

# Choosing a Liturgical Consultant



Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

SAMPLE

# Choosing a Liturgical Consultant

An evaluation workbook  
to assist parishes  
hiring a consultant  
for liturgical space

Liturgical Arts Committee  
Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

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## The Purpose of this Workbook

Designing and building a new place of worship is an experience that can bring the people of a parish to a deeper understanding of their own prayer as they explore the needs of the church as both the House of God and the House of God's people. Through prayer, discussion, and education, the community can examine the way that the Church prays, and how this both can be facilitated by and reflected in the space that is designed.

In recent years, parishes have benefited greatly by hiring professional consultants to assist in parish education, formation, and design. As more parishes begin to utilize consultants, there is greater need to assist parishes in identifying the proper person(s) to assist with a project. For example, while certain skills are needed for basic painting and roof repair, other skills are needed to reorder a worship space and craft new altar furnishings.

This workbook is designed to assist parishes in the selection and evaluation of consultants for liturgical space in the building and / or renovation of a worship space, which is the first step of the building/renovation process. It provides material so that this task may be undertaken in a systematic manner, and so that all involved in the process are treated fairly and with respect.

The workbook is composed of five parts:

1. Defining the Scope of the Project  
This section will assist parishes succinctly identify their needs and assemble information so that they can properly inform prospective consultants of the scope of the proposed project.
2. Information Gathering  
Once the parish has identified basic needs, this material will in the solicitation of a number consultants through the mail. Questions focus on education / background, experience, and communication skills.
3. Process for selecting candidates for interviews  
A worksheet is provided to assist parishes collate and evaluate the responses submitted in the Information Gathering stage (Part 2) so that they could invite a small number of prospective candidates to interview.
4. Personal Interview  
Part 4 includes questions and ideas for the personal interview.
5. Selection Process  
The final part is designed to assist the parish in the selection of a qualified consultant for their particular project.

The worksheets are intended to assist parishes compile information, and building committee members to take notes. They are designed to facilitate an informed discussion that can lead a committee to a selection made by consensus, finding a candidate with whom all are comfortable.

Keep in mind that the local Diocesan Office of Worship or Diocesan Building Commission should be contacted before any project begins. It is here that parishes will find guidance, advice, and recommendations. The education and formation offered at the local level will be of great assistance

throughout the process. The Diocese may also be able to provide a moderator for the selection process. This person—who needs to be both fair-minded and knowledgeable in liturgy—can assist parishes as a neutral voice who can help the parish in the discernment process.

Finally, the entire process is accompanied by fervent prayer. All in the parish are called to pray so that the project not only reaches a satisfactory conclusion, but builds up God’s kingdom on earth.

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## Why Hire a Consultant for Your Project?

There is much to consider when undertaking the renovation or building of a new church. Parishioners must consider their current and future needs for prayer and worship, education, administration, outreach, and the varied ministries that are undertaken by the Church. When looking at the specifics of the worship space, parish committees must carefully consult the liturgical rituals and see how the space relates to the rites that are celebrated by the Church today. Therefore, it is critical that worship spaces accommodate the rites as they currently appear in liturgical books.

The task, when done well, can seem overwhelming. However, when a process is established that makes room for prayer, study, and consultation with the parishioners and the Diocese, it can be a life-giving process which leads the community into fuller participation in the Christian mystery, and can be a gift to future generations.

Because of the scope of most building projects, combined with the tremendous workload already undertaken by most pastors, liturgists, and volunteers on a parish building committee, the services of a consultant help focus the project, educate committee members, form parish spirituality, and complete a project which will assist the community's prayer for years to come. While this may be the first building project for the pastor and most parishioners, a good consultant has years of experience in assisting parishes navigate the complicated but deeply rewarding process.

While some parishes have been hesitant to work with a consultant for financial reasons, most parishes that have hired a consultant have found that the consultant can help the parish stretch dollars, eliminating costly delays and retrofits after construction. The consultant also works with diocesan commissions and agencies, so that from the start of the project, the parish and diocese work closely together.

