

Formulation of the Local Community Plan

Practical Guide for the Local Superior
VINCENTIANA (2003), pp. 195-256

110. With the local superior, all confreres have the right and also the obligation to collaborate actively in the formulation of the local Community Plan. All are also responsible for putting it into practice. On occasion, the superior, with the members of the community, may wish to seek the help of a facilitator skilled in assisting others in the planning process.

111. Its content is outlined clearly in our Constitutions and Statutes:

- Each community should work at developing a community plan, according to the Constitutions, Statutes, and the provincial norms. We should use this plan as a means of directing our life and work, of fulfilling the recommendations we receive, and of examining periodically our life and activities (C 27).
- The community plan which each community draws up for itself as far as possible at the beginning of its work year, should include all of the following: apostolic activity, prayer, the use of goods, Christian witness where we work, ongoing formation, times for group reflection, necessary times for relaxation and study, and an order of day. All these should be revised periodically (S 16).

112. The plan should not be merely an order of day. On the contrary, it should express a vision, define concrete realizable objectives, describe the means for realizing these objectives, and state who is responsible for carrying out the various steps.

113. While, as it formulates its local plan, the community should be mindful of the gifts of each confrere, individual members of the house should adjust their personal initiatives to the overall community plan which is decided upon (C 22).

114. Several other paragraphs in the Constitutions and Statutes refer explicitly to the local Community Plan:

C 32 §1	Confreres' work responsibilities
S 19	Acts of piety
S 69, 5 ^o ; 78, 4 ^o	Approval by the Visitor
S 78, 4 ^o	Formulation by the local superior together with the community

115. Still other paragraphs provide relevant background for better understanding the plan:

C 23	Proper autonomy of local community
C 25	Need for local community to renew itself
C 129	The Congregation forms itself particularly in individual local communities
S 79 § 3	Frequent meetings should be held

116. Many other paragraphs suggest matter that might aptly be included in a community plan:

indigent

C 17 The service of the local confreres to the Daughters of Charity
C 152 § 1 The use of the house's temporal goods for the support of the province and other poorer houses
C 152 § 2 The use of the house's goods for the support of the
S 3 Cooperation with the diocesan clergy, with other religious institutes, and with the laity
S 7 Our cooperation with the lay groups within our Vincentian Family
S 9 § 2 Our promotion of justice and peace
S 18 How we will observe evangelical poverty in the local community
S 37 § 1 How the local community will encourage vocations to the Congregation of the Mission and other branches of the Vincentian Family

117. A typical outline might be as follows:

1. The real life situation of the local community

- describe the concrete reality of the place where the community and its members are carrying out their mission;
- describe the reality of the members of the community itself: their number, whether their mission is a common one or diverse, whether it is in a large institution or a small one, whether it is a parish, a popular mission, etc.;

2. Apostolic activity

- the community's priorities: what apostolates should be emphasized and what apostolates might be phased out;
- meetings that should be held periodically for an evaluation of the community's apostolic life, in light of the end of the Congregation.

3. Prayer

- establish the times for common prayer and how we might make it simple and "something beautiful for God and attractive to the young";
- how we will celebrate the Vincentian feasts;
- when and how we will make mental prayer in common;
- when and how we will engage in faith-sharing (repetition of prayer);
- when and how the community will engage in more extensive times of prayer, such as a monthly day of recollection;
- when and how the community will celebrate the Eucharist in common (once a week, once a month, etc.);
- the annual retreat;
- the invitation of lay people to join with us in times of prayer.

4. Community life

- the lifestyle we adopt, in light of our mission, and how we are going to concretize it;
- the practice of poverty: specify and evaluate how the community will

- use its common goods, how the personal needs of the confreres will be taken care of (clothing, books, expenses at vacation time);
- the scheduling of periodic meetings for evaluating our life in community;
- if the community is dispersed because of missionary engagements, a description of when and how all its members will come together;
- relaxation: when and how the community will come together for resting and enjoying one another's company;
- the ongoing or specific formation of the members: courses, books to be read, discussions within the community;
- the naming of confreres for various responsibilities within the local community: local vocational promoter, local advisor to the Vincentian lay groups, secretary at house meetings, librarian, contact person for sending news items to the provincial bulletin, etc.

5. The order of day

- fixing the times for common prayer, meals, and other activities;
- publishing a schedule, along with other useful information, for visitors in the house.

