

## Standard Consultancy Process

### **1. Realisation of need**

During this phase the church realises a need for change or growth and that they might require outside help to address this. This could be moving toward a vision they have for the future. It might be an outcome of realising they are stuck or losing members. There may be a crisis or conflict. Often contact will have come at the recommendation or by referral of denominational leaders.

### **2. Engagement and Covenant**

A number of growing churches will have an idea of what working with a consultant might mean, some others will have little concept of what to expect. An information session with the elders and leadership is a useful and now common practice. When the leadership is ready, a formal letter of request is sent to the consultancy team, signed by all leaders. On the receipt of a request letter, two members of the team will be appointed to the church. Either they or the co-ordinator may lead the information session. The church receives an information pack with a covenant. The consultancy element of the process begins with completing the covenant.

### **3. Prioritising issues and gathering information**

During this phase consultants work first with the leadership to discern two or three key objectives the church believes God is calling them toward. These objectives are documented and agreed upon. They form the basis of gathering information, perspectives, reflections, insights and ideas from the congregation. Consultants often review documentation, conduct interviews and small group gatherings, and sometimes work with whole congregations together. They might use questionnaires, ask for submissions and facilitate prayerful discernment processes. This is done using principles of systems thinking and organisational change within a Christian consulting framework. This phase concludes with reflection and discernment on what has been learnt about the objectives. Observations are carefully recorded and a set of recommendations drafted for the church based on what has been gathered from the church.

### **4. Action planning, alignment and integration**

The observations made through phase three and the recommendations created in response to them are communicated in a report. This is then translated into a plan for change and growth. The report is usually delivered by the consultants and is formally adopted. There is often some 'tweaking' of the plan to bring it into alignment with other aspects of church life. It may also be adjusted based on the availability of leaders to follow up recommendations and the need to integrate change with existing programs. An implementation group of three or four members of the leadership and congregation are usually appointed lead the next implementation phase.

### **5. Implementation and change management**

Consultants at this point usually step back and 'coach' the implementation group through the process of change. They meet periodically with the group to sustain

motivation and momentum and to guide the group through to completion. Ownership stays clearly with the implementation group throughout this phase. In many situations there is no need for on going linkage to the consultants.

## **6. Evaluation**

Evaluation takes place at two points in the process. At the end of phase 4, the team evaluate their consultancy based on feedback on how they gathered and interpreted the information available into a plan for change. Also at the end of phase 5, which may be from several months to even several years, there is a second follow-up evaluation relating to what was actually implemented in the consultancy and what the results have been.

## **7. Completion and closure of the relationship**

A central value in consulting is empowerment. Consultants seek to leave a group of people healthy and functioning well, without the need for the consultant to stay. It is important that consultants exit the church community in a clear and appropriate way. In many cases friendships have formed and the consultants may well be highly valued and appreciated. However for the sake of the church they need to exit the system and leave well.