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commission recommends that the Consultant for Liturgical Space be hired early in the process, even before the other design professionals (such as architects, acousticians, etc.). In this way, the consultant can lead the committee and parish through a comprehensive process that will bear much fruit.



## Part 1: Defining the Scope of the Project

Prior to interviewing prospective liturgical consultants, you must first define the scope of your particular project so that you can first determine what type of a consultant is needed. Some professionals are able to design and fabricate beautiful art and furnishings. Others are gifted as catechists, helping parishes learn more about the prayer of the Church and the demands that this places on the building. Some consultants are able to read blue prints and collaborate closely with other design professional. Depending upon the scope of your project, you may need someone with specific skills, or someone who possesses all of these skills. The larger the project, the more skills are required.

In order to select the proper individual, you must first assess your needs. This is not the time to be stingy about your dreams, nor is it the time to put pencil to paper and develop plans. It is simply the time to imagine the possibilities—from an entirely new parish complex to an intimate reconciliation chapel.

Once you have determined the type of skills needed, information about your parish must be gathered so that you can describe, to the best of your ability, the types of services that you will require. The worksheet on page 8 will help you to gather the information so that it can be sent to the prospective consultants.

The needs assessment does not need to be exhaustive. The liturgical design consultant, once hired, will help shape the needs assessment with the input of parishioners.

## Defining the Scope of the Project Worksheet

*To be filled out by committee members prior to contacting prospective consultants.*

### 1. What is the scope of the project (Check all that apply)

- New construction of worship space
- Renovation of existing space
- Enlargement of current space / additional seating
- Organ (new / renovated)
- Minor repairs and / or refurbishing  
(i.e. painting, refinishing pews, restoration of statues, etc.)
- Installation and / or repair of stained or etched glass windows
- Addition of new liturgical space and devotional space  
(i.e. Eucharistic chapel, daily Mass chapel)
- Design and fabrication of liturgical furnishings  
(i.e. altar, ambo, presider's chair, font, etc.)
- Provision for inclusion of people with disabilities
- Parishioner involvement in process
- Additional Construction (i.e. office space, restrooms, etc.)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. What is the timeline of the project?

*Briefly describe the time frame that exists, including when you would like the project to begin and when you would like it to be completed.*

**3. What type of Diocesan procedures are in place regarding building and renovation of building spaces?**

*Do consultants need to be interviewed or approved at the Diocesan level? Is final approval of a Building Commission or the Bishop required before a consultant is retained or a project may begin? Etc.*

**4. What is the anticipated range of the budget for the project? What is the timeline for parish fund raising and how will funds be raised?**

**5. What type of liturgical catechesis has already taken place in the parish? What additional catechesis would be required in relationship to the proposed project?**

**6. Have any other consultants/design professionals been selected (architect, landscape designer, furnishing designer, organ consultant, etc.)? Have they started working on the project?**

*Note: The FDLC suggests that the Liturgical Consultant be hired prior to other design professionals.*

## Part 2: Information Gathering and Written Interviews

Once you have assessed the needs of the project, contact your local Office of Worship and refer to the FDLC publication, *Liturgical Consultants for Worship Space*, for lists of qualified consultants. Through the information that you receive, you may “pre-screen” consultants to make your interviews more successful. Limiting written interviews to 4-5 consultants will increase the efficiency of the committee’s work, and will ensure that only those consultants who merit serious consideration for your project will be contacted.

The goal of this part of the process is to begin to compare and contrast the education, knowledge, and experience of the consultants. Consultants work in many geographic areas, and through this process you may discover that he or she has worked on a project in your area. You may also learn if they have worked on similar projects. By contacting others who have worked with a prospective consultant, you will learn about the quality of the work and the effectiveness of the catechesis.

After completing the information on pages 8-9, the written interview materials on pages 11-12 and a cover letter (see the sample in Appendix A) may be sent directly to the consultants that you would like to interview.

