

MISSION HUBS

A Program of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

INTRODUCTION

This information packet is designed to assist parish groups as they consider forming a mission hub. It includes information about:

- The history and goals of the Mission Hub program
- How to discern whether to become a hub
- How to apply to become a mission hub

The first round of discernment and applications was completed with the announcement of the first mission hubs at the Annual Convention on November 2, 2013. At least two subsequent rounds will occur; one in February 2014 and a third in the fall of 2014 or spring of 2015.

BACKGROUND

What is a Mission Hub?

A mission hub is a new model for mission, a new approach to collaboration among congregations, and a new way of building relationships and transforming communities.

Together with other local partners, such as social service organizations and congregations of other denominations or faiths, the mission hub congregations will discern needs in their communities and draw upon diocesan and local resources to respond collaboratively to these opportunities. The mission hubs also provide a means for expanding already successful diocesan programs into new places where there is need and opportunity. Depending on local needs, a mission hub might seek expertise from or choose to partner with programs such as the B-SAFE and B-READY summer and afterschool programs for children and youth, the Life Together young adult intern program, the Leadership Development Initiative, Mission Institute, Episcopal City Mission, the Urban Residents program, campus ministries or Bethany House of Prayer.

A mission hub is a collaboration of three or more Episcopal churches in a strategic location whose aim is to develop and enhance sustainable initiatives that embody God's mission.

The formation of mission hubs is part of the mission strategy of the Diocese to strengthen every congregation for mission and collaboration. This initiative grew out of the recent Comprehensive Campaign, which created a Working Group to develop the vision of mission hubs. The Working Group emphasized that mission hubs will come in a wide variety of forms, depending on their contexts and locations. Participating in a mission hub is an option open to every congregation in the Diocese.

The Role of the Mission Hub Implementation Committee

The Mission Hub Implementation Committee was established in early 2013 to build upon the initial work of the Mission Hub Working Group. The Mission Hub Implementation Committee is comprised of individuals appointed by the Bishop, some of whom were also members of the Working Group and chose to continue this work. The Committee includes at least one member of Diocesan Council and at least one representative from the pilot South Coast Mission Hub. This committee is responsible for:

- developing a process leading to the discernment, support and nurture of new mission hubs (including identifying impact priorities in communities and congregations);
- establishing goals and an application process;
- providing resources to help the hubs measure their impact and hold themselves accountable for meeting the goals; and
- exploring all aspects of sustainability, including funding sources, ongoing communication, and spiritual practices.

Financial Support Available

The total budget for mission hub work from the Comprehensive Campaign is \$7 million. In order to seed new efforts in a diversity of locations and achieve the greatest possible impact in each location, the Mission Hub Implementation Committee hopes to approve a total of eight to ten hubs of various sizes. The maximum size of a new mission hub budget will be \$1 million, to be allocated over 4-5 years. Some hubs will be able to realize their visions with a medium-size budget (\$500,000) or a smaller budget (\$250,000). All hub grants are expected to

\$7 million
Total budget for the Mission Hub Program

\$1 million
Budget for a large Hub

\$500,000
Budget for a medium Hub

\$250,000
Budget for a small Hub

fund 4-5 years of the hub's development and new programming.

The Pilot Mission Hub

To begin this work, the Diocese invited the parishes of Fall River and New Bedford to become a pilot mission hub in 2012. The South Coast Mission Hub decided to focus on initiating a Life Together program and a B-SAFE program. They opened new branch of the Life Together program in the fall of 2012, with four interns living in the rectory of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Fall River and serving in local site placements. They implemented a program for children and youth modeled on the B-SAFE (Bishop's Summer Academic and Fun Enrichment) program in the summer of 2013.

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Initial Mission Hubs

In addition to the pilot **South Coast Mission Hub**, the Diocese announced the approval of two new hubs, the **Plymouth, Cape & Islands Mission Hub** and the **Merrimack Valley Mission Hub**, at the Annual Convention on November 2, 2013.

HUB EXPECTATIONS

Team meetings
Two times a month in the first year, then monthly

Implementation Committee
2 on-site visits and reviews each year

Learning Lab
7 meetings a year with leaders from other mission hubs

Expectations of Mission Hubs

Hub leadership teams will meet at least twice a month in the first year and at least monthly in the remaining years of mission hub funding.

