

Opening up, Focusing Down: Creating a process for creating, evaluating, and serving our programs

Presented by: Odile Hugonot-Haber, Bob McMurray, Laura Spencer, and Chuck Warpehoski,

Summary:

In the interest of making ICPJ's programming more responsive, our decisions more transparent, and our allocation of resources more intentional, we propose creating a structure where we can provide different levels of service to different projects, everything from basic unstaffed support to highly focused staff support for key short-term projects.

Within this structure of different levels of support, we recommend a three-fold process of:

1. **Opening up to new initiatives:** Creating an opportunity for new initiatives to come under the ICPJ umbrella.
2. **Evaluating programs:** Establishing a regular process of evaluating programs effectiveness, goals, and needs
3. **Allocating Resources:** Developing a regular process for deciding how ICPJ allocates staff time and other organizational resources.

Rationale

The Board and staff of ICPJ are committed to improving the effectiveness of the work and services our agency provides. Over the past several months we have been engaging in a number of processes as a part of our Listening Project to assess the needs of all of our stakeholders; members, task forces, board and staff. This has included the membership survey, focus groups, and a board/staff retreat. The results of this process have led us to recommend a number of changes in how we provide services. We feel that these changes will strengthen the organization overall. We believe these changes will:

- Strengthen our core services. These services are congregational outreach, volunteer support, fundraising, and publicity.
- Allow for an increase in education and leadership development for our membership, organizers and volunteers.
- Allow the organization to put more resources into big important issues thereby increasing the impact and effectiveness of these projects.
- Allow the organization to be more flexible and to be able to adjust its focus on issues as the relevance and membership support changes
- Make better use of limited staff resources.
- Make the organization and its processes more transparent to its membership.
- Increase volunteer/membership ownership and participation.
- Encourage broader and more diverse involvement.
- Increase the visibility of the organization and its projects.

I. Opening Up to New Initiatives

ICPJ's current Task Force model provides an excellent vehicle for creating stable, long-term issue groups with active volunteer involvement. However, the very stability of our task force structure makes it difficult to respond to new concerns such as climate crisis, the war in Iraq, etc.

Therefore, we propose to create a way in for new initiatives that meet basic criteria for fit with ICPJ. These new initiatives would not receive the level of staff support that task forces receive (such as staff attendance at their regular meetings). Rather, they would get basic services for publicity, programming, leadership development, and financial services.

ICPJ could take on new projects at any time, and these programs could either be short or long-term.

See page four for a proposed list of criteria and services for these new projects.

II. Evaluating programs

For both new and established programs, we propose developing an annual evaluation process. This process will help ICPJ choose how to allocate resources (see below), identify strengths and gaps in our programming, and customize our services to our programs. The proposed evaluation guidelines are:

- **General concerns**
 - **Please provide a needs description** (Why do this? Why is this important?)
 - **How this could make a difference?**
 - Where does this fit along the balance of **cutting edge/visionary vs. ongoing need**
 - How does this project have **local impact** (even for global issue)?
 - Is this **a new program, or a continuation** of ongoing work?
- **Organizational Concerns**
 - **How does this program create opportunities community cooperation and outreach?** With religious communities? In the peace and justice community? In communities of color? Outside of Ann Arbor? What are other organizations doing in this area?
 - **What potential conflicts does this program bring?** Are there potential conflicts with faith communities? Are there potential conflicts with peace/justice point of view and/or ICPJ core values? How will you address these conflicts?
 - **How could this build the organization** (fundraising, volunteer energy, visibility, leadership development, etc.)?
- **Program Needs**
 - What type of support will this program need?
 - When will this need most support from the staff?
- **Mechanics**
 - How many people are/will be involved in this program?
 - Do you have a chairperson for this project?
- **For existing programs**
 - What were your biggest successes over the past 12 months?
 - What were your biggest challenges?