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## Information about the Parish Project

Parish Name \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch) diocese \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person (if different than pastor) \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Detailed description of project:

*Use additional sheet, if needed. Include photographs and drawing of the existing building, if possible.*

Description of proposed timeline:

Description of proposed budget/funding:

## Written Interview

*To be completed by the prospective liturgical consultant.*

Consultant / Firm Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Web page address \_\_\_\_\_

Person completing this form \_\_\_\_\_

Having reviewed the enclosed information packet about our project, would you like to be considered as a possible candidate?

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

*If yes, please continue below. If no, please return this form to us at your earliest convenience.*

1. Briefly describe your formal education and background, particularly as it relates to the liturgy, the liturgical arts, and the understanding of adult learning process. (Please include a curriculum vitae.)
2. In one page or less, please briefly describe:
  - ◆ your practical experience (number of years in business, number of projects completed, unique individual skills, etc.).
  - ◆ your vision of the reformed liturgy, and how the worship space affects our celebration.
  - ◆ your vision of music in the liturgy. How can assembly participation be enhanced by the liturgical space?
  - ◆ how worship spaces that you have designed have provided sacramental access for people with disabilities.

3. Please list professional societies of which you are a member, and any honors or awards received. Please list affiliations with organizations or individuals which may affect this project. Briefly describe your fee schedule—including travel, subcontracting arrangements, payment schedules, etc. Do you use a standard contract?
4. Briefly describe projects that you have done that are similar to our proposal.
5. Have you worked as a consultant in our area in the past? If so, please list names and addresses of representative parishes and the date of each project.
6. Are you available to provide the necessary resources in light of the proposed timetable? If not, please propose an alternate timetable which would work with your schedule. Please describe your ability to travel to our location, including your policy on frequency of visits and availability through fax, email, etc.
7. Please list the name, phone number and address of recent (within the last five years) projects. Please list the name, phone number, and address of at list three references, preferably located in our area.

Please include any other comments or items of interest that you think would help us better understand the work that you do.

## Part 3: Evaluating the Written Interviews and Selecting Candidates for Personal Interviews

The Committee should gather shortly after the deadline for submission of written interviews has passed. Prior to meeting, each member should receive copies of all material submitted. All are expected to review this material prior to the meeting, and to complete the worksheet (beginning on page 15) for each candidate. While the worksheet is designed to easily gauge the degree of support for each candidate, take time to comment on why you agree or disagree with each statement. This will prove useful in the discussion, helping members identify what are their own (and others') priorities.

References should be checked before this meeting. This may be done by one person, or by a sub-committee. The references should provide the information requested on page 18. This information can be shared with the entire committee when each candidate is discussed.

Each candidate who submits a written interview should be discussed. Candidates who do not respond, or who indicate that they do not wish to be considered, should be removed from the list. Ample time should be scheduled to allow for discussion of each candidate (15-30 minutes each) and for breaks.

Each committee member should indicate their support on page 18 of the worksheet. If only 2-3 candidates receive a high degree of support, they are clearly the ones to be invited to a personal interview. If more than three receive significant support, additional discussion may be needed. Keep in mind that the goal of this entire process is to narrow the field for personal interviews, so that an effective decision may be reached at the end of this process.

Ultimately, you want to engage the consultant who is most successful in capturing your imagination. While pictures and drawings may provide some insight, focus on the vision of the consultant. The visual aids which may be sent were designed for another community. Such a project may or may not be appropriate for your parish.



# Evaluating the Written Interviews and Selecting Candidates for Personal Interviews

*To be completed by Building Committee Members  
after reviewing the written responses.*

**Consultant Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Based upon the information provided, I believe that this consultant:**

Has the appropriate educational credentials in liturgy and the liturgical arts.

*Highly disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has the appropriate knowledge and skills to assist adult education.

*Highly disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has practical experience in this field.

*Highly disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has unique skills that will assist in our specific project.

*Highly disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has completed projects similar to ours in a satisfying manner.

