RFI Crisis Toolkit for Religious Institutions

Community Relationships

RFI
RELIGIOUS
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INSTITUTE

A non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, RFI is committed to achieving broad acceptance of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, a source of individual and social flourishing, the cornerstone of a successful society, and a driver of national and international security. RFI seeks to advance religious freedom for everyone, everywhere.

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Opportunity Amid Challenge

The *RFI Crisis Toolkit for Religious Institutions* (referred to as "Toolkit" throughout) offers practical guidance to help institutions like yours **prepare for, mitigate**, and **respond to crises**, while remaining faithful to your core convictions, identity, and mission.

The Toolkit is divided into three modules: *Institutional Governance*, *Communications*, and *Community Relationships*. Together they address threats from lawsuits, smear campaigns, hostile media coverage, adversarial legislation, hostile government legal or administrative action, and more. Even if your institution is a "religion-driven organization," maintaining an abiding respect for religion and prioritizing the critical role of religious free exercise in society, but not identifying with a single religious faith tradition, this Toolkit is also for you.

The Religious Freedom Institute (RFI) understands religious freedom as a fundamental human right. As an organization, we often use the phrase "free exercise equality" to convey the intent of the Founders in their guarantee of religious free exercise in the First Amendment. "Free exercise equality" means the inalienable, natural, God-given right of religious individuals, communities, and institutions to express religious, moral, and anthropological truths privately and to bring those truths into public life. Lamentably, American society has become increasingly resistant to pluralism and instead seeks to impose uniformity in ways that often run contrary to free exercise equality.

Morally orthodox institutions are particularly at risk of being attacked for their convictions, words, and actions regarding human sexuality, marriage, family, the intrinsic dignity of human life, and the natural, God-given distinctions between females and males. These institutions adhere to principles of right conduct that enable human flourishing and are consistent with the teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Hostile media coverage, costly court cases, and punitive government actions may undermine, or deny altogether, the right of religious free exercise.

This Toolkit module provides a roadmap for engaging with key members of your community, as an exercise in being a good civic neighbor, and for developing allies who will stand with your institution if it is attacked for its moral orthodoxy. While preparing for and navigating current threats to your institution through the building of strong community relationships may sometimes be challenging and even costly, such efforts also present an opportunity to strengthen your institution's commitment to its religious convictions, identity, and mission.

Confessional Religious Institutions and Religion-Driven Organizations

For the purposes of this Toolkit, a confessional religious institution (or "religious institution") is an entity that aims to embody the teachings of a particular religious faith. These institutions typically organize their identity and mission around a creedal statement, affiliation with a religious denomination or tradition, the teachings of a sacred text, and/or similar communal forms or expressions of a religious faith. Examples of religious institutions include Catholic parishes, Jewish schools, Muslim health clinics, and evangelical Christian universities, to name a few. Most of the elements of this Toolkit are tailored to this kind of institution.

At the Religious Freedom Institute, we use a different term, "religion-driven organization," to distinguish confessional from non-confessional religious entities. Religion-driven organizations maintain an abiding respect for religion and prioritize the critical role of free exercise of religion in society. Members of these organizations may affiliate individually with particular religious traditions. However, the organizations themselves are not based on a formal religious creed and do not affiliate with a particular religious community or tradition. These organizations can be more fully understood by exploring the nature of religion itself within the American tradition. There are many such religion-driven organizations in the areas of humanitarian aid, charitable assistance, human rights advocacy, and interfaith cooperation.

Whether a religion-driven organization enjoys the legal protections for the free exercise of religion remains untested. What is true, nevertheless, is that some of these organizations seek to maintain a morally orthodox ethos and set of institutional standards. Consequently, religion-driven organizations determined to

operate in accord with their morally orthodox commitments will find much of the guidance below to be enormously beneficial.

The Scope of Religious Freedom

Religious freedom, properly understood, secures the inalienable, natural right of all religious institutions to organize themselves in accord with their religious tenets. Religious freedom is not an individual right alone. It also includes the right of religious communities to found, to organize, and to gather in synagogues, churches, mosques, temples, and other places of worship. Religious freedom, moreover, encompasses the right of religious communities to found and to organize schools, hospitals, homeless shelters, universities, public policy institutes, drug rehabilitation centers, and other institutions that seek to embody and express the teachings of their respective religious traditions. Religious freedom includes the right of religious institutions to influence public policy and the shaping of laws.

