



IRFA's Best Practice Guide for Religious Non-Profits

Communicating Your Religious Identity

The Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance empowers and equips religious organizations to better communicate your religious identity. Here are a few ways in which your faith-based organization can proactively engage in advancing institutional religious freedom for your own organization, and the larger faith-based community:

Practice:

- Consider how your faith-based mission is being expressed in every sector of your operations.
- Clearly articulate your organization's position on same-sex marriage, sexual ethics standards, and other aspects of human sexuality in a positive way, highlighting what you are for, not just what you are against.
- Carefully cite sacred texts, sources of final religious authority, and historical context, when possible.
- Proactively express positive ways in which your faith-based organization is called to excellence in how you serve others and respect human dignity.
- Focus on the extravagant compassion and humility your faith also calls you to practice, in addition to following certain sexual ethics standards.
- Align every organizational area to reflect, in practice and consistency, your most important written tenets.
 - Do your human resources practices, from recruitment to the cultivation of organizational culture, reflect your organization's faith-shaped character?
 - Does your organization have board governance procedures in place that ensure the first priority is to preserve the divine motivation for carrying out the work your organization does?
 - Does your organization engage in fundraising practices that make clear the religious nature of the services you provide?

Public Policy:

- Consider how local, state and federal laws and regulations are impacting your capacity to continue to serve as an organization with distinctively faith-shaped standards and services.
- Learn how non-discrimination laws, procurement regulations, legislation regarding religious staffing, and other legal and judicial developments are impacting your capacity to both serve and retain your reason for serving: your religious identity. Consider joining coalitions of faith-based organizations, like IRFA, to learn more about these issues and explore ways in which your organization can take part with others in advocacy campaigns related to them.
- Become equipped to educate policy-makers through providing stories about the distinctive impact your organization has on your community, and how government policies limit your organization's ability to freely practice your faith through the provision of faith-shaped services.
- Consider how your organization might collaborate with those celebrating the expansion of marriage to the LGBT community to implement this new legal reality in a way that celebrates, or at least respects, religious pluralism as well.

Public Perception:

- Consider how to articulate your faith-based organization's unique and distinctive values proposition.
 - How does your organization contribute to your community, and how does your organization's faith implore you to make this contribution in a distinctive way?
 - How does your organization's messaging, in word and deed, connect your services and organizational practices with your religious mission?
- Consider how when faith-based organizations visibly connect their excellence in services and operations with their religious inspiration, they help to make the case for preserving the religious freedom of all faith-based organizations serving in the public square.
- Consider specifically how your organization, ideally in partnership with other faith-based entities, can engage in public dialogue about how to collaborate with those who support the inclusion of the LGBT community in the institution of civil marriage in America. Look for ways to articulate what your faith calls you to stand up for, as much as what it calls you to hold firm to.