*Highly disagree                  Disagree                  Agree                  Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Is sensitive to creating an environment that provides for inclusion of people with disabilities.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Understands the importance of music in the liturgy.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has a sound business structure which will provide us with the best possible artisans.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Is available to work within our timetable.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has a clear fee structure.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Can serve as a resource to our parish.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Can serve as a liaison with artisans, architects, and the diocese.

*Highly disagree*                      *Disagree*                      *Agree*                      *Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Can guide us through this process.

*Highly disagree*                      *Disagree*                      *Agree*                      *Highly agree*

*Comments:*

**Having contacted the references [and visited parishes that have worked with the candidate], I feel that:**

Parishes have been pleased with the work completed by the candidate.

*Highly disagree*                      *Disagree*                      *Agree*                      *Highly agree*

*Comments:*

The candidate has worked collaboratively with all involved in the process.

*Highly disagree*                      *Disagree*                      *Agree*                      *Highly agree*

*Comments:*

The candidate assisted the parish at large in education and formation.

*Highly disagree*                      *Disagree*                      *Agree*                      *Highly agree*

*Comments:*

**Having contacted our local Office of Worship and / or Building Commission, I believe that:**

The candidate can work collaboratively within the Diocesan structure.

*Highly disagree*                      *Disagree*                      *Agree*                      *Highly agree*

*Comments:*



## Part 4: Personal Interviews

Having discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates who responded to the parish questionnaire, the committee should strive to come to a consensus regarding the top two or three candidates for final personal interviews. The above worksheet is intended to facilitate discussion and refresh the memories of committee members when discussing each candidate.

While many consultants may seem to be qualified, the process of narrowing to a small number is crucial both to the parish and the consultant. This can be a difficult process, and you may need to prioritize what qualities you value most highly—creativity, proven quality, educational skills, etc. You may want to seek assistance or advice from your diocesan office of worship or building commission.

It is appropriate to contact the candidates that you would like to interview by phone or mail. You will need to find a time for the interview, and you may need to supply them with more complete photographs and / or descriptions of your existing space.

Qualified consultants who agree to come to a personal meeting will spend a great deal of time in preparation, so that they may be able to respond to your questions, giving answers that will meet the particular needs of your parish rather than offering a pre-packaged service. Respect for the time and money of the consultant is one important reason to keep the number of personal interviews to a minimum. It is important that the parish assume the travel, housing, and out-of-pocket expenses of prospective candidates.

As a general rule, the parish committee should meet personally with the top two or three candidates. The committee should let each candidate know who else is being interviewed. While phone interviews or video conferencing may be an option to control travel costs, it is most appropriate to meet prospective candidates prior to retaining their services. Much can be gained through this personal contact.

The following questionnaire and worksheet may form the basis for your personal interviews. You will need to adapt it to your particular situation. The worksheet will give committee members a standardized method of keeping notes to facilitate discussion and decision-making at a later date.

The questions should be asked by one person—the pastor, the chair of the committee, or another member. After the pre-selected questions have been answered by the consultant, committee members may offer follow-up questions.

## Personal Interview with Prospective Consultant

Please spend a few minutes describing your vision of liturgy and how the liturgical environment can help us to better celebrate the liturgy.

Have you worked on projects of similar scope that have similar financial situations as our parish? If so, please describe them for us.

How would you facilitate the process of educating and forming our building committee and staff?

What kind of educational process will you use to encourage both the education and input of our parishioners?

Please describe your experience working with architects, tradespeople, and other design professionals. Do you have a basic knowledge of reading blue prints?

*If the process needs to be approved by a Diocesan Building Commission, Office of Worship, or Ordinary:*

Have you worked with diocesan agencies in the past? How would you work within the framework set forth by our diocese?