Hub leadership teams will meet with members of the Mission Hub Implementation Committee twice a year. These meetings will include an on-site visit to the hub projects, a budget review, and a n assessment of the hub's progress towards the Core Goals.

Representatives of each hub will attend meetings with members from other hubs seven times a year (including 3 in-person meetings and 4 web conferences) for training, mutual support and encouragement. These meetings will serve as a learning lab where hub members can share best experiences and resources. As new hubs are approved they will join this group.

THE PROCESS FOR FORMING A MISSION HUB

Goals for Mission Hubs

The core goals of mission hubs are:

- **To promote deep, respectful engagement with the community;**
- **To create and sustain authentic, committed relationships among parishes;**
- **To build leadership which honors, reflects, and draws strength from diversity, and**
- **To strengthen and support spiritual and congregational development..**

Each of these goals starts with a **new awareness** that leads to **changed behavior** and eventually **lasting change**. While each mission hub will serve different communities and needs, **the real measure of success will be the transformation on both the individual and collective levels as expressed in these goals**. In other words, building a container for healthy relationships so that congregations may engage together in mission is central to the success of the project.

Achievement of these goals is integral to a mission hub's success and sustainability. Therefore a decision whether to form a mission hub evolves from a discernment process centered on these four goals. While each mission hub will have its own vision, a hub's focus and structure must be informed by these goals. The mission hub goals are more fully articulated in several different visual layouts in the appendix.



How to Start Discussion of Mission Hub

Formation of a mission hub may begin with **informal discussion among clergy and lay members of geographically close parishes**, often in the same deanery. These early conversations will explore interest in mission hub work and identify a possible focus based upon the needs in the surrounding communities. If there is sufficient interest, the next step might be **formation of a steering or organizing committee to provide initial leadership**. This group would seek out connections with other parishes and potential local partners, including social service organizations and congregations of other denominations or faiths.

The Discernment Process

What happens next will depend upon the discernment process initiated by the steering or organizing committee. Through the discernment process, parishes will discover how they can most effectively engage with the community. Some existing models for mission include developing after school programs (Merrimack Valley Mission Hub), offering formation programs to strengthen relational ministry and creation advocacy (Plymouth, Cape & Islands Mission) or the development of a Life Together affiliate, a B-SAFE type program, and a series of grass roots initiatives (South Coast Mission Hub). **The discernment process should help parishes develop relationships with community partners, and these relationships will be the key source of lasting change in their communities.** While the experience of current hubs will provide helpful guidance, we anticipate that each hub will be “made from whole cloth” and its particular experience will be unique.

Some hubs will **build upon an existing program or similar programs.** For example, the Merrimack Valley Mission Hub builds upon after school programs offered at Trinity Church, Haverhill, St. Anne’s Church in Lowell and Grace Church in Lawrence and further develops the partnership between Esperanza Academy in Lawrence and its neighboring congregations.

Other hubs will develop **entirely new programs for their local communities.** A working group from the Cape and Islands designed a process of discernment and invited all the parishes in deanery to participate. They held four meetings at different parishes over a 16-month period followed by a retreat. From this process, the vision emerged to develop formation programs that would train members to engage in mission, with a special focus on relational ministry and creation.

For a hub to be successful, **its mission must engage not just a few individuals who are involved directly in the organization and leadership of the mission hub, but also the full support and participation of the partner congregations.**

Through the discernment process, the hub leaders will develop:

- a **vision** for the mission hub
- a **strategy** for engaging with the local community
- an **understanding of the core beliefs** that inspire their mission
- a **plan for the organizational structure and leadership** to support the hub
- a **budget** for the financial and other resources necessary to sustain it
- and most importantly **the habits of prayer and spiritual reflection** which will nurture spiritual development among the congregational members.

The application questions are designed to reveal the scope and depths of the group's discernment in each of these areas. We suggest that you use the application guidelines to structure your conversations as you discern together your vision for a mission hub.

Readiness to Form a Mission Hub

In order to feel ready to form a hub, a mission hub group must reach a new awareness of the mission hub goals. This is **a developmental process and may not come at the same pace for all four of the core goals** listed at the top of page 4. For example, a group may have a clear awareness of how to engage with the community, but may require further discernment to address the challenges of leadership and diversity. We encourage applicant groups to **be aware of your strengths and their challenges, and to seek out support for the goals you find difficult.**

The Mission Hub Implementation Committee can provide resources to help you with your discernment. We will assign you **a liaison from the Committee** who can guide you through the expectations outlined in the application. We can also provide **a variety of consulting services** to assist with the formation of a mission hub. The costs of consulting would be paid initially through the Mission Hub Implementation Committee, and then rolled into the budget of the hub once funding is approved.

