



# Franciscan Federation

of the Sisters and Brothers in the United States

## *Executive Leaders of Franciscan Organizations* ELFO Summary Report

Prepared by Margaret Carney OSF, Co-Facilitator  
Submitted to the Board of the Franciscan Federation June 22, 2021

## **I. Origin of ELFO**

The formation of ELFO started when members of the Executive Committee of Charism Services were looking at future options for creating and delivering programs or services to Federation members. Questions about the best way to guarantee use of scarce resources arose early in this work. Other Franciscan non-profits were facing the same pressures. Founded and staffed in the beginning by members of religious congregations or provinces, they have a new generation of lay leadership for both boards and officers. Many are plagued with continual need for fund-raising, adequate staffing and active volunteers. When these similarities became evident, the board approved a plan to convene the executive directors of certain Franciscan organizations for discussion of common goals and needs. If many national Franciscan organizations faced the same problems, could solutions be developed by a cooperative effort? This was the question we wanted to answer.

We developed simple criteria for the designation of invitees.

- The organization is incorporated and governed by a board.
- The organization has direct relationships to Franciscan religious sponsors at present or had such a link in the founding period.
- The organization's work is national in scope.
- The representative will be the chief executive with authority to speak for the organization.

These criteria were met with some exceptions explained in the next section. The executives who agreed to join and serve in this first year of work are listed in the Appendix A.

## **II ELFO Membership Notes**

- 1) While the Lutheran Franciscan Order attended the first two meetings, the representative was a designated disaster relief coordinator for his diocese. This meant that his primary duties took him out of the group early as natural disasters hammered his diocese.

- 2) Franciscans International at the U.N. joined us. Kevin Queally, T.O.R., from the Franciscans International board, included Marya Farah of the New York office in the first meeting. She did not attend meetings after that and Kevin remained as the liaison. A meeting with Fr. Marcus Heinze, O.F.M. resulted in an agreement that FI would probably not join in substantial collaborative agreements since its scope is international and its main office is in Geneva, Switzerland. We believe that Kevin's participation provides a very helpful rapport and are grateful for his commitment. We have therefore proposed that Fr. Kevin continue to attend meetings for keeping communications with FI active and up to date.
- 3) Stephen Schneck asked Sisters Marie Lucey, OSF and Maria Orlandini, OSF to be the executive representatives of FAN until he could dedicate time to joining the ELFO group. They provided excellent participation and Stephen entered into the ELFO dialogue a few months ago.
- 4) The Secular Franciscan Order was invited as an act of solidarity with our brothers and sisters of the 'third' branch of the family. The National Minister, Jan Parker, designated Layna Maher as the representative as she underwent treatment for cancer.

### **III Organizational Meetings (Three Meetings)**

In August 2020, a series of three meetings set the stage for the ELFO members to make a yearlong commitment to explore options for collaboration. Similar patterns of need and/or purpose demonstrated that the various organizations had common issues and shared varying degrees of mutual need or mutual service. We summarized that recognition in the following way:

**A. Responsibility: Creation of resources for education in the Franciscan tradition**

Franciscan Media / Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition (CFIT) / Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs

N.B. 1) CFIT gathers scholars and academic faculties but hopes to expand to general public needs. 2) Franciscan Media operates multiple media platforms.

**B. Responsibility: Provide resources/programs to existing entities to foster continuing education/formation**

Federation / AFCU / Secular Franciscan Order/ Lutheran Franciscans

**C. Responsibility: Advocacy and work for justice, both national and international**

Franciscan Action Network / Franciscans International

**D. Responsibility: Direct formation of members and placement in ministry**

Franciscan Mission Service / Secular Franciscan Order / Lutheran Franciscans

N.B. 1) Formation for the two religious entities leads to public profession of members.  
2) FMS does formation of lay missionaries and places them in both local service positions and international mission assignments.

**The common agreements reached in the first phase of meetings centered on five points.**

- 1) Each organization plays a distinctive role in the national work of Franciscans in the US and some have international scope as well.
- 2) Members share the desire—though in different degrees—to continue to find realistic collaborative programs and shared services and/or structures.
- 3) Organizations have relied heavily upon Franciscan religious entities for funding. Future prospects for changes in this pattern create levels of uncertainty and anxiety.
- 4) Past efforts at collaboration have not always been successful and this leads to some concern about prospects for this group.

