



Muslim Organizations: Effectiveness and Limitations

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Types of Muslim Organizations

- Mosques and Hussainiahs
- Organization vs. Community Center
- Student Unions
- Political Activists

The Reality of Muslims in the US

- Shifting Populations: New generations taking over
- Most organizations were created to preserve the older generations culture and religious practices
- Most organizations are run by first generation immigrants
- Most organizations are administratively heavily influenced by clergymen who are not trained in management and leadership
- Leaders are often chosen using the wrong criteria such as trustworthiness to the decision makers, piety, and social status, without giving any consideration to other relevant traits such as leadership and organizational expertise and education

The Reality of Muslims in the US

- Very few clergymen understand inter-faith polemics as their training focuses on jurisprudence rather than comparative theology
- Only junior western scholars are trained in Qum and Najaf
- Most organizations are financially dependant on foreign funding which makes them captive to irrelevant agendas in many cases
- Organizations are often bound by their leadership and clergymen to narrow political, social, or jurist-consultant lines which limits their effectiveness in propagating true Islam
- Outreach programs lack the long term vision needed to effectively influence inter-societal mind-share and are often focused on political survival
- Few centers have inclusive agendas for their communities, often focusing on their immigrant populations while giving marginal attention to the youth and converts.

The Reality of Muslims in the US

What is working now?

- Shiah centers are able to mimic original culture organizations and thus attract the attention of our Marjies
- Our organizations are able to preserve our older immigrant populations
- The level of attrition of our older generations is much lower, and is negligible compared to that of our youth
- Shiah centers are more welcoming of non-Muslims thus giving us an opportunity to show the true teachings of Islam

The Reality of Muslims in the US

What is working now?

- Some of our organizations are starting to utilize established methods of reaching out to our youth such as the Boy & Girl Scouts organizations
- We have some emerging leaders who are coming to the conclusion that although we need to maintain strong ties to Muslims of other countries, we have our own unique challenges and requirements as American Muslims, or Muslims living in America.



Building a Strong and Effective Community in the West

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Building a Strong and Effective Community in the West

A Realization:

There are 2 types of intermingled Muslim communities in the West: Western (American) Muslims, and Muslims living in the West, thus creating an amalgamation faced with great challenges

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Critical Questions we need to ask ourselves:

1. If we consider ourselves to be Muslims who live in America, is our duty to preserve our cultural and political allegiance to the countries and politics of our countries of origin, or is it to represent Islam in its true form so that our neighbors have the correct teachings of our faith?
2. How do we draw the line between foreign and local policies? Democrat vs. Republican!



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Critical Questions that we need to ask ourselves:

1. If we are Muslim Americans, the challenge is different, it is how do we live as Americans without compromising our faith?
2. How do we interact with issues relating to our Muslim brethren in other places?
3. In either case, we are obligated to communicate our faith in its true form to all around us. How do we do so effectively?

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Our reality:

1. Must accept that our current communities are dominated by foreigners.
2. Must accept that our communities are becoming predominantly second generation
3. There will be cultural and political strife between these separating generations that we must contend with
4. Convert communities are starting to emerge in some places which do not share the same cultural and political commitments as immigrant communities
5. Multi ethnic communities gravitate toward foreign political splits thus limiting the effectiveness and cohesiveness of these communities

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Based on the above, where do we start?

1. Define your *vision*: To create and **sustain** communities that adhere to the teachings of Islam.
2. Define your *mission*: To build strong communities through proper education and noble conduct by building strong **inclusive support systems** that employ effective management techniques that are consistent with the teachings of Islam.

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How to build **Inclusive Support Systems?**

- Study your community carefully. What is the foreign/indigenous population mix? What is the older/younger generation mix?
- What languages are spoken in your community? Always make English your official language to be inclusive
- Understand the educational spectrum of your community membership
- Identify the leaders in your community:
 - Choose those who are strong in faith, professional, strong leaders

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How to build **Inclusive Support Systems**?

- Do not choose leaders based on their adherence to the faith alone, there is a big difference between an adherent person and a good leader
 - Do not choose leaders based on your social or cultural ties
 - If possible, form a leadership cadre that is representative of all segments of your community
- Agree on a mission statement that takes into account what you envision for the community in the long run:
 - Must focus on preserving the faith of the current members, and expanding the knowledge of Islam within weak or non Muslim communities
 - Must not be confined to ab-cultural experience of what Muslim communities must look like
 - Must be drafted with Muslims and non-Muslims in mind

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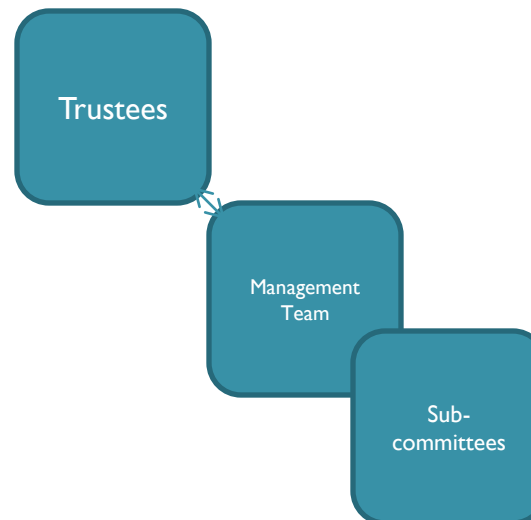
How to build **Inclusive Support Systems**?

