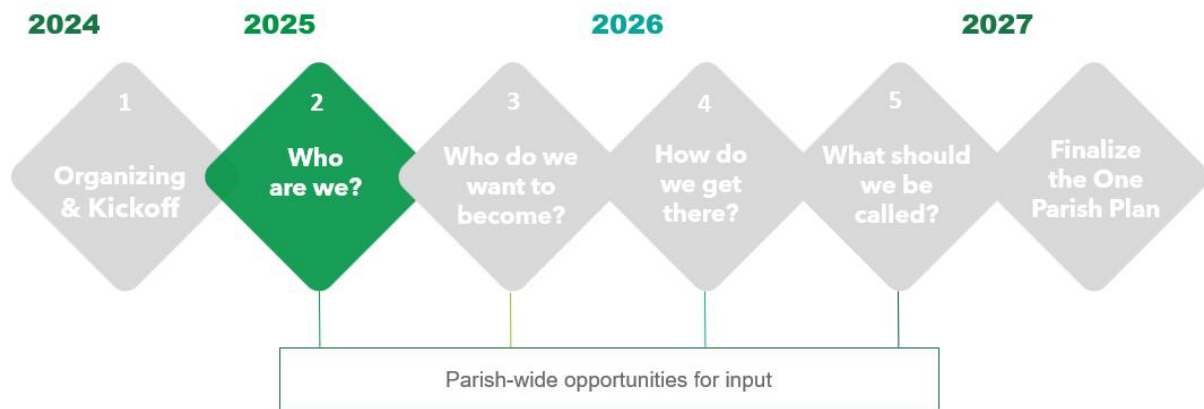




One Parish Plan: Who are we?

Possible start: Apr-Jun 2025 | Anticipated duration: 3-6 months

Overview



Before a parish family can start planning for who they would like to *become*, it is important to make sure they know who they *are*. This includes knowing about the people, gifts, ministries, and opportunities and challenges present in the parish family today.

This document will help facilitate discussions to answer the “Who are we?” question. It begins with an overview of the general process, followed by proposed forms and procedures in the timing, steps and tools section:

1. Collect baseline metrics of viability
2. Identify who we serve
3. Identify challenges and opportunities
4. Collect feedback from parish community
5. Refer to **Timing, steps and tools** for forms and procedures

Baseline metrics of viability

To help assess the factors that will determine the effectiveness of a plan to fulfill the mission of the Church, below are five groups of key metrics that have been identified along with viability levels for each metric. Based on research, these groups of metrics help identify a parish family's current state and its ability to sustain its operations into the future. Each parish is unique, and scoring low on one metric does not mean that the parish is in danger of becoming nonviable. Additionally, there are some families who – for geographical or socioeconomic factors outside of their control – may be unable to hit goal for a particular metric. This does not indicate that that family is inherently unviable, but rather requires a discussion about *why* the parish family is unable to hit the goal. These metrics work together to ensure that the new parish can thrive into the future.

To give parish families a place from which to begin discussing viability metrics, the Partners in the Gospel team will provide a set of baseline metrics pulled from the Parish Annual Report, Mass censuses, QVinci financial data, and other parish-submitted sources. These metrics will set the baseline of where the parish family is today and prepare for the work in later portions of the One Parish Plan.

The viability metrics are important to share with the PFAC/PFLT as well as the parish family community to frame all subsequent conversations - especially before beginning consultation. Parishes are encouraged to use their own tools to collect and fill in additional information for a complete set of metrics. The five metrics of viability are:

1. Evangelization metrics

- Total confirmations and first communions: This captures the total number of people confirmed or who received first communion each year across the parish family. These sacraments reflect the rate that parishioners “continue through” the faith journey beyond their baptism. The goal is to increase participants over time.
- Total faith formation participants: This is a count of participants in faith formation across the parish family as reported in the Parish Annual Report. Faith formation is the building block for evangelization and the goal is to increase participation over time.
- Total participants in OCIA/OCIA adapted for children: This is a count of participants in OCIA programs across the parish family as reported in the Parish Annual Report. OCIA participation reflects a commitment to the Church through sacraments of initiation. The goal is to increase participants over time.
- School enrollment: This identifies the school's ability to gain and retain students. The general goal is for Catholic K-8 schools to have enrollment of 200 students or more.

2. Utilization metrics

- Church utilization and capacity: This identifies how full the churches in a parish family are on a given weekend. To determine utilization, count the participants at each Mass on a weekend, then divide by the total weekend capacity (number of Masses x total seating capacity). The general goal for a parish family is a utilization between 50% and 80%.
- Number of Sunday Masses per priest: As is stated in canon law, “A priest is not permitted to celebrate the Eucharist more than once a day except in cases where the law permits him to celebrate or concelebrate more than once on the same day. If there is a shortage

of priests, the local ordinary can allow priests to celebrate twice a day for a just cause, or if pastoral necessity requires it, even three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation.” (Can 905 §1-2) Given our reality in the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Archbishop has determined that pastoral necessity requires permission to celebrate three Sunday Masses (including the Saturday Vigil Mass). The goal, therefore, is that priests celebrate no more than three Sunday Masses, including the Saturday Vigil Mass. This metric determines whether the Sunday Mass schedule meets this goal.