Religious freedom protects this full range of congregational and institutional expressions as well as the exercising of religious faith. Though these principles are enshrined broadly in American law, much in the area of institutional religious freedom remains highly contested.

Anonymity Increases Vulnerability

Proponents of certain ideologies are increasingly targeting morally orthodox religious institutions with cultural, political, and litigative intimidation that can quickly become crises. These institutions sometimes lack the strong external relationships that would have helped them prepare for, mitigate, and respond to such crises. Leaders and staff within these institutions often do not have adequate relationships with religious leaders, policymakers, civic leaders, or members of the local media. Without these relationships, trust is hard to establish and maintain. In the midst of a crisis, the situation becomes even more challenging.

To be clear, a crisis of community trust and organizational reputation may afflict your institution no matter how strong its external relationships are. These relationships, however, can reduce your institution's risk by addressing a key vulnerability: **anonymity**. People in your community are much more likely to stand by your insti-

tution, or at least to avoid joining in the attack against it, if they are already familiar with it, even if they disagree with you on particular matters of moral orthodoxy.

Developing external relationships is difficult on a national level, but more achievable and necessary at the state and local levels. Approaching your neighbors, especially those with whom you disagree, with respect is important. It typically begins with common courtesy, recognizing their inherent dignity, and refusing to exploit your relationships with them merely for your own benefit. As this module makes clear, practical benefits may result, but they should not be the primary goal.

Ultimately, investing over time in developing external relationships across a wide range of sectors—as a matter of discretion and not desperation—allows your institution and its important mission in your community to become known and understood apart from any crisis you may face. Friendships will emerge that will enable you to build trust with those who disagree with you and ideally common ground. When integrated into a broader strategic commitment of effective *Communications* and *Institutional Governance*, *Community Relationships* can strengthen your capacity to fulfill your mission, withstand crises, and be a better civic neighbor.

External relationships can develop in multiple directions simultaneously: a) between your institution and government, b) between your institution and other ones like it (community peers), and c) between your institution and those quite unlike it in the rest of civil society, both those of other faith traditions as well as those that work in other fields..

If your institution lacks external relationships in any direction, it is more vulnerable in a time of crisis than it would be otherwise. Why? First, if a crisis of community trust and organizational reputation is on the horizon, but you can still avoid its full force, relationships with policymakers, local journalists, and respected community leaders can be invaluable. Second, if your institution is in the midst of such a crisis, you will need allies in civil society and government. Access to allies is founded on knowledge and trust. If knowledge of and trust in your institution do not exist prior to a crisis, cultivating them once a crisis begins is nearly impossible.

II. PREPARATION

Enunciate Why Community Relationships Matter

Functional and fiduciary rationales are good grounds for your institution to engage with certain religious congregations, non-profits, businesses, and other organizations in your community. The same is true for engaging with government agencies and offices, both those occupied by elected officials affiliated with a political party (e.g., legislative, mayoral, or gubernatorial offices) and those that provide community services (e.g., police departments and health service agencies). But these rationales may be insufficient to convince those *within* your community that relationship-building of this kind aligns with your mission. Does your core constituency, a congregation or denomination, for example, support your efforts to engage your broader community? If not, what would it take to gain their support?

That project will look different for each institution. It is wise, though, to ground your institution's reasons for civic engagement in your religious convictions, identity, and mission. Avoid jumping to purely pragmatic rationales that may seem obvious to leaders of religious institutions but not their constituency. Suppose members of a con-gregation ask why their place of worship is collaborating with an institution of a different religion. It will be more edifying and sustainable to draw a straight line from your core convictions and mission to your strategy.

For a morally orthodox institution to maintain its integrity in the long run, it cannot operate in the public square based on purely functional or temporal considerations. Such a path would leave it vulnerable to losing its religious identity. Preoccupation with temporal and functional considerations risks communicating that your institution is motivated by expediency or desire for public affirmation rather than an abiding commitment to its religious convictions. Your institution should root all of its practices in its religious principles with a strong presumption in favor of publicly disclosing that reality.

