Developing A Conference Vitality Self Assessment/Inventory

Purposes for Inventory (Prioritized)

- Foster Conference level discussions regarding potential for Growth/Revitalization/Renewal focus areas.
- Foster understanding and prioritization of Conference Growth/Revitalization/Renewal efforts relative to other Conference activities.

- Identify Opportunities/Obstacles for Conference Growth
- Identify Conference Needs that might be met by “resource twinning” with other Conferences
- Identify Conference Strengths that can be twinned/shared with other Conferences
- Prioritize Conference Growth/Revitalization efforts
- Potential for establishment of a Benchmark/Starting Point for development of “Conference Vitality” assessment metric

Potential Questions for a Growth/Revitalization Self-Assessment Inventory:


Do members of our conference understand their personal mission/vocation? Can they express it in words? How are they challenged to growth in self-knowledge and understanding of their personal mission/vocation? How closely aligned are the personal missions/vocations of the members of our conference to the mission of the Society SVdP? How closely aligned are the personal missions/vocations of the members of our conference to the life and work of the conference?

Do members of our conference have a sense of Belonging? (Belonging is deeper than a sense of welcoming – think of the difference between “welcoming” a guest into our home as opposed to hosting someone who “belongs to our family” in our home.) Do members of the Conference see themselves as volunteers? Do members of the conference recognize their work in SVdP as a vocation or as a volunteer activity? Do the members of the conference identify their mission/vocation as a integral part of their self identity? Do members of the conference identify being a Vincentian as an integral part of their self-identity? (i.e “ I am a Vincentian.” Or “ I do volunteer work with SVdP.”)
Do our members look forward to our conference activities? Do they feel that there are enough opportunities to know each other well? Does the conference meet their need for friendship? How would they feel about more conference activities? How would they feel about fewer conference activities? Are Vincentians among their closest friends, or are they acquaintances at the parish? Do members of our conference know each other – enjoy the company of each other? Do members of our conference sense their need/desire for friendship/companionship fulfilled?

Do Vincentians pray for each other outside of the conference activities? Do they share their needs and prayer requests with other Vincentians?

Why do Vincentians say that they belong to the Society and participate in it’s work? Is it to make a difference
  in the world?
  in the lives of the poor?
  in their own lives?
  For some other reason?

How satisfied are members of the conference with their membership in SVdP? Do they experience a sense of fulfillment? Is SVdP a source of stress in their lives or a source of peace/fulfillment? Why?

Does our conference make home visits? What if we didn’t have the material resources to provide any assistance, would we still make home visits? Why do members of our conference say that they make home visits? Do they look forward to home visits? Are the home visits a burden? Do members of our conference respond to requests for assistance or do they seek out the poor? How does our Conference seek out and find the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity?

How does our Conference extend an invitation to others to be a Vincentian? Does our Conference have activities that are primarily designed as opportunities s to invite others to come? What activities do prospective Vincentians come to? What is their first exposure/experience like? Are visitors welcome? How quickly will visitors establish an impression that the conference is where they “belong”? Are they eager to come back? What would make them eager to come back?
How does the general parish community view the Society of St Vincent DePaul? How does the pastor view the Conference? What message(s) do current SVdP communications with the community convey? What do members of the community understand our mission to be? Why? What do members of the community understand that we want/need of them? Why? What do members of the community understand that we need the most? Why? Does the community understand our needs to be desperate? Does the community sense that the SVdP conference is vibrant? Why?

If you were the leader of your Conference, what would you address as a priority? Why? What do you sense are the priorities of the current Conference leaders? Why? What qualities are most important for Conference leaders? Who in our conference exhibits those qualities? Who in our conference would be a great Conference leader? Who in our wider community/parish would be a great Conference leader? What kind of conference leader would I be? What would I need in order to be a Conference leader? Can those things be attained? Would I be willing to be a Conference leader? If not, why not?

What do current conference leaders view as the greatest success of their Conference? What do conference leaders view as their own greatest leadership success? What do conference leaders view as their most difficult leadership challenge? Do conference leaders have a sense that they are succeeding or failing? What do conference leaders view as the greatest challenge for their conference? What do they view as the biggest obstacles they face? What keeps them up at night? Do they have a vision for the conference for the future? What is that vision? How is it different than the conference today? Do they conference leaders “know” who their successors will/should be? Is it difficult for the conference to fill their leadership positions? Which leadership positions are the most difficult to fill? Why did the current leaders become leaders of the conference? What do the members of the conference see as the role of their leaders? How do conference leaders sense that members of the conference would assess their leadership? Why? How do they assess their leadership themselves? Why?

Vincentian Leadership

Our founders, in their lives and works, truly modeled for us what it means to be a visionary, socially responsible leader. St. Vincent in particular was certainly in many ways an organizational and management genius. Think about these questions: What is my sense of commitment to the broader human community and world? How well do I know the Vincentian vision and values? How comfortable am I with hearing ideas that differ from my own? How I am living my commitment to contribute to my communities? Can I inspire others through my actions and words?