118. The Local Community Plan is not a definitive work. The local superior, with the community, should evaluate and revise it at the beginning of each year. Experience of the past year and the transfer of confreres into and out of the house will necessitate modifications in the plan, further precisions in the objectives, the formulation of new means, and other choices. Some objectives, of course, will remain in the plan over a period of years, since the time frame for their realization will be long-term.

119. In Appendix II are found three models which may be helpful to the local superior, with the local community, in formulating the house plan.

Appendix II

SOME MODELS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY PLAN

MODEL I

(It is recommended that this model be used by community houses that are beginning the planning process. While taxing, it has the value of helping the local community come into fuller contact with the Constitutions and Statutes and can draw it into reflective discussion of what they demand of us.)

Community Plan of the Vincentians at _____

I DESCRIPTION OF THE REAL-LIFE SITUATION

This section might describe the place where the confreres minister, the socio-economic environment, and the concrete needs of the people. It might also describe the make-up of the local community of confreres (how many there are, their age, whether they engage in a common work or in diversified ministries, etc.).

II APOSTOLIC ACTIVITY (S 3, S 9 §2, S 16, C 17, C 23, C 24 2°, C 25, C 96, C 129).

This section might treat the apostolic priorities of the house.

III PRAYER (S 16, S 19, C 25)

This section might treat our daily exercises of prayer, a weekly sharing of the word, periodic times of reflection, the annual retreat, etc.

IV COMMUNITY LIFE (C 23, C, 24 2°, C 25, C 129)

This section might treat the means that the local community chooses for fostering its life together (perhaps these are already treated in other sections of the plan).

V CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN THE PLACE WHERE WE WORK (S 16, C 20, C 24, C 33, C 44-45, C 49, S 36, S 100).

This section might treat those aspects of our lives that the local community plan sees as its most important witness in its place of work.

VI ORGANIZATION (S 16, S 78 4°, S 79 §1 §3, C 24 2°, C 96, C 134 §2)

This section might treat the organizational structure of the local community (e.g., how often it meets, how decisions are made, etc.).

VII ON-GOING FORMATION (S 16)

This section might treat the means the local community will take for its ongoing formation; (e.g., attendance at workshops, study, meetings and discussions in the house, retreats, guest speakers, etc.).

VIII PROMOTING VOCATIONS (S 36, S 37 §1)

This section might treat the plan of the local house for fostering vocations (how will the local community find young people who will carry on this apostolate in the future).

IX RECREATION (S 16)

This section might treat daily common recreation, the need for periodic time off (balancing work and leisure), annual vacation time, etc.

X USE OF MATERIAL GOODS (S 16, C 25, C 33, S 18, C 149, C 152)

This section might treat how the local community plans to use its material goods, how it will seek to live simply, how it makes decisions in regard to spending money or using its resources, etc.

XI ORDER OF DAY (S 16)

This section will give the order of day.

XII EVALUATION AND REVISION OF PLAN (S 16, S 78 4°)

This section might treat how, when, and by whom the plan is evaluated and periodically revised.

MODEL II

(This model presumes that the local community has already worked out many of the issues involved in the first model. It helps it to situate itself within a larger context, articulate its special Vincentian mission, and covenant some goals for the coming year.)

I DESCRIPTION OF THE CONCRETE SITUATION

This section would describe the concrete situation where the confreres of the house minister (e.g., the number and type of people in the parish or school; the resources available; the needs of the people; etc.)

II MISSION STATEMENT

In this section, the confreres of the house would formulate a statement describing the specifically Vincentian mission which they carry out.

III COVENANT FOR THE COMING YEAR

This section might treat any number of the matters listed in the first model above.

MODEL III

(This model aims at situating the house within the present context and plan of the province and at developing goals in that light. It also assigns specific responsibility and provides for periodic evaluation.)

I REFLECTION ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE PROVINCE AND HOUSE

After prayerful reflection on the Constitutions and Statutes, the Lines of Action, and the Provincial Plan, the members of the house might in this section describe what they see as their principal concerns as a house.

II SPECIFIC GOALS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

In this section a limited number of goals will be formulated and agreed on (e.g., carrying out a home visitation in the entire parish; meeting every Thursday at 4 p.m., followed by evening prayer and supper together; organizing a day of recollection together four times during the coming year; agreeing on a book to be read and discussed once every two months, as a form of on-going formation; making some systematic contact with young people in the parish or school with a view toward vocational promotion; etc.). Specific responsibility for reaching the goals would be assigned to various individuals or groups, as well as a time frame.

III EVALUATION

A method for periodic evaluation of progress toward the goals would be stated here.