3. Staff Metrics

- Staff count: This is total staff count across the parish family as listed in Paycom. While a portion of this work can be accomplished by volunteers, key roles are best accomplished by paid staff to sustain viability. A total staff count, along with the review of administrative, faith formation, and facilities roles, can help a parish family discuss whether their staff structure needs review or revision.
- Administrative staff roles: Parish families require significant administrative work including finance, facilities, HR and compliance. These roles are key to enable pastors to focus on the pastoral needs of the parish family.
- Faith formation staff roles: Evangelization is dependent on good formation of the faithful. Formation needs strong leadership to be effective, and parish families should invest in staff to support this work.
- Facilities staff roles: One of the pressing issues for the Catholic Church in Western Washington is significant deferred maintenance. Hiring qualified staff to perform and oversee maintenance of facilities is imperative.

4. Capability to maintain buildings

- Number of buildings in Black, Red, Yellow and Green status: Pastors will receive a report that includes an in-depth review of all properties in their parish family. Part of this report is a building status note, with buildings either in Black status (likely unrepairable without extreme investment), Red status (requiring major repairs), Yellow status (requiring repairs but not at risk of entering Black status), and Green status (well-maintained building with ongoing maintenance). The goal is for no buildings to have Black status and for those with Red status to have plans for addressing the issues.
- Insured value of buildings: Insured value provides some sense of the value of the buildings that are being insured and maintained. There is no set goal for this metric.
- Total maintenance spending to insured value: This measures total dollars spent annually on maintaining buildings and related systems compared to insured value. A ratio of at least 0.64% represents a parish family that budgeted adequate funds to maintain the property and should be the goal for this metric. For instance, if a parish family has \$10,000,000 in total building insured value, they should be spending at least $(\$10,000,000 \times 0.0064) = \$64,000$ on maintenance annually.
- Ratio of PRF to insured value: This is the ratio of PRF savings for the parish family to the insured value of the buildings. A low ratio of PRF savings to insured value is indicative of a lack of ability to cover needed building maintenance expenses. The goal is for the PRF balance to be more than 6% of the value of the insured buildings. For instance, if a parish

family has \$10,000 in total building insured value, they should have at least $(\$10,000,000 * 0.06)$ \$600,000 in their PRF savings account.

5. Financial viability

1. Total Parish family income: This is how much money comes into the parish from all sources. The goal is for a parish family to account for all the sources and determine which are consistent every year or one-time.
2. Ordinary income: Describes money that comes into the parish from sources that are considered ordinary like weekly collections and holy day collections. It does not include items like rental income or one-time bequests. The general goal is for a parish family to have an ordinary income of \$1 million or more.
3. Parish margin. This is how much more (or less) the parish brings in each year over what it spends. The goal is for parishes to have a positive margin, meaning less is spent than is brought in each year.
4. School margin: Just as the parish needs to show a positive margin (less is spent than brought in), so does a school. Parish financial support is included in both parish and school margin calculations.
5. Debt: This is raw debt. While debt is often required for parish family projects, the ultimate goal for a parish family should be to actively paying down any debt.
6. PRF balance: This indicates overall financial health and the ability to invest in routine capital, maintenance, and respond to emergency expenditures. There is no set dollar-amount goal for this metric, but PRF balance should be sufficient to reach the PRF to insured value ratio described above.

Identify who we serve

An important starting point for discussions is to identify the people the parish family serves – both within the parish and within the wider community. To make the terms clear in this document, those involved with the parishes and schools in a parish family comprise the “faith community” and the broader population who the parish family serves is the “wider community.”

Start with existing demographic data

To assist with this quantitative work, here are two resources that give parish families a starting baseline:

1. **A survey** to collect existing parishioner demographics, which can either be hosted through ParishStaq (with responses automatically sent to parish family leadership) or as a written form collected at Mass or other events.) Here is the copy for the [Demographic Survey](#).
2. **A demographic report** of the geographical parish family boundary (based on information pulled from U.S. Census reports). This report will provide information on the wider community to identify opportunities around evangelization and ministry offerings. This demographic report will be provided by Archdiocesan staff in addition to the Baseline Metrics of Viability resources.

Discuss opportunities to expand those served

Use the information from the demographic report to start a broader discussion about who else the parish family may serve. For instance:

- Does the parish family have a large population of military personnel within the parish family boundary? Is there a large population of people originating from a certain country or region?
- Does the wider community have many tourists during certain of the year? Are there large populations of age groups that require specific support, such as young families or an elderly population in local retirement homes?
- Does the school's student body reflect the broader makeup of the community?

