors promote CVN and members, and use our data/stories/models.
- CVN is invited to shape more conversations (e.g. Church crisis, lay leadership, young adults).

Transition

CVN will provide *pastoral* leadership by creating spaces for reflection on pressing challenges. The goal is to explore these questions *with* members as we continue creating our story:

- Are service models relevant/appealing? If not, how must they change?
- What do changes in the Church and society mean for the future of faith-based service?
- What must we better understand about identity? About diversity, justice, and equity?
- What are new opportunities/partners? Do members seek more collaboration with each other?

Actions

- Relate these questions to program needs by engaging member programs via: regional groups; program staff groups; other groups based on geography, charism, program size/focus, etc.
- Utilize survey data and research to identify needs, options, decision points, and supports.
- Seek audiences with Church leaders to share and explore new partnerships.
- Incorporate this discernment into annual programs and consider changes to: RESPONSE; national conference; regional groups; and former volunteer outreach.
- Determine how much of our identity and leadership is tied to *recruiting efforts*. Explore changes based on organizational transitions and assess the potential impact on membership.
- Explore if member programs need help transitioning to new models or combining programs.

Measurement

- Members affirm this focus by investing energy, shaping direction, and trying new approaches.
- Enough member engagement to answer these questions and inform future strategies.
- Partners invest more in our mission because they are compelled by our vision and leadership.
- The 2019 conference attracts a high number of attendees (because of the focus on these challenges/questions) and successfully equips attendees to explore program adjustments.

Diversity

CVN will explore new partnerships, models, and supports that increase diversity and equity. The goal is to create spaces with members for education, conversation, and action to *reduce barriers* to service. We affirm the stories unfolding around us of increased opportunity, and seek to become part of them.

Actions

- Use our [Diversity and Racial Justice Statement](#) to help CVN and members pursue diversity in deeper ways, increase volunteer and staff diversity, engage cultural competency trainings/resources, and discern advocacy opportunities.

- Explore pilot projects that alter program models to: appeal to groups other than middle-class whites; link service and economic opportunity/skills building; and experiment with program components such as length of service, residential aspect and part-time site placements.
- Expand partnerships/outreach at Hispanic Serving, Historically Black, and Community Colleges. Engage adolescents through Catholic youth organizations.
- Assess our potential appeal to a range of minority groups, and partnerships that will help.
- Assess how to help members with challenges related to immigration (new restrictions and requirements impacting potential volunteers).

Measurement

- Diversity and equity increases within CVN staff and board.
- Recruitment efforts yield more diverse applicants to programs.
- Pilot projects allow members to discern changes that will enhance diversity, and provide insights that benefit the whole network.

Fundraising

Goal is development efforts that: 1) further strategic goals; 2) increase unrestricted giving; and 3) inform us about our long-term fundraising potential and needs. We will share our story and strategy more widely, learn from relationships, and nurture interest and opportunities.

Actions

- Proposals to small foundations for core programming. Strategies for larger foundations that speak to longer-term vision and capacity. Map foundation strategy.
- Intensify individual donor cultivation. Use strategic planning to engage them anew.
- Active cultivation of new online donors. Regular communication about programs, vision, and opportunities to connect with CVN and member efforts/events.
- Increase and leverage Combined Federal Campaign and Mission Appeals donations.
- Consider AmeriCorps and VISTA applications.
- Develop case statement and articulate CVN's theory of change.
- Leverage national perspective, relationships, and capacity to secure grants that empower members (*e.g.* AmeriCorps, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation).
- Evaluate other revenue sources to gauge viability and explore changes (advertising; monetizing programs and offerings).

Measurement

- Meet revenue goals in annual organizational budget. Understand how much those can increase.
- Current major donors increase giving. Lapsed major donors begin giving again.
- Donor visits and frequent cultivation by Executive Director yield increases in contributions, and provide insight on our donor strategies, messages, and requests.
- Seventy-five percent success rate for small grant proposals.
- Relationships established with major foundations.
- Break even on fee-for-service offerings, or affirm strategic rationale for not doing so.