

ITEM H.208 INFORMATION

Presbyterian Mission Agency
Report from Board Strategy Advisory Team for Mission Work Plan
September 25, 2015

Once upon a time there was a fairly large, stable staff of professionals coordinating the efforts of a complex mission agency. The staff members had developed a Mission Work Plan that gave focus and priorities to the work of the agency, and staff priorities were aligned to that work plan. The Mission Work Plan was to be renewed every four years.

As the fourth year of the current Mission Work Plan arrived, the management and board of the agency committed to renew the plan. It seemed a good idea to follow the same process that resulted in the current plan, and individuals began to prepare for the new work plan. However, a few things happened as the Mission Work Plan process was beginning, including:

- Several issues related to the agency resulted in lost trust between staff and board, and between the church at large and the agency.
- The Executive Director, who was the bridge between staff and board, resigned. Several key staff in one ministry area were removed, and later the staff coordinator for the Mission Work Plan resigned.
- A call for a fundamental review of the structure of the agency in relation to its companion agencies rose up from within the Board and the church at large, resulting in discussions of a churchwide listening plan.
- The agency's financial constraints reached a point where significant cutbacks in programs would be required within the year.

It became clear to all involved that the Mission Work Plan could not be renewed as was originally anticipated. In July, the Leadership Cabinet of the staff and individuals appointed from board membership met to discuss the unanticipated changes—and tensions in board-staff relationships—that had risen up in recent months, and how these may impact the ability to renew the Mission Work Plan. There were certain required deliverables, including having a new Work Plan and budget by the June 2016 General Assembly which reflected the cutbacks needed for sound fiscal management. In order to present this budget in June, decisions about cutbacks will have to be made by the February 2016 board meeting.

As a result of the July planning meeting, certain decisions were made:

1. What was expected to be a four-year Mission Work Plan would instead be a two-year Interim Strategy.
2. Within the two-year Interim Strategy, several priorities were identified:
 - a. Help us do less and interpret that to the church – prioritize, and make cuts along those priorities
 - b. Help us with theological underpinning for the agency's purpose, and the decisions the agency makes
 - c. Build trust, guidance for the interim period – reconcile with the larger church and each other

- d. Nimble follow Christ into the next decade – innovate
 - e. Cultural humility regarding White privilege but also issues that have arisen in the past year
 - f. Keep structure simple, maximize synergies among ministries
 - g. Pursue justice – address sin.
3. There needs to be a way to make significant cutbacks to address the budget shortfall, and the cuts need to be seen as theologically-based and reflective of the concerns of the church at large.
 4. A listening plan is needed to provide near-term specific data for the Interim Strategy and longer-term perspectives from a variety of constituent groups, coordinated with OGA through Research Services.
 5. We need to be willing to ask some very basic questions about the agency, such as:
 - a. “If the PMA went away tomorrow, who would notice and what would you do?” (asked at a feedback session with new agency staff members)
 - b. What are the things that the church needs that no one else but the PMA can do?
 - c. How do we fund high-priority programs that do not have restricted fund support, and gain the most relevant productivity from programs that have extensive restricted fund support?