Relying entirely on the power of one political party is an example of allowing functionalism to distort a religious institution's public presence. An institution may collaborate chiefly with one party on a specific subject because of shared views with that party, which another party opposes. Yet, there are religious institutions across the theological and philosophical spectrum that go further, wholly associating themselves with one party. Tethering your institution to partisan politics may elicit short-term gains but risks linking your institution to that party and
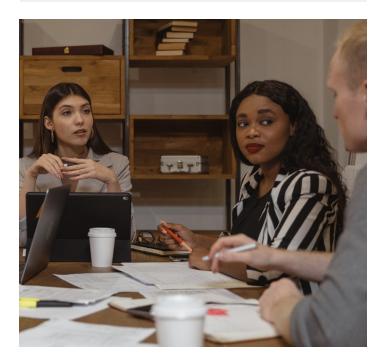
generating the reasonable view that it is beholden to it. Religious institutions, by their nature, should be visibly motivated by their religious, moral, and anthropological convictions, not the favor of any one political party, even when engaged in deliberations over government policies. Be principled, not partisan.

Therefore, when engaging policymakers, your institution should strive to develop relationships with officeholders of all political parties, knowing you will have better relationships with some officials than others. Make your institution's non-partisan approach visible to people within your institution and to the broader community.

TOPIC RECAP: **ENUNCIATE WHY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER**

❖ **Convince Your Core Constituancy**

❖ **Ground Strategy in Religious Convictions**

❖ **Avoid Excessively Partisan Affiliations**

Understand Your Community

The essential categories of "audience" or "community" for the sake of public engagement include 1) your own membership or constituency, 2) the broader community, 3) media, and 4) government. Each sphere is important for supporting the overall goal of fostering vital community relationships. The following outline explains the importance of cultivating these relationships in each sphere *before* your institution is engulfed in a crisis.

1) **Your institution's own membership or constituency.** Though often overlooked, it is important to inculcate your institution's vision and strategy into its constituent engagement. Otherwise, your own constituency may fail to support your community relationships strategy, or even withhold support for your institution entirely in the midst of a crisis. Regular, informal updates about such matters may be a better strategy than one big meeting that constituents gradually forget over time. For example, in monthly newsletters or other recurring updates to your members, include recent instances of your institution's community engagement and a brief explanation of how they fit within your broader strategic plan. In this context, you may also reference how your core convictions inform these activities.

2) **Broader community beyond government.** The broader community consists of all nongovernmental institutions and individuals your institution may encounter. This group includes religious leaders, social service providers, business leaders and groups, and education leaders in your geographic area of operation. It may also include your immediate neighbors, i.e., people who live near your institution and may be interviewed by hostile media in a crisis.

Religious institutions sometimes default to forging relationships with people in similar institutions, e.g., clergy interacting with clergy. A comprehensive community relationships strategy involves seeking relationships across a range of organizational types. Intentional outreach to leaders in the social services, business, and

education sectors is worthwhile. A natural overlap of interests may initially appear limited. Begin with your shared desire to seek the common good of your community and learn about each other's work.

Social service providers, business leaders, school administrators, and religious clergy see important trends in the community and have insights into local politics, which may aid your institution in fulfilling its mission and strengthen its position amid present or future crises.

3) **Media.** The Toolkit's *Communications* module elaborates on this domain. In sum, do not wait for a crisis to engage key members of the media. Consider a media tour for your institution's leadership involving introductory meetings with relevant media representatives whom you think are well-respected and influential in your geographic area, your sector, or both. Schedule an informal conversation with them over coffee or a meal to introduce your institution and the role it plays in your community, state, or region. (See the *Communications* module for additional guidance on media engagement.)

4) **Government.** Engaging with government representatives on matters of legislation, policy, and the common good, and collaborating with them whenever possible, have benefits beyond those domains. If your institution experiences a crisis, those representatives will know you and your institution, and associate the two with more than the immediate crisis.