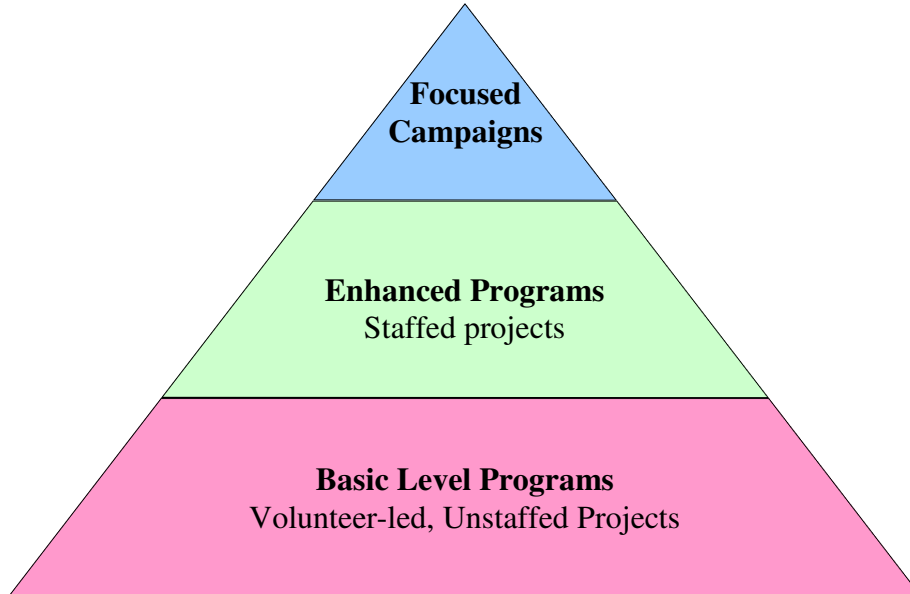
III. Allocating Resources

Our programs are different, with different needs, different challenges, and different potential benefits. We will better achieve our organizational goals if we intentionally choose how we allocate our resources and staff time among our programs.

Therefore we recommend an annual process of allocating resources, with an eye toward where we have the strongest support, where we can have the most effect, and how much we can realistically commit to. We recommend a 3-tiered framework for service:

- At the base of the pyramid we create a structure for volunteer-led, unstaffed projects (basic level service). If a project meets criteria a, b, and c, then ICPJ would provide services x, y, and z
- In the middle of the pyramid would be our "enhanced programs," along the lines of our current task force structure, with continued clarification of what is expected of a task force and what is expected of the staff/organization.
- As needed, ICPJ's Board may put significant staff time and organizational resources into specific, time-limited campaigns that have high potential to make change and/or to achieve organizational goals such as increasing volunteer involvement, building ties with key constituencies, or strengthening our fundraising base.

If any of our current task forces were to fail to meet the criteria for "enhanced programs," they would be given a one-year "grace period" to get up to that level.



	Basic Level Programs	Enhanced Programs	Focused Campaigns
Criteria that program must meet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a concern with promoting peace, justice, or environmental responsibility, • Bring together people from different faiths and backgrounds, • Be sensitive about potential conflicts with key faith allies, • Participate in ICPJ's accountability process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quarterly reports to board and check-ins with staff ○ Staff members on groups' email list and group minutes sent to staff ○ Copies of materials put in ICPJ archives • Pay 7% fee of funds processed as part of financial services (current policy) • List their projects as "A project of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice" • Participate in annual self-evaluation • Comply with appropriate laws and policies (for example, federal tax laws and ICPJ's privacy policies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet all basic level criteria • Have at least 5 active volunteers members • Have a system for chairing meetings and recording minutes • Be recognized as a priority area by the Board (priority status may be given for the issue area it addresses or the other ways it builds the organization. For example, a program that builds ties to new constituencies could be recognized as a priority even if that issue isn't a high priority for existing constituencies). • Pay administrative fee of 25% of funds collected (current policy for task forces) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific • time-limited • high potential to make change and/or to achieve organizational goals such as increasing volunteer involvement, building ties with key constituencies, or strengthening our fundraising base.
Services that ICPJ provides to program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Newsletter ○ Email update ○ Provide contacts and guidance for press coverage ○ Mailings to key constituencies ○ Host email lists ○ Provide sub-page from ICPJ website • Member services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track people interested in a given issue in database • Facilities & infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate finding space for meetings and events ○ Provide file storage space ○ Access to fax services • Financial services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accept tax-deductible donations ○ Pay bills and reimbursements from funds account balance. • Program development services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eligible to participate in ICPJ trainings in organizing skills ○ Eligible for organizing consultation (fundraising, event promotion, PR, etc.) 	<p>Programs receiving enhanced services (<i>ie</i> current task forces) get a higher level of staff support. The focus remains on developing volunteer leadership, but staff can step in to fill holes as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All basic-level services • Staff attendance at meetings and events, as available. • Increased staff collaboration with volunteers to make programs successful. • Active program development, outreach, education, and mobilization services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of staff support • Coordinating project • Fundraising • Recruiting and supervising volunteers • Event planning • Outreach • Publicity
Timeline	Can begin at any time	Programs are evaluated annually to be selected for enhanced service.	As needed