Acquiring a new awareness is only the beginning of the journey together. Through on-going discernment and spiritual formation, we believe the work of the mission hub will lead to changed behavior and eventually to the ultimate goal of lasting change.

There are many ways in which parishes can engage in mission and have an important impact on their communities without forming a mission hub. Some parishes will find that other approaches are more suitable to the vision and the resources they have. **If you find that becoming a mission hub is not the best way to pursue your mission goals, the Mission Hub Implementation Committee will support you in connecting to other financial and congregational development resources.**

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Letter of Intent

The next application cycle will begin on **February 1, 2014** when letters of intent for applications in this round will be due. The **template for a letter of intent** is contained in the application materials in the appendix. Following the Mission Hub Implementation Committee's review of all submitted letters of intent, a member of the committee will respond with specific feedback designed to help the mission hub group to engage with the rest of the application process in a way that best suits the potential mission hub's current situation and needs.

Workshop for Applicants

The second step will be a **half-day workshop scheduled on early March, 2014** (date to be announced) for 3-4 members of each group applying to become a mission hub. Since the mission hub initiative involves collaboration among mission hubs, this workshop enables mission hub groups to better know – sooner rather than later – potential partners in the wider work in which all are investing. At the workshop, group members of mission hubs in formation will be encouraged to offer feedback on the vision for other mission hubs, and to reflect on the feedback they receive as they imagine God's dream for their communities. For example: Does the mission hub have a clear focus and a specific population to engage with and serve? Is the mission hub's vision too narrow or too broad? Has the mission hub group taken into account all of the resources within its communities? Should it recruit more partners?

Completion of Application

Step three will be to complete the application by April 15, 2014. The application form in outline form with guidelines is contained in the application materials in the appendix. Each member of the group will bring many different strengths to the table. It is a good idea to divide up the task of writing the application question responses based on each person's area of expertise. At the

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Letter of Intent Due

July 7, 2014

Application Workshop

Early September

Application Due

September 25, 2014

**Group Feedback
Meeting**

*Early October,
2014*

**Meet with Liaison or
Consultant for Support**

Ongoing, as needed

same time it is suggested that before a mission hub group submits an application it have one person edit the application so that it speaks with a single voice.

Mission Hub Implementation Committee Liaisons

Mission Hub Implementation Committee members are available as liaisons to answer questions and to assist you in completing the application. In addition, should mission hub groups find that some consulting resources would be helpful as its discernment continues, the group will have access to limited funding and to consultants. Your committee liaison can work with you to make these arrangements.

Group Feedback Meeting

Once the Mission Hub Implementation Committee has received a mission hub group's application, members of the group will be asked to participate in a group feedback session, which tentatively will be in early May 2014. During this two-hour session each mission hub group will be afforded the opportunity to present, as well as review and provide feedback to the proposals of other groups. This meeting also will give the Mission Hub Implementation Committee a chance to discuss with each group its proposal.

Commitment of Mission Hub Funding

Not more than one third of the remaining mission hub funding will be committed during the first round. Groups considering forming a mission hub are encouraged to take the time necessary to discern and prepare its application, and know that funding will be available for future cycles as well. The application process itself has been designed to encourage and shepherd reflection and planning toward the long-term strengthening of each applicant group's ministry.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If groups considering forming a mission hub have questions or wish to discuss the process, including with members of existing mission hubs, they should contact The Rev. Samuel Rodman, Project Manager of Campaign Initiatives at srodman@diomass.org 617-482-4826 x404.

The Mission Hub Implementation Committee hopes this information is helpful and will inspire groups to consider seriously engaging in this exciting new mission strategy.

Members of the Mission Hub Implementation Committee:

Judith Atkinson, Grant Barber, Libby Berman, Diane D'Souza, Joyce Harrington, Thea Keith-Lucas, Stephen Mascoll, Connie Melahoures, Mary Beth Mills-Curran, Joe Robinson, Sam Rodman, John Woodard and our consultant, Jin Min Lee from the Emmanuel Gospel Center