Government is complex. The officials and staff your institution should prioritize will vary. Government includes a broad range of local and state policymakers such as mayors and city council members, county commissioners, state legislators, officials and staff at government agencies, and—depending on proximity—the governor. Law enforcement leadership and key staff members may also be worth engaging.

The *staff* of government offices, particularly legislative staff, are sometimes more important than the elected officials for relationship development. Elected officials rely on their staff for subject matter expertise, counsel, and managing relationships. Legislative staff are often more well-versed in the minutiae of public policy. They have more time to listen and give atten-

limited to a yea or nay vote. Even if he or she ultimately casts a vote against the interests of your institution, a relationship with his or her office may have a number of desired effects. For example, the legislator may decide not to sponsor a bill, be more muted in public, and be far less likely to castigate institutions like yours publicly.

Throughout all government engagements, as in all other areas of your institution, act in accord with your religious identity, mission, and core convictions. Whenever possible, show magnanimity and seek areas of commonality and collaboration. Humbly show how your institution contributes to the welfare of your community in ways that are consistent with important elements of the elected official's agenda.

Whenever possible, invite elected officials and other government leaders to your congregation, ministry, or organization. Show them hospitality while introducing them to your institution's many contributions to your community.

TOPIC RECAP: **UNDERSTAND YOUR COMMUNITY**

❖ **Your Core Constituency**

❖ **Broader Community Beyond Government**

❖ **Media**

❖ **Government**

tion to your institution. It is not uncommon for a request for a meeting with a legislator to transition to a meeting with his or her staff instead. Aim to convince the staff of key legislators to become champions of your cause and their bosses will likely also become champions.

An understandable question is, "What about engaging political leaders whose policy positions are usually incompatible with my institution's convictions?" Despite deep disagreement, it is nevertheless important to cultivate relationships with those across the political spectrum for the sake of awareness, potential collaboration on matters of mutual agreement, genuine non-partisanship, and mutual good will.

A legislator's activity, for example, is not just

Networking Basics

Leaders and staff of morally orthodox religious institutions will have a broad spectrum of experience and training in what many call networking. Avoid the negative stereotype of networking—that of an insincere person roaming around a social gathering passing out business cards—by using some rudimentary training from readily available resources, including business resources. Keith Ferrazzi's and Tahl Raz's book, *Never Eat Alone,* is an example. Try a few to find what works for you. When applying a resource like this to your outreach, you can merely substitute the book's references to "sales" and "customers" with cultivating meaningful friendships in your community.

A simple strategy, as Ferrazzi's and Raz's book outlines, is to make hospitality a part of your weekly routine by inviting another key person in your community to breakfast, coffee, or lunch. Inquire with that person about other people you might speak with. Take an interest in your guests and encourage them in their work.

Expand your strategy. Brainstorm, perhaps with your own staff, to create a list of essential people in each of the four spheres (described above) whom you do not know or could know better. Then, as you have capacity, invite those people to share a beverage or a meal. No agenda is necessary. Just get to know each other and discuss the work each of you do. Some of these encounters may result in enduring friendships.

As familiarity increases, speak candidly about the current or potential threats to your respective institutions and how you are trying to prepare, mitigate, and potentially respond. Some will likely become the core of your network of community relationships. From there, you can encourage one another in your respective leadership positions, collaborate on near-term initiatives for your community, and share strategies in preparation for a crisis situation.

The simple hospitality required for networking of this sort may require a modest commitment within your institution's budget, like a monthly line item for beverages or meals. It is not a significant cost in the long run but may substantially support your mission.

Once you have a core group of individuals representing institutions that share concerns similar to yours, convene them to discuss how you can collaborate on pertinent initiatives in your community.

TOPIC RECAP:
NETWORKING BASICS

❖ **Practice Regular Hospitality**

❖ **Identify Essential Community Contacts**

❖ **Convene Core Community Partners**

III. IMPLEMENTATION

Collaborating with the Religious "Other"

Some morally orthodox religious institutions may have negative associations with the term "interfaith." There is a more fruitful model of "multifaith" collaboration that can include an array of participants, from congregations to social service organizations.