## Evaluation of Personal Interview Worksheet

*To be completed by Building Committee Members  
following the interview.*

Consultant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

Based upon the interview questions, I believe that this consultant:

Was well-prepared for this meeting.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Seems credible and personable.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has a vision of liturgy that is consistent with the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Is committed to promoting the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and desires to design worship spaces consistent with universal, national, and local liturgical norms.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Has the knowledge and understanding to collaborate with the design of a worship space that will help our parish celebrate the rites more fully.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Would work well with other consultants on the project.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Was able to relate our project with similar projects he /she has completed.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Presented positive ideas regarding our project.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Answered questions clearly and succinctly.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Would work well with our committee and parish staff.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Understands adult modes of listening and learning.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Outlined a sound plan of education and formation for our parishioners.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*



Would be actively involved in the formation of our parishioners.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Would be accepted by the people of the parish.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Is open to input from others.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Can work with the appropriate agencies / commissions in our diocese.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

*Comments:*

Can work within our budget.

*Highly disagree*

*Disagree*

*Agree*

*Highly agree*

Based upon my evaluation, I would recommend this person to serve as a consultant on our project.

\_\_\_\_\_ Highly recommend

\_\_\_\_\_ Recommend with reservations (please describe)

\_\_\_\_\_ Not recommend

*Comments:*

## Part 5: The Selection Process

It is usually helpful to schedule the interviews over the course of the same day or the same weekend. When scheduling interviews, take into account time needed for note-taking, discussion, and breaks.

If you are fortunate, one candidate will stand out above the rest as the right one for your project. However, since you have undertaken a process designed to put you in touch with the most highly qualified candidates, there may not be immediate consensus.

When you meet to make your final selection, take time to pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit. If possible, allow all committee members briefly to share their thoughts on all of the candidates. If no clear consensus appears, consider prioritizing the following items:

- ◆ Vision of liturgy and liturgical space
- ◆ Ability to communicate and work with others
- ◆ Understanding of the role of education and formation of the assembly
- ◆ Proven ability to complete projects satisfactorily
- ◆ Ability to work within our time frame and budget
- ◆ Preliminary ideas presented at the meeting

You may have other issues that you would like to add to this list.

Discuss the primary needs of the parish. Often, the most important skill a consultant can offer a parish is the ability to “meet the people where they are,” and bring them along. By so doing, the community will truly grow from this project .

As the discussion continues, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. Compare these strengths and weaknesses with the needs of the parish. Eventually, a candidate will be identified as the one who is the best fit for this project.

When you have made your choice, call the candidate and request a contract (securing diocesan permission if necessary). Then, contact all of the candidates that you interviewed, and let them know that you chose another candidate, so that they know they are no longer being considered (see appendix B). This is both courteous, and allows them to accept other projects for which they may have been reserving time for you. The unsuccessful candidates may appreciate knowing why you decided not to select them, so that they can learn from the process, as well. In doing so, be courteous, but honest. While the liturgical consultant serves the Church in ministry, their work is their livelihood, and your comments may aid them in their personal growth and in their service to the Church.

## Appendix A

### Example of a letter to be sent to prospective candidates

*(Allow 6-8 weeks for candidates to respond)*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Our parish is beginning the process of constructing a new worship space (or renovating our existing space, creating a eucharistic chapel, etc.), and we would like to inquire if you would be interested in being considered as a liturgical consultant for this project.

We have enclosed a description of the project, photographs, and other information that may be of use to you. We have also enclosed a questionnaire which we ask you to submit to us by (date). We have sent this form to (number) consultants, and we hope to interview our top three choices in (month(s), year).

If you would like more information, or would like to speak with a member of our building committee personally as you are considering this project, please contact (name and phone number of pastor or contact person).

We are grateful for the time that you will spend on this on our behalf.

Sincerely,

(Pastor or Building Committee Chair)

## Appendix B

### Example of a letter to be sent to candidates after selection of consultant

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for responding to our request for information regarding our liturgical renovation (construction, etc.).

I am writing to inform you that we have selected \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as consultant to the project.

*Briefly describe the reasons that you selected another candidate and not this person (for example, "Our committee felt that the candidate whom we selected offered a more complete catechetical package," or "After reviewing all of the candidates, we felt that the solutions offered by \_\_\_\_\_ better suited the parish needs."*

We are grateful for the information that you provided us, and we wish you luck in your continued ministry.

Sincerely,

(Pastor or Building Committee Chair)