

FEBRUARY 2024

AGENCY EVALUATION SUMMARY



Connectional Table
The United Methodist Church

Prepared by: Rev. Grace Killian
Connectional Ministries Associate, Connectional Table

I. Introduction

The Connectional Table carried out an evaluation of the United Methodist Agencies and Commissions in 2023. The purpose of this evaluation was to increase the CT's awareness of the UM agencies and commissions' use of allocated funds, their alignment with their disciplinary mandates, and the effectiveness of their work.

After discussion with agency General Secretaries, the CT utilized a new method for conducting this evaluation, making this process a pilot for future evaluations processes that gather the necessary information without putting undue burden on the agencies' and commissions' staff.

As per ¶702.3 in *The Book of Discipline*, the CT evaluated the following agencies and commissions:

- General Commission on Archives and History
- United Methodist Men
- General Commission on Religion and Race
- General Commission on the Status and Role of the Women
- General Board of Global Ministries
- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
- General Board of Church and Society
- Discipleship Ministries
- United Methodist Communications

II. Method

The Connectional Table employed a meta-evaluation method for this evaluation. CT Agency Evaluation Committee requested two sources from each agency for this meta-evaluation: internal evaluations and the spending plan narrative. The Agency Evaluation Committee then reviewed the submissions and reported on their findings based on the following objectives:

- Strategic Alignment
- Cost Accountability
- Management and Administration
- Outcome and Output Assessment

Following the review of the agencies' submissions, each agency received specific comments and recommendations.

III. Findings

Strategic Alignment

- Every agency and commission is carrying out their disciplinary mandates and their unique expertise.
- All the projects and programs described in the submissions align with the overarching values of The UMC.

- The priorities delineated in the spending plan narratives reveal that, in general, 2024 is a year for evaluation and pivoting as necessary.
- Many agencies and commissions report new or renewed priorities related to racial justice and equity.

Cost Accountability

- The agencies and commissions are accurately projecting and tracking their expenses.
- The agencies and commissions' reserve policies vary from three months to twenty-four months of operating expenses. The agencies and commissions that reported their end of year in comparison to their reserve policy are all within their targets and in compliance with their reserve policies.
- Costs related to General Conference are forcing many agencies and commissions to use reserve funds.
- The agencies are all attending to the demand of raising additional funds beyond apportionments.

Management and Administration

- The capacity, resources, and staff for monitoring and internal evaluation vary between the agencies.
- All of the agencies and commissions are effectively utilizing partnerships, both internal and external to the UM connection. Partnerships reliably enabled the agencies and commissions to maximize their impact.
- Reports on staffing indicate that diversity on agency and commissions' staff has increased since 2018.
- Furthermore, spending plan narratives reveal that staff have been cut across the board. To fill in the gaps left by staffing cuts, agencies and commissions rely on partnerships within the United Methodist connection.
- All of the agencies and commissions are taking financial sustainability seriously and facing the probability of greater staffing cuts in the near future.
- Partnerships with annual conferences remain essential to the ministry of the agency and commissions.

Outcome and Output Assessment

- The outputs and outcomes further reveal shared priorities and successes across the agencies, including:
 - developing more resources in the languages of the central conferences
 - maintaining trustworthy information amidst widespread misinformation
 - meeting the material and spiritual needs of individuals and communities

IV. Recommendations

Moving forward, the CT offers the following recommendations:

- The CT should pay special attention to existing partnerships to identify what can be strengthened or what is missing.
- CT could facilitate greater access to monitoring and evaluation resources, including staff, shared services, and locating grants and partnerships.

- The CT could support the work of evaluation across the agencies by facilitating training in monitoring and evaluation for staff and CT board members as well as recruit CT board members with an evaluation background.

V. Conclusion

The United Methodist agencies and commissions continue to witness to God's transformative grace through their mission and ministries. The CT's evaluation of their stated priorities, staffing, projects, and programs reveals that each agency and commission is effectively carrying out their disciplinary mandate, capitalizing on their unique expertise and aligning with United Methodist values. Moreover, the information gathered in this process functions as a baseline against which future evaluations can be measured.

The CT is grateful to the cooperation of the agencies' and commissions' staff for their cooperation in submitting internal evaluations and spending plan narratives and to the CT Agency Evaluation Committee for their essential work in this process.