Interfaith gatherings often have the reputation for attracting groups that affirm current "progressive" ideologies, and which modify or turn away from the orthodox teachings of their faith tradition in order to do so. Such gatherings can be quite limited in what they can produce in the long run. Interfaith gatherings may be unacceptable, or at least problematic, for some religious institutions because of their real or perceived tendency toward minimizing or denying religious or moral differences between faith traditions. Activities sometimes include shared worship or prayer gatherings, which may cause unease for some religious institutions. Nevertheless, even where morally orthodox institutions may not be able to participate in such gatherings regularly, there may remain value in staying in contact with existing interfaith networks in your community. Some participants may be sensitive to the ramifications of a religious freedom challenge even when they do not share the particular convictions that may make your institution vulnerable to a crisis.

Secularized gatherings are interfaith gatherings that government entities typically convene to collaborate with religious communities. This type of gathering has the potential to be more diverse, including morally orthodox institutions, but admission to the "dialogue table" often requires leaving religious identities and convictions outside the door.

Multifaith gatherings tend to be more suitable for institutions that are theologically and morally orthodox. They can be more difficult to initiate than the two aforementioned models. The multifaith gathering affirms that there are important differences between those who are gathered. Participants must commit to explore possibilities of collaboration in service to the common good from which all may benefit, but there is no implicit demand that participants disregard the significance of those differences. This approach recognizes that partnering does not require compromising core convictions. To the contrary, all are encouraged to draw deeply from their own religious resources.

A prime example of an effective gathering in the multifaith model is the International Religious Freedom Roundtable. For well over a decade, this roundtable has been one of the most diverse gatherings in Washington, DC, and has accomplished a great deal in instances in which participants have joined forces on narrow policy goals. But the main requirement is simply to show up to the conversation. Any participating organization may invite others to join a collaborative initiative, but no participant is obligated to join an initiative. This arrangement creates an environment where relationships are less likely to be exploited, and trust is built on open acknowledgment of differences and a shared commitment to achieve common goals through collaboration.

TOPIC RECAP: COLLABORATING WITH THE RELIGIOUS 'OTHER'

❖ **Interfaith Gatherings**

❖ **Secularized Gatherings**

❖ **Multifaith Gatherings**

Convening a Coalition

Some institutions may decide to take a leadership role in developing a coalition in their community as a means of shaping public perceptions and/or public policy on matters pertinent to their mission. Pursuing this role in your community requires a sufficient commitment of personnel and other resources.

Point person. A convening initiative requires an institutional leader's support and participation. The practical work of convening a coalition does not, however, need to rest on the executive's shoulders. The executive should regularly participate but may delegate organizational tasks to a qualified and trusted staff member.

Although policy expertise or political experience may be helpful, a person who works in partisan politics, or has been highly visible in that arena, is generally not a good candidate to run your non-partisan, multifaith gathering. A point person must serve a fiduciary role by prioritizing and representing your institution's religious identity, mission, and convictions above their personal political preferences.

Resources and leadership. Your institution must devote resources to bringing together a coalition. Some institutions take inspiration from the practice, found in multiple religious traditions, of intentionally giving a set percentage of their income to their religious community. Similarly, your institution might devote a percentage of its resources to a community relationships strategy that may, in part, take the form of building an ongoing coalition of community partners. See Appendix III for recommendations on how to sustain an effective coalition.

TOPIC RECAP:
CONVENING A COALITION

❖ **Designate a Point Person**

❖ **Devote Resources and Leadership**

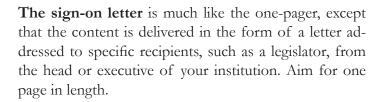## Tools for Engaging Government

Some institutions may desire to advance religious freedom or other objectives that are relevant to their mission in state or local public policy. Religious institutions and individuals are free to bring their religious convictions into these deliberations.

The following government relations tools may be deployed as a method for advancing religious freedom and other policy objectives. They may also be utilized in concert with a broader crisis management strategy. The tools are non-partisan by design. Your institution should seek its own legal consultation and, as with all areas of your institution, act in accord with your religious identity, mission, and core convictions.

The "one-pager" is a summary of your institution's position on religious freedom or other policy matters. The length is one page because policymakers have limited time and attention. The content can be continued to the backside of the page if *absolutely necessary*. Brevity is critical. It should look professional and can often be organized into easily digestible bullet points.