Identify challenges and opportunities

Use the baseline viability metrics and demographic reports noted above and consider both the challenges and opportunities that exist within the parish family and the wider community. This is not the time to start thinking about solutions – instead simply identify challenges and opportunities. For example:

- Is there a looming roof replacement that needs to happen soon and has strained budget planning?
- Has the parish family been unable to hire a youth minister despite the call to serve young people?
- Does the parish family have several Ukrainian speakers without any existing ministries to support them?
- Are there three large high schools within a few miles but relatively few high schoolers engaged in parish life?

Collect and report feedback from parish community

After collecting all the data above and considering challenges and opportunities, the next step to fully understand *the current faith community*. The best ways to collect this data are through surveys and listening sessions.

Community Consultation

Here is the suggested order to collect feedback:

- Offer a community consultation session, which may be an online or written survey, a brainstorming session, and/or a synodal-style listening session focused on the question, "What are our gifts?"
- Hold a PFAC discussion to review and synthesize the feedback received during the "What are our gifts?" session and create a report on the findings for the parish family.
- Hold one or more PFAC working sessions to complete the, "Who do we serve and what are our opportunities?" work based on viability metrics and demographic information provided to the parish family by the Chancery.
- Hold a community listening session to answer the question, "What opportunities and challenges exist for us?"

- Have the PFAC review, synthesize, and report out the findings from the “What opportunities and challenges exist for us?” session.

Determine what questions to ask

The questions to ask are organized into two broader categories:

- What has brought you closer to God?
Think about the ways that your participation at our parish has brought you closer to God. In your faith life, what people and experiences assisted you in your faith journey? How did our parish support these and bring you to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ?
- What are our gifts?
What significant gifts are present in our faith community that make it stand out? If you had 30 seconds to tell a stranger in an elevator about the gifts that set our parish apart, what would you tell them first? For example, do we have a robust outreach program to feed the hungry in our faith community? Has our number of confirmandi grown year over year? Do we have a deep pool of committed volunteers for several of our ministries?

(Note: The “Tell Your Parish Story” documents completed to supplement the Parish Annual Report in 2023 would be a good resource to see how the communities described themselves at the start of Partners in the Gospel).

How to conduct listening sessions

Synodal style listening sessions, which call upon the Holy Spirit, have been effective for gathering feedback in the Partners in the Gospel effort. There will be several opportunities throughout One Parish Planning to hold listening sessions. The input from these sessions will be captured by notetakers and shared with the PFAC at the end of each session.

- **Synthesis document:** An important part of the synodal style listening session is reporting what was heard. After the completion of a listening session, the PFAC will be responsible for creating a synthesis document that captures the input in a way that allows the Holy Spirit to be heard. At least two people should read each piece of feedback to draft the final synthesis. The PFAC will assign the readers, but the entire group should familiarize themselves with the input so that they have a shared understanding of it.
- **Forms to guide discussions and capture feedback:** On the following pages are forms (and guidance for their use) that can be utilized by parish family leaders to facilitate these discussions in a fruitful way. A major responsibility of the PFAC and PFLT in planning these sessions is providing notetakers and facilitators to manage discussions and, if they are unable to provide them, to train others to be able to serve in these roles.

Since each parish family is unique, discussions will take different forms based on language, geography, personnel, and resources. ParishStaq can also be used to collect online input for the questions asked in the first consultative session. Templates have been created and are located in the “Templates” section in ParishStaq.

How to reach less engaged groups for listening sessions

A major benefit of the whole-parish family listening session is that it provides an opportunity to hear from people who often don’t give input about parish life. As such, a good effort should be made to hear from those people – e.g. youth and young adults, cultural communities, families with children in the school who do not regularly attend Mass, etc.

We also suggest hosting a targeted listening sessions to hear from groups with unique needs, such as those with unique language needs, senior parishioners from local retirement communities, those who have physical challenges or accommodation needs, or college students. Some examples of how to reach these groups include:

- Offer listening session directly after a Young Adult meeting or Newman Center Mass or connect the listening session to a community dinner.
- Hold a listening session at the retirement community where local seniors live.
- Consider a combined listening session in English and another language, with some tables participating in English and others in another language with the assistance of interpreters. This can be a great way to bring together multicultural groups who may not regularly participate alongside one another in parish activities. Just make sure to clearly note the feedback that was received from each group on the report.

Timing, steps, and tools

Possible start: Apr-Jun 2025 | Anticipated duration: 3-6 months

1. Refamiliarize the PFAC with the One Parish Planning [Overview](#) document and more in-depth [Introduction](#).
2. Complete the “Who are we?” community consultation process. Start by reading the [Community Consultation Overview](#).
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT or Pastoral Leader | Audience: Parishioners | See Docs. B2 - B4B)
3. Complete the “Who do we serve/what are our opportunities?” PFAC review process. Start by reading the [Input Review Synthesis Process](#).
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT members | Audience: PFAC members | See Doc. B5)
4. Hold a “What opportunities/challenges exist for us?” community listening session. Start by reading the [Listening Session Planner Guide](#).
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT or Pastoral Leader | Audience: Parishioners | See Docs. B6 - B7C)

Completion of these forms is a required part of the One Parish Planning process. These forms will be submitted at the end of the One Parish Planning process to be given to the Archbishop.