- Draft your mission statement: How do you execute your plans to fulfill your vision?
 - Build organizations that can support your vision. Establishing a center is not the only method of success. Educational organizations, propagation programs and events, social support systems for Muslims and non-Muslims, endowments and scholarship programs, all can be part of your support system of a healthy and successful Muslim community
 - Put your execution – business – plan in writing before you start any projects
 - Review and achieve buy-in from your leadership team prior to execution
 - Communicate your plans effectively to all the segments of the target community

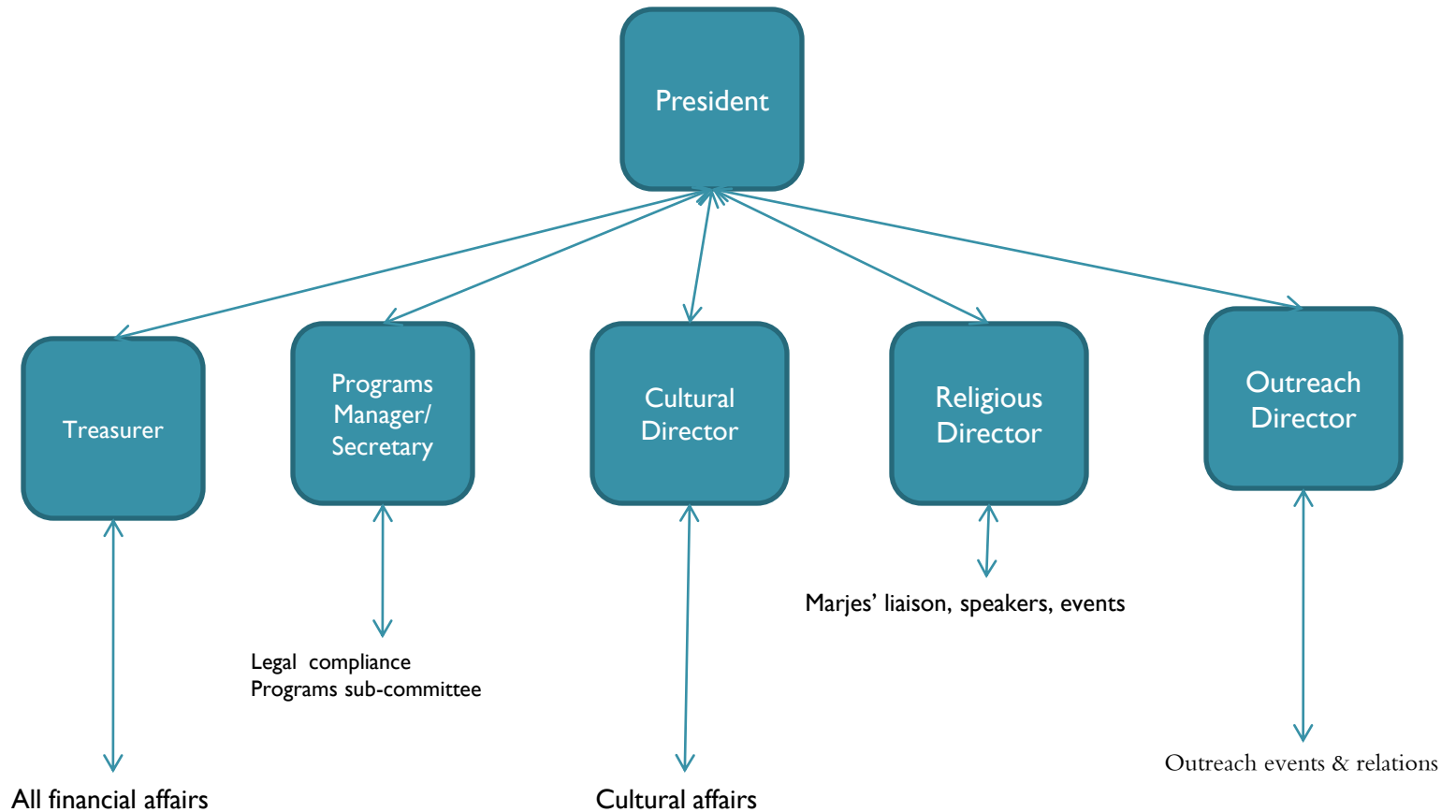
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How to build **Inclusive Support Systems**?

- How to form an effective Leadership organization?
 - Mimic for profit organizations. If you don't have a target for success then you will fail



Management Team Structure



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How to build **Inclusive Support Systems**?

- Create effective and well defined sub-committees. The subcommittees are selected by the members with leadership selected by the leadership team. Each subcommittee has a liaison on the leadership team.
- The following subcommittees should be created:
Outreach, youth, women, programs.
- Make sure that your subcommittees are representative of your parish