A one-pager may include affirmation of or opposition to a proposed policy or may speak to principles that ought to inform how a policy is implemented while refraining from taking a direct position on the merits of the policy itself. NOTE: If your institution qualifies for Section 501(c)(3) status, attempting to influence legislation (commonly known as lobbying) may not be a substantial part of your activities. A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying, but too much lobbying activity would risk loss of your institution's tax-exempt status. Consult qualified legal counsel with any questions you may have on this or related matters.

The "white paper" is shorthand for any lengthier document you think might be necessary to sustain your summary arguments found in a one-pager. While it is *rarely needed or justified*, a white paper can help present a larger volume of considerations, such as supporting collective documentation from community allies. Keep the white paper physically separated from the one-pager from your institution.

The sign-on letter is much like the one-pager, except that the content is delivered in the form of a letter addressed to specific recipients, such as a legislator, from the head or executive of your institution. Aim for one page in length.

An individual letter is sent by your institution to relevant policymakers. The challenge is to communicate your institutional convictions in a way that policymakers and their staff can understand and find persuasive.

A coalition letter with multiple signatories will be more limited in rhetoric, making points on which all signatories can agree. A multifaith coalition typically will not enunciate the same kind of religious conviction as a single religious institution. Despite this limitation, one of its strengths is the expression of unity across religious traditions. One page remains optimal for a coalition letter.

Flexibility is key in coalition work. Multiple letters is also an option. Some engagement situations call for multiple letters from different perspectives that each push toward the same end. If a coalition cannot come to an agreement on the text of a letter, a small group of signatories may still form to issue the letter and others who are unable to join may send an individual letter that parallels the small group letter. Avoid being too rigid in pursuing coalition initiatives but, at the same time, avoid watering down a message that requires clarity.

Meetings with policymakers may include direct engagement on a matter of religious freedom. It is best to develop relationships well in advance of such requests.
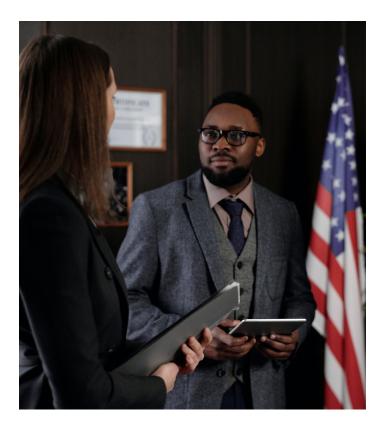
A truism of politics is, "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Be *known* to policymakers. You want your institution to be on their radar as policy is crafted, even if that means they anticipate your opposition. Knowing elected officials is not merely about policy influence. Elected officials often have responsibilities other than policymaking that are non-partisan in nature. For example, members of the U.S. Congress employ case workers who act as liaisons between their constituents and *any* federal agency that might meet their needs.

A political party or official may be at odds with your institution on significant, fundamental matters. Your institution should still know who to contact about issues such as, for instance, adapting traffic control for your congregation's arrival and departure times during a religious holiday or who can act as a liaison between the State Department and a family in your congregation whose international adoption has been derailed by in-country turmoil.

Developing relationships with government contacts takes time. Here are some basic suggestions:

a. Meet for the purposes of **introduction and education**. You need not have a policy objective to request a meeting with government officials. Seek to inform the official about the contributions of your institution, or the coalition collectively, toward the common good of your community.

b. **Expectations**. Your meeting might be postponed, delayed, or shorter than you had planned. These scenarios are common. In the course of scheduling, always be cordial and flexible, while still being persistent to get something on the calendar. You or your staff may have to drive the scheduling activity.

c. **Creativity**. Consider a variety of ways to meet. It could simply be in the official's office, which is often most convenient for her or him. If your institution provides some service to the community worth showing, such as a community garden or homeless outreach, invite the official to see this in action. Hospitality is usually good, so consider a meal or beverage option. Coordinate with pertinent staffers (especially those responsible for the official's schedule) to ask what is most convenient for the official.

d. **Risks.** Recognize that engaging elected officials, especially at public events or anything that looks like a photo opportunity, may have drawbacks. In many cases you will be able to trust an official not to take advantage of your position. However, be mindful of how and when representatives of your institution appear with the official, and to what extent your institution risks offering a platform that may be used for a message with which you disagree.

