

## Glossary of Religion Sector Language

**Religion Sector:** The religion sector contains those institutions composing the framework for the people and organizations associated with collective religious activities. Some consider the religion sector, or certain religion sector organizations, to be a part of the broader civic or nonprofit sector.

**Congregations:** Congregations are the primary institution of the religion sector. Congregations are the membership and the gathering points for various religious denominations. In most but not all cases, congregations are led by clergy. In some instances, a board of congregants shares in leadership responsibilities.

In addition to their respective denominational beliefs, congregations share: 1) the experience of collective worship; 2) common meeting space and building(s); 3) frequent and regular gatherings for education, social support and fellowship; and more. Another significant aspect of congregations is their location in neighborhoods throughout the community

**Clergy:** In most cases, individual congregations are led by one or more clergy who combine the role of spiritual leader, chief management and organization professional, and denominational representative. "Clergy" is a generally appropriate and inclusive word that designates religion sector leadership. However, it is important to emphasize that not all denominations "ordain" or otherwise designate clergy of any title.

**Denominational Institutions:** Denominational institutions, sometimes referred to as judicatories, take many forms and range from the formal to the informal. Their role and impact locally can vary depending on their respective structures and hierarchies, their staffing levels, and/or the nature of their communication and interactions with their local congregations.

Denominational institutions can provide local officials with information about denominational structure and appropriate clergy contacts in the local area, an understanding of denominational practices, and ways to disseminate information to denominational clergy and congregations. Even if a denomination has little formal organization in an area, information may be gained from a "lead" clergy identified by their seniority or interest.

**Interfaith Collaboratives:** Interfaith collaboratives frequently result from the collective efforts of a number of clergy and congregations to support a community activity or service, or to advocate for a local, state or national issue. For instance, a collaborative may be the result of a desire to host a homeless shelter, promote community re-entry, or advance immigration reform. However, they may also exist for the primary purpose of promoting multi-faith relationships and understanding.

The scope of these collaboratives may be local, regional, state or national. Governance structure often involve representatives of participating congregations. In some cases, they may evolve to become separate entities with largely independent governing boards.

**Faith-Based Organizations:** Faith-based organizations provide specific or a range of social services, although their mission may be strongly influenced by the religious beliefs of its founding and/or coordinating bodies. The organization may be related to a congregation or denominational institution, an interfaith collaborative, or a community-based organization. They also can be local affiliates of a larger group. Some are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations; most have a board of directors and are managed by an executive director and professional staff. Faith-based organizations have been the historic points of interaction for government and other nonprofits with the religion sector.

**Local Clergy Associations:** Local clergy associations are typically *ad hoc* groups of clergy within one or more cities or across a county. Their purposes may include collegiality, communications, and the achievement of other common interests. In some instances there may be more than one association in the same area with different memberships based on denominations, an orientation to community needs, or culture. These associations may also be known by other names, such as ministerial associations or alliances, or clergy caucuses.

**Regional Clergy Networks:** Regional clergy networks are professional and capacity-building associations of all clergy (representing all denominations and congregations) organized in specific geographic areas. A regional clergy network has formal organizational structure. Such networks promote the greatest breadth of clergy involvement with political, civic and business leaders.