IV. Evaluation Committee

To oversee this process, the Board will appoint an Evaluation Committee that may consist of both Board members, staff, and non-Board ICPJ members. This committee will review applications for new projects as they arrive, review the annual evaluations of all projects, and make recommendations to the Board on accepting new projects and allocating resources to existing projects.

V. Implementation Plan

April	Approve process, begin forming review committee Make application "form" or process available
May	Host Task force/organizer education and orientation to the process Visits with Task Forces to explain process
June-Aug	Publicize application process
Sept 1	Application due
Sept/Oct	review by sub group- recommendations to the board
October	Board approve pyramid placements
Nov/Dec	Staff report on implications of placements
Next March	review, adjustments as needed, roll out new years plan

VI. Concerns

- This structure should be a guideline, not a straight-jacket. We should maintain the freedom to support things like Come Together for Peace or local peace marches, even if they don't fit clearly into this structure.
- Just as we evaluate our programs, we should evaluate this process.
- The Board will need to show discipline in saying "no" to the temptation to spread ICPJ too thin. To be effective, we need to set limits and choose where we should focus our energy.
- Staff support for a project does not mean that the staff are a "safety net," if the volunteer leaders fail to come through, staff will not automatically save the project. For high-value projects, staff might catch them, but that is a staff/board decision.

VII. Next Steps

- Create publicity material to present this to interested parties.
- Form program review committee.
- Present this program to Task Forces and community partners who might be interested in launching new programs.
- Develop new program application and existing program evaluation forms (see Appendix 1)
- Develop program agreement language
- Develop appropriate policies for unstaffed, basic-level programs (privacy policies, accountability practices).
- Develop an organizers guide for programs describing what services are available from ICPJ and what is required from the project or task force.
- Publicize through the New Center and other venues
- Develop resource guide that explains what ICPJ has to offer and what it requires of projects.
- Present this at the Liaison meeting
- Develop Leadership Development plan.

Appendix 1: Evaluation Guidelines for ICPJ Groups

Group being described: _____

General Description of the group (2 sentences):

Program Concerns:

Please provide a short needs description for what you would like the group to do. Is this a new focus or ongoing work? (Why do this? Why is this important?)

How could this work make a difference?

List your goals.

What are other organizations and coalitions doing in this area? How does your proposal fit in with this work?

Does this proposal focus more on meeting an ongoing need or would you describe this as more of an emerging issue?

Who wants to work on this?

What is the level of support for this work at the current moment within ICPJ and the broader community?

Describe the local impact your work will have, even if it is a global issue.

Organizational Concerns:

Will this program create opportunities for cooperation and outreach? For interfaith work and to religious communities? For work in the peace and justice community? For outreach outside of Ann Arbor, to communities of color, to new audiences?

What potential conflicts does this program bring? Are there potential conflicts with faith communities? Are there potential conflicts with a peace/justice point of view and/or ICPJ core values? If yes, how do you propose you address these conflicts?

What opportunities are there to build the ICPJ organization (fundraising, volunteer energy, visibility, leadership development, etc.)?

Needs:

What type of support will this program need? When will this need the most support from the staff?