

# MRC

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Zero-based budgeting, on the other hand, would require that each program and expenditure be re-justified each year.

"(Zero-based budgeting) is difficult to do in this kind of an organization, when you have to deal with ongoing programs," Arrington conceded. "But when there are needs that are identified as ongoing, there should be a process for reviewing allocations. There's always going to be a lack of dollars and people, but we should be sure we're spending what we have most effectively."

Arrington pointed to Urban Ministries as

one division that has already responded to the MRC's suggestion to critically review existing programs and establish ministerial priorities.

Both the Office of Black Ministries and the Spanish Apostolate revised their programs during the past year to respond to emerging needs. Overall, Black Ministries dropped one program, cut back on eight others, and identified seven new programs for the coming year, including youth enrichment activities and an increase in school counseling for black youths.

The Spanish Apostolate dropped a total of five programs, including assistance for Hispanic people in filling out their income tax forms — a service that is provided by other agencies, according to Father Larry Tracy, pastoral assistant.

On the other hand, staff members have ad-

ded five new programs. Among them are efforts to recruit and train Spanish-speaking volunteers to assist illegal aliens in applying for legalization, and a Hispanic Lay Ministry Institute. As early as this September, the institute is expected to begin preparing Hispanic lay people to assume roles of responsibility in the church and community, in areas ranging from youth ministry to community organizing.

While Father John Mulligan, director of Urban Ministries, agreed in principle with the need to consistently evaluate programs, he cautioned that criteria need to be chosen carefully.

"(The MRC) would like to see some motion every year ... rather than merely rolling programs over," he said. "(But) we need to be very careful not to judge ministerial effectiveness strictly by quantitative measurements."

Among other new programs reviewed by the MRC were efforts by the Division of Social Ministry to reach out to the elderly in the Southern Tier and to AIDS victims in the Genesee Valley.

Social ministries' efforts on behalf of housing for the poor and developmentally disabled, parish programs for the homeless, chaplaincy services to area prisons and institutions, and training sessions for parish social ministry committees were also cited in the MRC report.

"I was most impressed by the amount of money (Social Ministry) gets with what diocesan people give them," said Sister Ann Miller, the MRC member who reviewed social ministries.

The new diocesan budget and program plan are scheduled to take effect July 1, 1987. But whether or not diocesan divisions actually spend what they are allocated by the budget will depend on the success of this year's Thanks Giving Appeal. The appeal's goal has been set at \$3.584 million, an increase of almost 4 percent over last year.

## Diocesan review committee plans to re-think its role

For almost 15 years, the Ministerial Review Committee has provided the most impartial and comprehensive review available of diocesan programs and budgets.

Now MRC members believe it's time to re-view the MRC.

With the presentation of the MRC's June, 1987, program and budget review to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, three of the committee's seven members — including MRC chairman Scott Arrington — completed their three-year terms.

"We have decided at some recent meetings to have a core group address the MRC process and look at more effective ways to review programs," Arrington said. "We feel very limited in our ability to properly review and evaluate what's going on ... If this body is what (the diocese) is going to use for accountability, we need to look at how we should structure it, who should be used and what should be involved."

Several years worth of discussion about the need to re-examine the way the MRC operates preceded Arrington's announcement on Saturday.

At least a few division and department directors would like the report to be more current. Several MRC members would like broader participation on the group.

"I believe it was last redesigned in 1977 and like any 10-year-old thing, it needs to be looked at."

There were no division directors and there was no Diocesan Pastoral Council in the early 1970s, when Bishop Joseph L. Hogan established the Budgetary Review Committee, which consisted of representatives from the Priests' Council.

After the DPC was founded in 1975, the Budgetary Review Committee was renamed the Ministerial Review Committee, reconstructed to include lay people, religious and clergy, and appointed as a standing committee of the DPC.

Although the MRC was intended to assist diocesan divisions and departments in meeting their goals and using their resources wisely, its task was complicated from the very beginning by the fact that MRC members depended on those same division and department heads for the bulk of their information.

In its early years, the MRC attracted more than enough volunteers who were excited at the prospect of opening diocesan programs and budgets to outside accountability.

More recently, MRC membership has declined to the point at which the committee has consistently fallen below the prescribed membership level of two priests, two sisters and eight lay people. In contrast, the annual diocesan divisions and programs the group reviews has steadily increased.

Several years ago, MRC members were obliged to meet every week year-round, in addition to participating in marathon sessions

as their review deadline approached.

In retrospect, Sister Miller observed that many of the recommendations contained in current diocesan reports and studies originated in previous years' MRC reports.

"Over the years, I think maybe the MRC has offered suggestions that weren't right for their time," she said. "The MRC has looked at the need for preparation of lay people for ministry before ... It has consistently asked for a specific set of ministerial priorities that we would work with."

This year's reviews have given MRC chairman Arrington reason for new optimism. By letter, DPC members urged division directors to respond to the specific concerns and recommendations included in January's program reviews, a request with which they've complied.

And despite the committee's current size, members were able to complete, in record time, both the review of programs between June and December, 1986, and a review of proposed budget and program plans for fiscal year 1987/88.

Although his term has ended, Arrington plans to participate in meetings throughout the summer to re-evaluate the MRC. He remains undecided about whether to seek another term.

"It's a frustrating mechanism that exists," he said. "Although we may ruffle a few feathers along the way, I think the system gets better. Things are looking good at this point."



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