TOPIC RECAP: **TOOLS FOR ENGAGING GOVERNMENT**

❖ **The "One-Pager"**

❖ **The "White Paper"**

❖ **The Sign-On Letter**

❖ **An Individual Letter**

❖ **A Coalition Letter**

❖ **Relationships with Government Contacts**

IV. CONCLUSION

A crisis of community trust and organizational reputation may afflict your institution no matter how robust its external relationships. These relationships, however, can reduce your institution's risk by addressing a key vulnerability: anonymity.

Forging external relationships will enable key members of your community to understand your institution's work, core convictions, and mission apart from any crisis you may face. Suppose your institution remains anonymous to the vast majority of your community until finding itself in the harsh spotlight of alleged cultural, moral, or legal wrongdoing. Many will be inclined in these circumstances to approach your institution and the allegations against it with a presumption of suspicion rather than one of good will grounded in trust. Meaningful community relationships aim to flip that presumption entirely. When integrated into a broader strategic commitment to effective *Communications* and *Institutional Governance*, *Community Relationships* can strengthen your capacity to fulfill your mission, withstand crises, and be a better civic neighbor.

If you have questions or would like referrals to qualified communications, legal, or other professionals who can help you implement the Toolkit, please contact RFI by email at: <u>RFICrisisToolkit@rfi.org</u>.

Community Relationships

CHECKLIST

Preparation

☐ Enunciate why community relationships matter:

  ☐ Ground your institution's civic engagement in your religious convictions, identity, and mission.
  ☐ Communicate to your members (e.g., your congregation, denomination, etc.) why developing community partnerships matters.
  ☐ Be principled, not partisan, in all political engagement.
  ☐ Develop relationships with officeholders of all political parties.

☐ Understand your community:

  ☐ Your membership or constituency: Inculcate your vision and strategy for community partnerships into your constituent engagement.
  ☐ Broader community: Undertake intentional outreach to leaders in the broader community, including the social services, business, and education sectors.
  ☐ Media: Hold introductory meetings with well-respected and influential media representatives in your geographic area, your sector, or both.
  ☐ Government: Cultivate relationships with those across the political spectrum for the sake of awareness, potential collaboration on matters of mutual agreement, genuine non-partisanship, and mutual good will.

☐ Networking basics:

  ☐ Practice regular hospitality with leaders and other key members of your community.
  ☐ Identify essential community contacts among your constituency, the broader community, media, and government.
  ☐ Convene core community partners to discuss how you can collaborate on pertinent initiatives in your community.

Implementation

☐ Collaborating with the religious 'other':

  ☐ Stay in contact with existing interfaith networks in your community, even if only on a limited basis.
  ☐ Join multifaith gatherings in your community if any exist.

☐ Convening a coalition:

  ☐ Establish a point person.
  ☐ Devote resources and leadership to bringing together a coalition.

☐ Tools for engaging government:

  ☐ Develop effective written products – such as one-pagers, white papers, sign-on letters, individual letters, and coalition letters – that convey your institution's position on religious freedom or other policy matters.
  ☐ Develop relationships with government contacts.

GLOSSARY

Anthropological: pertaining to the reality of human beings, human nature, and human goods.

Common Good: the social conditions that together objectively enable individuals and groups to more completely and easily flourish and reach their fulfillment.

Ideology: any system of thought or set of claims in which truth is subordinate to, or determined with regard to its usefulness for, advancing a particular social or political agenda. Ideologies are made up of claims that are effectively immune from genuine rational scrutiny, because there is no independent criterion for truth apart from compatibility with a predetermined agenda.

Moral Orthodoxy: a set of principles of right conduct that are consistent with the historical teachings of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, especially regarding sexuality, marriage, family, the immutability of being female or male, and the intrinsic dignity of human life.

Religion: the human search for truths and ultimate meaning from an external source that is supernatural and greater-than-human, and the ordering of one's life in accord with those truths.