The group committed to a monthly meeting until December.

#### **IV ELFO Meetings from September-December, 2020 (Four Meetings)**

Dr. Bryan Froehle facilitated each of these meetings. The meeting structure consisted of prayer, a status update from each executive on his/her organization, a further discussion of common concerns. Before long, the monthly exchange of information led several ELFO members to seek assistance from another member for specific projects, advice, or cooperation to meet a common goal. In other words, the executives themselves initiated multiple actions that involved a close cooperation with at least one other organization of the ELFO group. As time went on, members also voiced personal appreciation for the opportunity to become acquainted with peers in other organizations and to have a place to explore common problems and to test options for future possibilities of collaboration.

Within a short time, it was clear that the key areas of concern that were shared by most members were:

- stable finances (and availability of professional financial management)
- adequate professional staffing, and
- communications/technology support

Bryan and Sr Margaret invited the group to give serious consideration to what type of structures would allow each to not only survive, but to prosper in the future. As conversations deepened, two paths emerged for serious consideration...

- a) Could there be a shared services/strategic alliance created that would allow member institutions to have a central source for the three administrative needs listed above? This would mean the development of a "systems" approach to administrative tasks. An example would be the type of central operations hub in health care systems. (A sub group was formed to help develop this idea: L. Hughes, K. McCracken, F. Scornaienchi, and D. Haug).
- b) The second option was the development of a national foundation to be used to increase and protect financial assets given by donors. These assets could be used to provide grants to the various Franciscan non-profits to fill the gap between operations and their own available donated funds.

## V Meetings from January - June, 2021 (Six Meetings)

The members agreed to continue meeting to explore these two options and deepen their conversations towards joint activity—or at least to study the feasibility of some collaborative response to pressing issues. In order to develop better understanding of what the “shared services” model could look like and could contribute, the group held zoom meetings with two resource people:

- Sr. Clarette Stryzinski, CSSF described the elements of a shared services model such as that created by Felician Services.
- Dr. Michael Horowitz of TCS Learning, Inc., described the system he founded in which small graduate colleges combine to share a single centralized operations hub including offices for finance, HR, communications, legal compliance, etc.

Sr Margaret facilitated contact with SeaChange Capital Partners. This organization helps non-profits with efforts such as ours. The hope is to find grant funding that supports getting a professional design of a shared services system that could lead to savings in administrative costs and/or increased professional excellence in the support services needed by each participating member. At this point, the ELFO group is responding to requests for information, and a representative of SeaChange Capital will soon interview the group.

The foundation idea is one that all respond to very positively. However, actual work on developing a proposal for this has not taken place to date. The key elements discussed were the positive impact such a venture would have. A foundation to which donors could commit financial gifts, and which would be managed professionally, could then serve as a resource to help maintain the various ELFO organizations. In this way, donors—other lay benefactors could join both religious congregations and provinces—or funding sources would all strengthen the impact of Franciscan life and service in the U.S.

In the final meeting facilitated by Bryan Froehle, members agreed to a continuation of ELFO activity. Fr. Frank Scornaienchi agreed to serve as convener and Sr. Margaret Carney will continue to accompany the group to pursue the shared services feasibility studies.

Prepared by Margaret Carney OSF, Co-Facilitator Submitted  
to the Board of the Franciscan Federation June 22, 2021

## The Executive Leaders of Franciscan Organizations List

Facilitators: Dr. Bryan Froehle, Margaret Carney, OSF

1. Franciscan Federation of Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular\*  
**Frank Scornaienchi, TOR, President**
2. Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU)  
**Debi Haug, Executive Secretary**
3. Franciscan Action Network (FAN)  
**Stephen Schneck, President**
4. Commission on Franciscan Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition (CFIT)  
**Darleen Pryds, Ph.D., Executive Committee of Board**
5. Franciscan Mission Service (FMS)  
**Elizabeth Hughes, President**
6. Franciscans International  
**Kevin Quaelly, TOR, Vice President, Board**
7. Franciscan Media (FM)  
**Kelly McCracken, President**
8. Franciscan Pilgrimage Program (FPP)  
**John Cella, OFM, President**

Liaison Role:

Secular Franciscan Order\* (OFS)

**Jan Parker, National Minister or delegate Layna Maher**

N.B. The Franciscan Federation USA is the convening organization and its board has oversight of the process and finances of the work.