

Interview Tool

One of the most important and practical skills that congregational leaders need today is the ability to lead teams effectively. Whether it's the vestry, the annual stewardship committee, or any one of the other small groups that contribute to the vitality of a congregation, the ability to lead a collaborative team is critical. For this reason, when it is time to identify new clergy leadership, congregational search committees should consider including questions in the area of team leadership in the interview process.

The following interview tool is part of the Episcopal Church Foundation's Vital Teams initiative, whose aim is to strengthen

the leadership teams that are at the heart of every Episcopal congregation. The Interview Tool's suggested questions focus on leadership style and three key areas of team leadership:

- **Building Strong Relationships**
- **Using Effective Group Processes**
- **Achieving Results**

The questions ask interviewees to share specific examples from their past experience (behavioral interviewing) because past performance is a strong predictor of future behavior.

ECF strongly encourages congregations to adapt and customize these generic questions to match their specific situation and needs. **This tool is designed to supplement a congregation's existing interview questions and should not serve as the only questions asked during an interview.**

If you have questions about using this tool in your congregation, please contact Brendon Hunter, Associate Program Director of Leadership Resources, at bhunter@episcopalfoundation.org.

LEADERSHIP STYLE: Interviewers should listen for indications that the interviewee values working collaboratively when making significant decisions about the life of the congregation, while also recognizing her/his unique role as a leader in shaping the conversation and bringing the group to concrete decision points and practical action steps.

- Share a story or example from your prior experience that reflects or indicates your leadership style.
- Describe an experience of working as part of a team to accomplish a significant challenge or make a tough decision. What was that like for you?
- Provide an example of your involvement on a collaborative leadership team and discuss the pros and cons of this approach to ministry.

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS: *The extent to which teams work effectively often depends on how well individual members know and trust one another. Listen for indications that the interviewee knows how to build trust and accountability within groups.*

- Describe a situation in which you helped team members get to know one another. What methods did you use to build a sense of trust among team members at the initial stages of the group's formation.
- Besides bible study or an opening or closing prayer, describe practices you have used to set the tone or establish a spiritual focus for a meeting or retreat setting.
- Reflecting on groups that you have led in the past, describe how you have helped address typical challenges and issues such as people regularly showing up late to meetings, certain individuals dominating the conversation, or lack of follow through on assigned tasks.
- Describe how you have helped to resolve minor or serious conflicts among team members as well as conflicts between a team (e.g. the vestry) and the wider congregation.

USING EFFECTIVE GROUP PROCESSES: *Meetings are a critical part of how collaborative teams make decisions together. A well-led meeting can be a spiritual and joyful event which still manages to accomplish the goals and produce results. Listen for indications that the interviewee brings a sense of enthusiasm to meeting facilitation, as well as some practical skills for guiding group conversations toward decisions and action steps.*

- Describe the process or method you use when preparing a meeting agenda.
- As a chairperson facilitating a meeting, what techniques or processes have you used to ensure that all participating members' voices are heard and considered by the wider group?
- Describe a situation in which you sought to build consensus within a team around a key decision. What do you see as the advantages and/or constraints of consensus decision making?
- What are some methods you have used to help facilitate group decision making? (Example: making sure team members receive documents ahead of the scheduled meeting to prepare for discussion.)

ACHIEVING RESULTS: *Goals are key tools for organizing the efforts of any team. Team leaders must be able to work collaboratively to articulate goals and then also hold the team accountable for their achievement. Listen for indications that the interviewee knows how to work collaboratively to articulate shared goals, and can also help focus the team on achieving them.*

- Describe a situation when you worked collaboratively on a leadership team to develop organizational goals. What was that process like?
- In your prior experience, how were established goals and mission strategies of the congregation considered or discussed in the context of regular vestry meetings?
- Thinking about prior groups that you have led, how have you worked with groups to help them focus on and achieve a challenging goal?
- Describe how you have held individuals and groups accountable around established goals and priorities.