Religious Exercise: living out one's faith in private and public life, individually and communally.

Religious Freedom: the inalienable, natural right of all persons to believe, speak, and act – individually and in community with others, in private and in public – in accord with their understanding of ultimate truth that has a greater-than-human source.

Religious Institution: an entity that aims to embody the teachings of a particular religious faith and which can act and be acted upon in society. These institutions typically organize their identity and mission around a creedal statement, affiliation with a religious denomination or tradition, the teachings of a sacred text, and/or similar communal forms or expressions of a religious faith. Examples include, but are not limited to, worship congregations, religious schools and universities, and religious organizations, including those that provide social services.

Religion-Driven Organization: an organization that maintains an abiding respect for religion and is often informed by the religious commitments of its founders, executive leadership, and other staff, but does not look to a formal religious creed or have a legal relationship with a religious denomination or tradition.

Religious Community: a deep association of individuals and institutions bound together by a shared set of convictions about ultimate reality, including that there is a greater-than-human source, that inform their sacred practices, anthropological understandings, and moral commitments. Governments and non-government actors sometimes use affiliation with a religious community as the basis for invidious discrimination and other forms of religious persecution.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO SUSTAIN AN EFFECTIVE COALITION

Venue. Initial meetings may be small and at an easily accessible location. As the gathering grows, logistical challenges may arise, especially in urban settings. Participants should be encouraged to share in the burden of hosting or securing venues in these circumstances.

Hospitality. Hospitality is a common bridge builder across human history. Make convening attractive to participants by ensuring that beverages and light food options are provided. Hospitality is a way for partner institutions to contribute to growing and strengthening the coalition.

Many institutions are not able to join coalitions formally or contribute financially to an initiative. Those same institutions may be able directly to provide or finance hospitality occasionally in a way that is well within their institution's priorities.

Consider friends in the local food industry who may be interested in encouraging your gathering either with discounted or gratis food and beverage service. Be mindful of possible dietary restrictions of those in your multifaith coalition. Merely asking communicates care to your guests.

Shared interest. Identify at least one shared interest with which to convene a group of institutions. For example, in Washington, DC, a gathering called the International Religious Freedom Roundtable only focuses on religious freedom in an international context. Theological and domestic policy differences abound among that group. When participants focus on religious freedom abroad there is often significant agreement. Another example is the aforementioned network of middle Tennessee churches that focused on addressing poverty, substance abuse, and foster care.

Consider convening to discuss the goal of securing religious freedom for everyone. Discuss threats at the state and local levels and opportunities for reversing them. Your institutions will likely identify subjects on which to convene and collaborate. Even if your regular convening becomes about something other than religious freedom, it is wise to include a regular review of the religious freedom landscape.

Disposition. Multifaith collaboration requires the skills of patience and interpretation. Though we think we all speak the same language, as the American cultural landscape grows ever more diverse, religious, political, and regional differences can disrupt mutual understanding. **Patience** commits us to bearing with our partners while seeking genuine understanding. **Interpretation** aims to listen carefully and communicate accurately, recognizing the potential for uses of common language with different intended meanings.

Forging coalitions such as these can be valuable for its own sake, but if your institution faces a crisis, already having in place a coalition of trusted partners in your respective community who a) know you and b) trust you can be vital. It is possible they may not come to your aid in a time of public crisis. But the absence of trust ensures they will not.

Rules of engagement. Set expectations for engagement. Conversation should be candid while building a sense of trust among participants. One helpful tool is the "Chatham House Rule," which reads,

> "...participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

Opt-in initiatives. Make it clear that participation in the *convening* does not obligate anyone to participate in a particular *action*, like hosting an event or signing a coalition letter. Any person or organization may propose or invite others to join them on an initiative and each participant may freely choose to opt in or out.

Declining to participate in a particular initiative should be respected and not held against the institution. Part of keeping a diverse group together is to understand that each institution may participate when and how they see fit.

Invite government participants only as needed. It may become helpful for the conveners to interact with government representatives. But be sure to notify regular participants if government representatives will be in attendance. Invite government representatives periodically but not permanently. Civil society participants may wish to discuss concerns candidly and apart from the presence of government officials, even when they are friendly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS