

Hiring a Director of Music
Ministries:
A Handbook and Guide



The National Association of
Pastoral Musicians

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Hiring a Director of Music Ministries: A Handbook and Guide

Prepared by the Professional Concerns Sub-Committee
Director of Music Ministries Forum
National Association of Pastoral Musicians

Revised Edition

The members of the Professional Concerns Committee of the Director of Music Ministries Division of NPM who prepared the original version of this Handbook included John A. Romeri, Chair; Karen Barr; M. Eric Diskin; James Hess; and Charlotte McGervey. In 2006, members of the Professional Concerns Committee, Kathy Mumy, Chair; Robert McCaffrey-Lent; Lena Gokelman; and Jon Thibo, produced a revised version. This third edition gratefully relies on the work of these members of NPM.

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Introduction

Over 15 years having elapsed since the most recent edition of this Handbook was published, the Director of Music Ministries Forum of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians decided it was time for a thorough update of this important document. Many parishes and religious communities have little expertise in finding the right musician to direct their music ministry. This handbook guides the rector, pastor, and music search committee in all the major aspects of hiring a director of music ministries, from forming a search committee to the essential step of incorporating the new music minister into the parish family. Links are provided to make advertising positions easier. Forms for assessing a musician's abilities in an audition provide guidance for non-musicians.

While the general scope and concept of the 2006 version of this Handbook remains useful, much of the practical information in the earlier edition has become outdated, and some of the recommendations are no longer practical or even viable. Through technology, the means for advertising a position have greatly changed since the document was last revised, and the ability to conduct interviews through on-line video conferencing platforms has become commonplace. Email is now a standard method of communication with individuals rather than sending letters in the mail.

We have expanded on the original scope of the document in several ways. This edition gives a more detailed consideration of the hiring of music directors who are primarily vocalists or guitarists, in addition to organists and pianists, reflecting the reality of many parishes. We have also recognized the phenomenon of the clustering of parishes to form a single multi-site parish, also a reality of today's Church.

We have included a comprehensive workload and duties/responsibilities evaluation of the position being filled, reflecting NPM's desire, to encourage communities to ensure a just workload and a just compensation for those who labor "in the vineyard." The National Association of Pastoral Musicians hopes you will find this document useful in your search process, and we salute your parish's commitment to excellence in music ministry. We express our thanks to Emily Strand, Nancy Douglass, and Amanda Bruce for their editorial help with this handbook.

Foreword - A Brief Theology of Ministry

This handbook is a comprehensive guide to the process of hiring a Director of Music Ministries (DMM)^[1] by a parish or other worshipping community. In addition to establishing a process to follow, an important focus is naturally on developing in the search committee members an understanding of the practical responsibilities of the DMM and some ability to judge the musical, liturgical, and pastoral competence of the candidates the committee will evaluate. The committee will benefit from understanding these 'nuts and bolts' of the DMM's responsibilities as merely the practical expression of the DMM's ministry to the Christian community. This ministry, like any lay ecclesial ministry, has a two-fold basis: the lay minister's call to discipleship and holiness as a fully initiated Christian and the minister's collaboration with the mission of the Church. Following is a selection of passages from the documents of the Church that speak to this two-fold foundation of lay ecclesial ministry.

In 2005 the USCCB approved and published *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (CVL), "a resource for diocesan bishops and for all others who are responsible for guiding the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States."^[2] With this document, the bishops of the United States follow the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)* in situating lay ecclesial ministry in the Sacraments of Initiation and the gifts of the Spirit that are the fruits of these sacraments:^[3]

The laity...are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth. Thus, every lay person, through those gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself "according to the measure of Christ's bestowal." (Eph. 4:7).

Besides this apostolate which belongs to absolutely every Christian, the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy.... They have, moreover, the capacity of being appointed by the hierarchy to some ecclesiastical offices with a view to a spiritual end.^[4]

CVL considers the ministry of those lay women and men who have a professional competence, and who collaborate with the ordained with whom they labor, to be a true vocation:

Their functions of collaboration with the ordained require of lay ecclesial ministers a special level of professional competence and presence to the community. Their position often involves coordinating and directing others in the community. They are frequently employed on a full- or part-time basis by parishes, dioceses, or church institutions. For these reasons, their roles often require academic preparation, certification, credentialing, and a formation that integrates personal, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions. These lay ecclesial ministers often express a sense of being called. This sense motivates what they are doing, guiding and shaping a major life choice and commitment to Church ministry.^[5]

The USCCB's 2007 guidelines on sacred music, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, in discussing the role of the Director of Music Ministries, follow CVL — and thereby *Lumen gentium* — in placing this lay ministry, and the discernment toward it, within the community of believers:

Since every ministry is rooted in the Sacraments of Initiation, which form the People of God into “a community of disciples formed by and for the mission of Christ,” (CVL, 21), the director of music ministries has a role that “finds its place within the communion of the Church and serves the mission of Christ in the Spirit.” (CVL, 17)

Directors of music ministries and other lay ecclesial ministers exercise their role in relation both to the ordained and to the community of the faithful. Directors are collaborators with bishops, priests and deacons, who exercise pastoral ministry based in the Sacrament of Holy Orders which configures them to Christ the Head and consecrates for a role that is unique and necessary for the communion of the Church (See CVL, 21ff.) At the same time, lay ecclesial ministers are members of the lay faithful, “sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized” and “called to discipleship.” (CVL 25)^[6]

This synthesis of the call to discipleship and service to the Church in relation to the Church's worship serves the evangelical character of the liturgy described by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* (“On the Liturgical Formation of the People of God.”) The following passage may perhaps be a source of reflection for those charged with hiring and collaborating with a Director of Music Ministries in order to understand that the DMM's labor is not mere craft nor in some way ancillary or “decorative” to the work of the Church, but is ultimately at the service of the Gospel and, by virtue of its service to the liturgy, at the very center of the life of the Christian community.

More than being the result of elaborate [parish] programs, a comprehensive, organic, and integrated pastoral practice is the consequence of placing the Sunday Eucharist, the foundation of communion, at the center of the life of the community. The theological understanding of the Liturgy does not in any way permit that these words be understood to mean to reduce everything to the aspect of worship. A celebration that does not evangelize is not authentic, just as a proclamation that does not lead to an encounter with the risen Lord in the celebration is not authentic. And then both of these, without the testimony of charity, are like sounding a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (1 Cor 13:1).^[7]

[1] Following the usage of the USCCB's 2007 document, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, this resource will use the term ‘Director of Music Ministries.’ This title affirms the ministerial role (one of service to the community) of this position, as well as that of the other members of the “music ministry.” At the same time, the editors recognize that a given community may prefer one of several similar titles.

[2] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (CVL) (2005), 5.

[3] CVL, 8.

[4] Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)*, no. 33, in *Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, edited by Austin Flannery, 1996, 390-391.

[5] CVL, 12.

[6] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (STL)* (2007), 46.

[7] Francis, Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* (2022), 37.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html. Accessed June 18, 2024.

Process for Hiring a Director of Music Ministries

Section 1: Parish Self-Assessment and Creation of the Position

1. Forming a Search Committee
2. Establish a Timeline for the Entire Process
3. Evaluate Parish Needs
4. Assess the Workload
5. Draft a Position Description
6. Advertise the Position

Section 2: Selection of Candidate

7. Receive and Evaluate Applications
8. Conduct Interviews and Auditions
9. Welcome the New Director of Music Ministries

Section 1: Parish Self-Assessment and Creation of the Position

1. Forming a Search Committee for a Director of Music Ministries

Tasks of the Search Committee

The committee advises the pastor in:

- making a plan for the search process
- evaluating parish needs
- searching out prospective candidates
- assessing the candidates' applications
- participating in the interviews/auditions
- selecting the best candidate

Structure of the Committee

The committee is formed by the pastor and is accountable to him. The pastor is ultimately responsible for hiring the musician. Experience has shown that a committee of four to six is most effective, regardless of the size of the parish or the complexity of its music program. Having more people may make the interview process more challenging both for the committee and the candidate. The committee may appoint a chair to assist the pastor in organizing the search and conducting the meetings.

Membership

The search committee requires the pastor (or his representative) and representatives from the music ministry but other areas of parish life may wish to include representatives on the search committee as well, such as:

- other clergy on staff, especially those with special interest in liturgy and music
- the parish council president or a representative (chairperson of the worship committee)
- the parish finance manager or a representative of the finance council
- parish staff members (DRE, youth minister, school principal)
- if a clustered parish, a representative of each constituent community

Members of the search committee should have an understanding or be open to learning the role of liturgical music in the faith life and evangelization of the worshipping community. In choosing members for the search committee, the pastor may seek the advice and guidance of members of the parish staff. The committee may also consist of members of the parish who may not necessarily be experts in music, but who understand the place of music in the larger parish life.

If additional musical expertise is needed on the committee, someone from outside the parish may be invited to join. These sources could include the local cathedral music director, a member of a diocesan worship office, or a local college/university faculty member with expertise in Catholic liturgy and/or sacred music.

Pastoral Formation of the Search Committee

Committee members should be formed in the role of liturgical music and the ministerial role of a Director of Music Ministries in the faith life of the parish community. This can be accomplished through the study of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (especially nos. 39-41), *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (especially nos. 45-53 and 119-136), and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (especially "B. Formation for Lay Ecclesial Ministry," pp. 33-53). It is to the advantage of the committee that this study take place early in the search process.

Budget for Search Process

A budget for the hiring process should be considered. There are expenses associated with the process. These are factors which may influence whether you conduct a national or a local search. Possible costs include:

- transportation and housing for each candidate not from the local area
- a meal with the candidate and members of the search committee to get to know them on a personal level
- food for search committee meetings
- advertising expenses
- a reception for the parish to meet the new Director of Music Ministries

2. Establishing a Timeline for the Search Process

A timeline must be established at the beginning of the process. Be realistic: assessing the current state of the parish, establishing goals for the music ministry, creating a position description, advertising the position, evaluating applications thoroughly, conducting interviews and auditions, calling references, and completing Child Protection and new hire requirements can take two to six months. Advertising the position adequately will take two to three months. Potential applicants need adequate time to prepare résumés, solicit letters of reference, and prepare or gather other required materials.

Set concrete dates for completion of tasks by the search committee and for the application process with the understanding that some dates may need to change. For example, the scope of the search will impact the timeline. A national search will take longer due to the time needed to advertise the position and in order to allow candidates to organize their travel. After evaluating the needs of your parish and financial situation, you may wish to revise the timeline for the process.

Creating a timeline and clear guidelines for each step of the process will save the committee much work later on. Do not feel that a decision must be made as soon as possible. An interim musician may be appointed to reduce the pressure on the committee and to maintain the existing program. Although it is impossible to control when an incumbent leaves a position, a search process ideally begins in the early part of the calendar year so that a change in leadership can take place during the summer.

Steps in Creating a Timeline

1. The search committee should educate itself on the steps of the search process. Using this Handbook will be a great resource to guide this process.
2. Set the date when you want the person to begin. This will determine the timeline for the entire process.
3. Work backwards from the target hiring date, and set the deadline for receiving applications and the date to begin advertising the position. Below are broad estimates for the amount of time each part of the process will take:
 - two weeks for completion of new hiring requirements
 - one month for evaluation of applications/resumes and conducting interviews
 - two months for the advertising of the position and submission of applications/résumés (You want this time period to be extended, rather than short, to allow plenty of time for potential applicants to see the ad and gather their materials. Listings appearing in national magazines and other print publications usually require a month or more before reaching suitable candidates.)
 - one month to assess the status of the parish community and music ministry research diocesan employment guidelines, create the position description, and the advertisement of the position

All of these items can possibly take four to six months. If the new DMM needs to relocate, this can add significantly to the timeline.

3. Evaluating Parish Needs

The search for a new Director of Music Ministries is an opportunity to evaluate parish needs in terms of the nature of the parish community and the present state of its music program. This evaluation will assist the search committee in creating a job description, determining an appropriate range of compensation, and defining the target applicant pool. It is important for committee members to be familiar with the full range of information outlined here, because it will help them more effectively dialogue when the candidate asks questions about the parish.

A. Assess the Current Parish Situation

1. The Parish Community

Who makes up the community?

- families/singles, elderly/young
- people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- people of various educational backgrounds
- people of varying socio-economic means
- language(s) spoken in the life of the parish
- members of a parish school community
- people with special needs

- parish staff
- members of communities: for example, military, university students, hospital, artists

What is the location of the parish?

- urban
- suburban
- town
- rural

Other things to consider:

- Are there multiple worship sites?
- If a clustered parish, are there differences in the composition of the constituent communities?
- What is the general standard of living in this area? Similarly, what is the financial condition of the parish?

2. The Present Music Ministry

Members of the Music Ministry

Who is involved in the music ministry?

- Director of Music Ministries
- organists/pianists
- choir/ensemble directors
- psalmists and cantors
- choirs (adult, children, handbell, etc.)
- instrumentalists
- In a clustered parish, do music ministers serve at one site or at multiple sites?
- audio/visual technicians
- support staff (e.g., administrative assistant, music librarian)

Of the music ministry members, who is paid and who is a volunteer? Who is full-time and part-time?

Repertoire

- Is there an established repertoire of acclamations, responses, and songs/hymns?
- Is there a diversity of musical styles, or does one style predominate?
- Does the music reflect the cultural diversity of the parish?
- What has been the criteria for selecting music?
- What has been the process for selecting music?
- Does the DMM receive input from a liturgy team, pastor, or pastoral associate?
- Are song/hymn choices based on lectionary and missal texts?
- If the parish has more than one Sunday Mass (including a Saturday evening anticipated Mass) or multiple worship sites, is there a shared music repertoire, or does each Mass/community have its own repertoire and/or leadership?
- Are there Masses celebrated in a language other than English?

Worship Resources for the Assembly

- What hymnal, if any, does the parish use?
- Is the hymnal permanent, annual, or seasonal?
- Is there a weekly worship aid?
- Is there a supplement to the hymnal produced by the parish?
- If the hymnal is permanent, how old is it? Is it in good condition?
- Does it serve the musical needs of the parish?
- Is the parish happy with the current resource, or would they like to make a change?
- Does the parish have a copyright license for reprinting music?

Musical Instruments

What instruments does the parish own?

- organ
- piano
- keyboard/synthesizer
- handbells
- percussion instruments
- amplification devices (bass and guitar amps, etc.)

Additional questions for instruments may include:

- Is the organ and/or piano adequate to support congregational singing, the choir, psalmists, cantors, and other voices in sung worship? Is it of appropriate size for the worship space?
- If there is an organ, who was the builder? How old is it? When was it last renovated? How is it serviced? Are there improvements that should be made to the organ? While these questions may seem foreign to those who are not the former Director of Music Ministries, such information will be helpful in the interview and hiring process. The current organ technician who services the parish's organ should be able to produce an assessment upon request. If no technician is currently used, contact the local representative for your organ make/model (i.e., Allen Organ, Rodgers Organ, etc.).
- What instruments are used regularly in worship?

Facilities

What facilities are available? What condition are they in? Do they serve their purpose adequately? If a clustered parish, does each site have adequate facilities?

- office space
- desk and chairs
- computer
- adequate internet access
- copier
- phone
- choir rehearsal space
- rehearsal piano
- music library space

- storage space for equipment and supplies
- music stands, stand lights, other music equipment
- digital music resources (Hymnal publishers now make associated resources for choir members and instrumentalists available in digital form.)
- worship space sound system (including microphones, microphone stands, mixers etc.)
- video streaming system

Where in the main worship space is the music ministry area? In that location, is the music ministry able to perform its function and also be members of the assembly? (See GIRM, nos. 131, 312.) Is the size and configuration adequate for the music ministry? If there is more than one worship space, the same questions can be asked about the music area. Are there physical improvements necessary for the music ministry area in the worship space, or for the worship space as a whole that will affect the music ministry?

Music Ministry Budget

What items are in the current budget? Some typical budget items are:

- music and supplies
- tuning and maintenance of instruments
- hospitality and gifts of appreciation for music ministers (meals/celebrations, physical gifts, etc.)
- printing supplies for worship aids and reproductions of authorized music (digital downloads, public domain music, annual copyright license)
- continuing education expenses (attendance at professional conferences, a course, etc.) and/or membership in professional associations (National Association of Pastoral Musicians [NPM], American Guild of Organists [AGO], American Choral Directors Association [ACDA], etc.)
- substitute musicians
- internships

Are these areas adequately funded? How is the music director involved in the budgeting process? What is the relationship between the parish business manager and the music ministry?

Employee Benefits

Are there benefits available for paid music ministers? What is the minimum number of hours per week that an employee must work before being eligible for any specific benefits?

- annual leave
- annual retreat
- sick leave
- health insurance
- disability insurance
- medical savings plans
- family leave
- retirement
- direct deposit
- sabbaticals

- leave of absence
- life insurance or death benefits
- tuition waiver and college assistance

B. Evaluate the Music Ministry's Life in the Parish

Having studied the concrete aspects of the parish and music ministry, the committee now needs to evaluate the music ministry in the life of the parish.

How does the weekly Eucharist form its parish members in discipleship and mission, and how does the liturgical music contribute to that formation?

- Does the music ministry provide music for sacramental celebrations and devotions, and does the music contribute to the mission of the parish?
- Does the music ministry engage with other ministries of the parish, such as the religious education program and parish or regional school (if applicable)? If so, is there a written or implied expectation that the Director of Music Ministries will assist with these programs?
- Does the organist (or piano or guitar) effectively lead the singing of the congregation?
- In a clustered parish, are there differences in the effectiveness of the music ministry serving each worship site?
- Is the parish supportive of the music ministry? Why or why not?
- Does the music ministry participate in non-musical ways within the parish: Lenten soup supper, fish fry, parish festival, etc.?

Music Ministry in the Community

Does the parish have musical events such as concerts, recitals or hymn sings? How are these supported by the parish community and by the wider religious and civic community? What is the music director's role in implementing these activities?

Additional Questions for Consideration

Why is the present musician leaving? Are there conflicts that need to be resolved before hiring a new musician? Is the music ministry adequately staffed? Is there too much work for one person to do, or is administrative support needed? Conversely, are there too many people on staff that impact the efficacy of one's responsibilities? Can support staff be shared among ministries to provide a substantial position for one person? Are there regular assessments of the staff responsibilities and workload?

C. Determine Future Goals for the Music Ministry

The search committee should consider what goals they have for the music ministry, both tangible and intangible. These goals should reflect the hope for the future music program, even if they are a departure from the former director's program. The current music ministry may not necessarily reflect the goals or the directions desired by the search committee. Nevertheless, in the end, the search committee should be open to the goals of the new Director of Music Ministries.

Here are some examples to spark your thoughts on possible goals for the music ministry. Of course, all of these would not necessarily be appropriate for every community.

- to purchase a new hymnal
- to grow or elevate the choir at a particular Sunday Mass
- to have more participation by volunteers
- to have more attention be given to the singing of the congregation
- to broaden the range of musical styles
- to integrate the cultures of the parish
- to start or add a choir
- to use more instrumentalists
- to use more of the organ or piano
- to install an organ (pipe or electronic)
- to incorporate handbells in the liturgy

A possible source of goals is to speak with music leadership at other parishes that have a successful and comparable music ministry. While this list suggests some possibilities for the music ministry, it will ultimately be the responsibility of the new Director of Music Ministries, in consultation with the pastor, to determine how the music ministry should grow.

4. Assessing the Workload for a Director of Music Ministries

The Director of Music Ministries has a wide range of responsibilities and tasks to complete. The pastor with the search committee needs to determine a just workload and just compensation for the work required of a candidate. Some of this work is visible to the congregation and local community. Other responsibilities, such as work with ensembles, committees, and other staff, are semi-public. Finally, some responsibilities, for example, administrative tasks, planning and preparing music, and caring for the physical spaces of the music ministry, are done privately.

The following worksheet will assist with formulating a position description and with evaluating candidates applying for the position. Even though you may not know how much time should be devoted to each task, the worksheet will give you an idea of the work of a typical Director of Music Ministries each week. Below are possible tasks in each area, along with a suggested range of time spent. Some activities may be done seasonally rather than weekly, and more time may be required to complete certain tasks than others. To account for these tasks in a weekly workload, we suggest dividing the total number of hours to complete a seasonal task by the number of work weeks in a year and include the result in the average weekly number of hours.

There are many ways to organize the structure of a music ministry. In some parishes there is a separate organist or pianist employed to play for services. Likewise, in parishes with more than one choir, other choir directors might be responsible for those ensembles. In some parishes, the DMM may

have responsibilities in the parish school or parish cluster school such as directing the school's liturgical choir or serving as the school's music teacher. The search committee may envision a particular structure but should be open to a different structure based upon the qualifications of the candidate being considered for the position.

Time spent in worship services

Calculate the total amount of time spent in worship services in a typical week. ____ hrs./wk.

Rehearsals with other musicians

Calculate the total amount of time spent in weekly rehearsals with each choir. ____ hrs./wk. (*Adult Choir/Teenage Choir avg. rehearsal time is 1-2 hours. Children's Choir avg. rehearsal time is 1 hr. or less.*)

Calculate amount of time in warm-up/rehearsal before a Sunday Mass with each choir. _____ hrs./wk. (*.5-1 hour per choir/week*)

Calculate time spent in preparation for choir rehearsal (i.e., score study, keyboard and/or conducting practice, room setup/cleaning up, robe management, distribution and collecting of music). ____ hrs./wk. (*3-5 hours per week/choir*)

Calculate the time spent preparing cantors and instrumentalists for liturgies. ____ hrs./wk. (*Preparing recordings for cantors, weekly/bi-weekly rehearsal with cantors, warm-up/rehearsal before Mass is 1-3 hours.*)

Personal practice time

Calculate the amount of time spent practicing the organ/piano/guitar/voice in preparation of hymns, service music, preludes/postludes, and choral or vocal accompaniments. ____ avg. hrs./wk. (*5-10 hours per week, possibly more if the organist is expected to play extensive organ repertoire, elaborate hymn accompaniments*)

Selection of music

Calculate the total time in selection of music for a service, including establishing a hymn repertoire for your community, choral pieces, and organ/piano and other instrumental music. Include time spent in consultation with clergy or others. ____ avg. hrs./wk.

(As referenced above, a task such as music planning may be done in the summer or in blocks of time throughout the year. This may take a total of 20-40 hours a year, which may then be averaged over the course of a work year.)

Preparations for special services

Throughout the year, certain times like Christmas and Easter require additional time to plan and to prepare music, special arrangements, etc., and to rehearse with musicians. In addition, there are several holy days of obligation and other services beyond the normal Sunday schedule.

Calculate total amount of time to prepare additional music and rehearsals with additional musicians. ____ avg. hrs./wk (*Weeks before special services may require 5-6 hours per week, the total of which may then be averaged over the course of a work year.*)

Maintenance of the music library

Calculate the average amount of time each week, including cataloging, distributing, collecting, and filing music for choir(s), instrumentalists, and cantors, or for supervising volunteers/paid staff doing this work. _____ hrs./wk.

(1-2 hours may be needed during the week while the choir(s) is/are in session for regular maintenance, 2-20 hours of more intensive work during the year may be needed, depending on the state of the music library, and therefore averaged through the course of the work year.)

Administration

Calculate time to meet with co-workers (clergy, staff, volunteers), to coordinate rehearsal schedules for each site, to communicate with music ministers the schedule of music selections, to carry out payroll responsibilities for paid staff the music director supervises, to supervise or prepare worship aids (Sunday, funerals, holy days, etc.), to prepare projection slides, and to supervise employees and volunteers. In a clustered parish, account for the needs at each worship site. _____ hrs./wk. *(2-6 hours per week)*

Calculate the total amount of time for seasonal/periodic tasks such as conducting employee evaluations; developing a budget proposal; tracking spending; arranging for the maintenance/tuning of organ, instruments, and other equipment; contracting musicians for special occasions; and other tasks, and divide by the number of work weeks per year. _____ hrs./wk. *(This may take 10-50 hours per year.)*

Meetings

Calculate time preparing for and participating in staff, liturgy committee, planning, or other parish leadership meetings. Include time spent meeting with families to plan funeral liturgies and with couples to plan music for weddings, if not compensated by a stipend. _____ hrs./wk. *(1-3 hours per week)*

Educational and spiritual formation opportunities

Calculate time spent to educate and provide spiritual formation to parish leadership, music ministers, and the parishioners through bulletin articles, lectures, workshops, retreats, website/social media, etc. _____ hrs./wk. *(1-2 hours per week)*

Other

Calculate time spent for concerts and their planning and preparation, maintaining the music ministry content on parish website/social media (recruitment/announcements), preparing students for school liturgies, etc. _____ hrs./wk. *(1-10 hours per week)*

TOTAL HOURS PER WEEK _____

If total equals more than 40 hours, then the parish may need to hire administrative staff or prioritize the work the music director will do. You may discover that the workload needs to be distributed among additional staff or determine what items to remove from the list.

5. Drafting a Position Description

Based upon the responsibilities identified in the “Assessing the Workload” section above, the search committee should draft a position description that proposes a fair and feasible workload for the number of weekly work hours determined for the position. These responsibilities are then listed in the position description. A proposed position description should include as much detail as possible regarding both the current needs and future goals of the music ministry. The position description is much more detailed than the summary used in advertising the position. In the position description, state whether the position is full-time or part-time and how many hours the position entails each week. With a clustered parish, the responsibilities for each worship site should be specified. The position description and any division of responsibilities with other musicians ultimately agreed to by the selected candidate and the parish should be made in writing.

General Responsibilities

- create an environment of pastoral care for the music ministry
- select congregational songs and service music (“Glory to God,” “Holy, Holy, Holy,” etc.)
- coordinate with and supervise other choir directors and organists/pianists; provide needed music, including digital resources
- form cantors, both musically and liturgically, and manage their scheduling
- prepare the music ministry budget
- create worship aids for the assembly (e.g., weekly or seasonal worship sheets, projections, worship aids for funerals and weddings), and coordinate use of and care for hymnals and missalettes as appropriate
- manage parish copyright and video rights licenses and their requirements, including reporting
- manage use and maintenance of the organ, piano, and other instruments
- purchase musical instruments, equipment, and supplies
- manage use and maintenance of worship space sound and video system
- supervise the hiring process for other choir directors, organists, and pianists
- manage the hiring of paid singers and instrumentalists
- attend parish staff meetings, liturgy committee meetings, etc.
- assist families in planning music for weddings and funerals, and arrange for musicians for these liturgies
- assist with or attend parish events (Christmas programs, parish retreats, etc.)
- arrange for substitutes during times of absence
- assist with the liturgical/musical formation of the parish
- provide musical compositions as needed
- pursue personal ongoing musical, liturgical, and pastoral formation
- develop promotional materials for special liturgies, concerts, etc.
- attend meetings, conferences, and conventions of professional organizations

Responsibilities in Directing the Choir

- direct, recruit for, train, and supervise one or more choirs
- lead choir for regular weekly liturgies and rehearsals and for additional services throughout the year
- select choral music, and learn or review it, developing a musical interpretation
- examine new choral music from various publishers, selecting pieces with suitable texts and representing a range of musical styles and traditions appropriate to the parish community
- provide the choir and/or congregation with the theological, literary, or musicological understanding of choral music chosen
- coordinate and work with accompanist(s)
- maintain choral library, including purchase of music and supervision of sorting and filing choral scores
- keep attendance records; maintain choir vestments; prepare choral space(s)
- pursue ongoing training in conducting, vocal training, composition, and arranging

Responsibilities as Organist or Pianist *

- play for Masses and other liturgical services
- prepare hymn accompaniments and service music
- prepare/learn or adapt choral accompaniments for organ or piano
- select organ or piano music, usually a prelude and a postlude, including new compositions
- maintain playing skill by regular practice
- prepare for and play for and/or lead rehearsals with choir, psalmists/cantors, and other musicians
- supervise maintenance of the organ and/or piano by engaging, when appropriate, qualified service professionals
- pursue ongoing training, e.g., academic study, private study of organ or piano, professional certifications through NPM, The American Guild of Organists, etc.

*These items can also pertain to other accompanying instruments such as guitar.

[Appendix 1](#) contains a sample position description for listing the possible responsibilities of a Director of Music Ministries.

Qualifications of a Candidate

The following are qualifications that the committee should consider for the position description: a degree in an appropriate field, such as choral conducting, organ performance, or liturgical/sacred music; proficiency in an instrument and relevant performance experience; familiarity with Catholic theology and liturgical studies, including Church documents on liturgy and music, especially the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*; leadership experience; being a practicing Catholic; the ability to work in or at least support the musical styles of the parish, including music that reflects the cultural diversity of the parish membership; and facility in languages other than English. The Committee may also want to establish a minimum number of years

of relevant experience for a candidate. There may be other qualifications that the committee wishes to include based upon the needs of the particular community.

Compensation of the Director of Music Ministries

There are many factors that go into deciding how much you should compensate a Director of Music Ministries. At a minimum, a salary for a full-time position should allow a person to purchase a home, raise a family, pay for student debt, etc. The professional members of the search committee may be able to assist the committee in understanding what is a just salary for someone living in the area. Beyond the minimum salary, many factors, such as the qualifications and experiences a candidate can bring, will demand a higher level of compensation. In the overall compensation of the Director of Music Ministries, benefits are provided in addition to the salary. If certain benefits (for example, health, vision, dental, paid leave, retirement) are not provided, then the salary should compensate for those deficiencies. The local diocesan office of worship or employment office may provide salary guidelines and benefit requirements. As a non-profit association, NPM cannot provide salary guidelines in the form of specific figures.

The search committee should take into account the following in determining a salary:

- salary of the previous Director of Music Ministries
- salaries of similar professional teachers, musicians, and other professionals in the community whose education and experience are comparable to that of professional musicians in religious institutions
- data published regularly by [the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

The following items may demand a higher level of compensation:

- education (college degrees or private instruction)
- experience or years of service
- musical and liturgical skills
- leadership skills critical to initiate, develop, and maintain a quality music ministry
- pastoral skills to collaborate with the members of the parish

For a position that requires less than 40 hours of work per week, determine what the full-time salary would be, divide by the number of work-hours in the year, and then multiply by the number of hours proposed for the position. For part-time positions that do not offer benefits, expectations should be managed for a candidate's availability for funerals and other events during the work week. If presence during the week is a non-negotiable requirement for the position, then the position should be made full-time, or the salary should be increased to support a Director of Music Ministries offering full weekly availability at solely this position.

When preparing the advertisement for the position, consult your state or local laws as to whether it is required to provide a salary range. If it is not required, you may still want to include a salary range in the advertisement. The range should encompass the minimum amount you think will attract the person you need and the highest amount you are willing to pay to a person with more experience or higher qualifications. The quality of the candidates applying for the position will be dependent on the

relationship between the salary range being advertised and the workload being requested. There is no magic formula for the spread of the salary range in the advertisement. If the job market is competitive at the time you are advertising, the salary will need to be higher to attract applicants.

6. Advertising the Position

1. Writing the Advertisement

The advertisement is a distillation of the work you have done to establish the needs and goals of your community, along with the responsibilities of the Director of Music Ministries. Check with your (arch)diocesan human resources office for any job posting requirements and other assistance they may be able to provide. Read several ads from local or national publications to assist you in determining what is essential to include in an advertisement. Here are a few items that should always be included in any advertisement:

- position title
- church or organization name
- address, phone number, email and/or website addresses
- description of the position, including responsibilities, estimated hours (full-time, part-time), required education and experience, salary range, and benefits (For positions with an extensive job description, it is recommended that the ad provide a summary description and a website link to the more complete job description.)
- diocesan non-discrimination statement and other diocesan requirements
- other useful information

Responsibilities and Estimated Hours

This is a summary of the job description and the estimated hours for the completion of the responsibilities (full-time or part-time). If a clustered parish, be sure to list any responsibilities at more than one site.

Education and Experience

There are several items you will want to list in qualifications. These are details not included in the duties portion. List required qualifications and additional requests beyond the required. Check with your (arch)diocesan human resources office to determine if there are any requirements that must be included. Here are some common qualifications you might include:

- education: bachelor's or master's degree in music
- a minimum number of years of experience in the field
- certain professional accreditations (e.g., NPM or AGO certificates)
- fluency in Spanish and/or other language
- ability to lift heavy items, stand for extended periods, or walk up and down stairs
- be a practicing Catholic

Salary Range and Benefits

Giving either the exact salary or a salary range will make it more likely that the applications you receive will be appropriate for your position. You may state that the higher end of the salary range is for candidates with more experience and qualifications. Consult with your diocese and state or local laws about whether a salary range is required in the advertisement. Whether or not you include a salary range, you should state whether the position is part-time or full-time. Avoid the term “salary negotiable,” as it does not give any indication about the position or your expectations. Include what benefits are available, e.g., retirement plan, vacation time, insurance. You can also indicate that there is a budget for continuing education, association memberships, purchasing music, etc. As a non-profit association, NPM cannot provide salary guidelines in the form of specific figures. However, as a frame of reference, the MIT Living Wage Calculator can be found at <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>.

Other useful information to include

- size of parish
 - number of families
 - number of weekend Masses
- items that give an indication of the commitment a parish has made to good liturgy, which often attract a more qualified candidate:
 - organ, including size and maker/builder
 - additional instruments (piano, synthesizer, handbells)
 - hymnal or music resource in use
 - a weekly or monthly worship aid
 - established choirs or musical ensembles
 - assisting musicians or music office staff
- other income possibilities
 - wedding and funerals in the parish
 - teaching privileges on parish instruments
 - teaching opportunities in the parish school or in a nearby school or college

What to ask from the applicant

It is typical to ask an applicant for a résumé or curriculum vitae with references and a cover letter. Three references is a typical number. You may ask for a video of the applicant playing for or directing a service, or singing and playing a hymn. Additional videos could include playing a prelude/postlude of the applicant’s choosing.

Application Deadline

As previously addressed, the committee should have established a deadline for accepting applications and a specific date when the position is available. Be sure to state these clearly in the advertisement. Remember to allow plenty of time for receiving applications.

2. Determining where you will advertise

The evaluation of the needs of the parish and the position will help determine the geographical range of your advertisement and your target applicant pool. This in turn will help you decide where you

will advertise. For example, if the position requires someone especially skilled in choral music, you can advertise on platforms that are targeted to the choral community. If the position requires someone with significant skills and experience, you may want to make sure your position is advertised nationally.

3. Where to Advertise

The following is a list of the most common places where churches advertise for Directors of Music Ministries. Out of courtesy, notify those advertising outlets, who may run your ad indefinitely, when the position is filled.

A. Diocesan Offices and Newspapers

Often there is a placement service offered through the diocesan human resources office or office of worship and music. This could be the case in neighboring dioceses as well. There is often no charge for this service. Check with your diocesan human resources office for policies and opportunities to advertise a position. Some dioceses encourage or require all job position ads to refer to the diocesan employment webpage where applicants may submit their résumé and other required materials. Another place to advertise is the local and neighboring (arch)diocesan newspapers.

B. National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM)

NPM is the national organization for musicians who serve Catholic churches in the United States. Its “Job Hotline” is the job-listing service provided by the NPM National Office. They provide useful information about what to include in the position description. To learn more visit <https://npm.org/jobs/>.

NPM also has local chapters, many with their own newsletter or other means of communication with their members.

In addition, any parish may list an opening to its local NPM chapter, usually without charge.

C. American Guild of Organists (AGO)

AGO has a national job posting site at <https://jobs.agohq.org/>.

Each chapter of AGO has its own local newsletter. Larger chapters have a separate placement service for their membership. Any parish may list an opening, usually without charge. In some areas, particularly in a large metropolitan area, there may be more than one AGO Chapter. To find your local chapter, go to <https://www.agohq.org/Ago/Ago/About/Chapters.aspx>.

D. Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC)

FDLC is the national organization composed of members of diocesan liturgical commissions and directors of diocesan worship offices. FDLC members also include others who support the liturgical life of parishes, universities, or other Catholic institutions. To learn about FDLC, go to <https://fdlc.org>. For information about job postings go to <https://fdlc.org/jobs/>.

E. Music Schools of Colleges and Universities

Often a music school within a college or university will have a placement service where positions are listed. Usually there is no charge for this service. You may contact the chair of the music department, director of the sacred music program, or organ instructor. If you want an organist or choral director, you will want to target institutions with organ or choral programs.

F. General Catholic Posting Services

National Catholic Reporter

The *National Catholic Reporter* is an independent Catholic news source. At the time of this publication, job listings can be [posted here](#) on the NCR website.

National Catholic Register

The *National Catholic Register* is a Catholic print and online publication. For more information regarding EWTN (its parent organization) and its advertising requirements, [click here](#).

America

America is a national Catholic magazine. Employment ads are published in the print magazine and online. More information can be found by [clicking here](#).

Catholic Jobs Online

CatholicJobs.com features free job listings for Catholic organizations, as well as free job searches and career tools for anyone seeking employment. [Click here](#) for more information on how to find and post job listings.

G. Other Musician Membership Organizations

Choristers Guild

Although Choristers Guild focuses on children's and youth choirs, its "job-line" service includes openings for directors of music ministries as well as for children's choir directors. [Click here](#) for more information regarding its "job-line" service.

American Choral Directors Association

The American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) promotes excellence in choral music through performance, composition, publication, research, and teaching. [Click here](#) for more information regarding posting job listings.

NAfME: National Association for Music Education

NAfME addresses all aspects of music education. Its online career center focuses primarily on job openings for music educators. [Click here](#) to learn more about listing job opportunities.

Section 2: Selection of Candidate

The recommended process for selecting a candidate from the applicants is:

1. Reception and evaluation of résumés/videos, etc.
2. Phone interviews
3. In-person interview/audition

As the committee goes through this process, you may want to adapt the amount of time spent at each step so that you feel comfortable in assessing whether a candidate is the best person for your position.

7. Receiving and Evaluating the Applications

1. Acknowledging the Receipt of an Application

Be sure to acknowledge all applications in writing. See [Appendix 2](#) for a sample email.

2. Review of Parish Needs and Goals

Before evaluating the applications, review the needs and goals set for the parish music ministry as established in Step 2. This will help prepare the committee to focus on applicants whose past accomplishments, experience, and qualifications would make them ready to help you meet your parish music ministry goals.

3. Engaging a Consultant

Since some members of the search committee may not be professional church musicians or have training in liturgy, it can be highly useful, when the Committee is evaluating the applications, to call on the expertise of a knowledgeable church musician whose opinion the committee trusts and respects. The consultant should understand and advocate for the goals of your parish music ministry rather than impose his/her own personal vision. This person can be helpful in the committee's review of the application packages, in offering feedback following the interviews, and in evaluating the auditions.

4. Credentials and Qualifications

Review the applicant's resume against the position description that the committee formulated. The following are qualifications that the committee should consider for the position description: a degree in an appropriate field, such as choral conducting, organ performance, or liturgical/sacred music; proficiency in an instrument and relevant performance experience; familiarity with Catholic theology and liturgical studies including Church documents on liturgy and music, especially the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*; leadership experience; being a practicing Catholic; the ability to work in the musical styles of the parish; and facility in languages other than English. The Committee may also want to establish a minimum number of years of relevant experience for a candidate.

- Does the applicant have a degree in the appropriate field? You may wish to verify whether the applicant's academic credentials are authentic.

- Did the applicant indicate proficiency in an instrument, voice, or conducting? Has the applicant performed instrumental/vocal recitals, directed choral concerts, led choir pilgrimages, etc.?
- Has the applicant given any indication of knowledge of liturgical documents such as through workshops presented?
- Has the applicant remained in a position long enough to establish a fully developed music program? If the applicant has had frequent job changes, the committee may wish to ask the applicant for an explanation.
- Is the applicant active in professional associations? Such professional musical organizations are the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM), Church Music Association (CMAA), American Guild of Organists (AGO), Pueri Cantores, American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), and Choristers Guild.
- Do they have professional certifications (for example, NPM/AGO's Service Playing Certificate (SPC), NPM's Basic Organ Certificate, AGO's Colleague (CAGO) or Fellow (FAGO), pursued further studies, published articles, published compositions?

5. Pastoral Vision and Leadership

As important as education and experience are, you will want to consider if an applicant has the vision, leadership, and pastoral skills to be successful as the Director of Music Ministries in your parish. Although you should explore this area in depth in the interview, you may begin to get an idea of these qualities by assessing the resume.

6. After the Search Committee has reviewed the applications, it needs to determine which candidates to interview and/or audition. From the applications you received, you will want to narrow down the number of applicants to the better candidates, eliminating those you do not think will fit for your position. If the Search Committee determines that none of the applicants are qualified for the position, then the Committee may need to reassess the position or the process. Reasons could include that the requirements of the position are too great either for the compensation offered or to complete in the weekly hours, more time is needed for applicants to submit resumes, or the ad needs to be more widely disseminated.

7. Send emails or letters to those applicants you no longer wish to consider. [Click here](#) for a sample letter.

8. Interviewing and Auditioning the Candidates

Now that you have narrowed down the number of applicants to interview and audition, you need to determine how you want to conduct the interview and audition process. Depending on the number of candidates, there are two common ways to structure the interview and audition process:

1. Have a short interview with the potential candidates, in person or remotely, to narrow down the number, and then have the candidates come in person for an audition and a more extensive interview. This method may be useful and efficient if you have more than two or three candidates.
2. Have an extensive interview, either in person or remotely, with the potential candidates and then narrow down the number of candidates for an audition only.

Any candidates invited to come in person should be compensated for their travel expenses.

1. Preparing for the Interview

Interviews can be conducted by video conference, by telephone, or in person. To be fair to all candidates all interviews should be conducted in the same format. For sample messages requesting an interview with a candidate, [click here](#).

Scheduling the interviews

- The interviews should be scheduled well in advance in order to allow maximum participation by the committee members.
- Determine a length of time to allow for each interview. A good suggestion is to allow 20-30 minutes for a shorter interview and 45 minutes for an extended interview. Factors in your schedule can be the number of candidates you are interviewing, how many questions you want to ask of each candidate, and how much time to allow for the candidate to respond.
- Allow time after each interview for committee members to record their impressions of the candidate during the interview and before any discussion, so they are not influenced by other committee members.
- With due consideration to the committee members' personal time and alertness during interviews, try to schedule as many interviews as close together in time as possible. This will allow the committee members to more easily notice similarities and differences between candidates.
- The committee should carefully prepare the format of the interview process. This format should ensure that all committee members actively participate in the interview. You may want to assign each committee member a question to ask each candidate.

2. Conducting the Interview

Try to establish an easy rapport with the candidate at the beginning of the interview to reduce tension. As you speak with the candidate, you will want to see how they engage the committee in order to evaluate their ability to communicate, which is as important as the content of their answers. Begin with a brief discussion concerning the candidate's educational background, career goals, and the strengths that this person brings to the job. Here are some examples of questions you might ask, but you may have other questions specific to your parish community:

- What do you consider the role of the music minister to be in a parish or other ecclesial community?
- What is your view of the role of music in Catholic liturgy?
- How do the pastoral, liturgical and musical needs of a liturgical assembly influence your music planning?
- What would be your musical priorities in the parish?
- Do you have ways to encourage the singing voice of the assembly?
- Do you have facility in the different styles of music used in our parish (e.g., traditional, contemporary, gospel, chant, Taizé, praise and worship, etc.)?
- Are you competent in creating instrumental parts for hymns and service music?
- Do you compose music for liturgy?
- How can the music of the different cultures within the parish be a means of unifying the community?
- How do you see the music ministry collaborating with other ministries and leadership in the parish?

- What is your experience in designing worship aids, both print and projected? What software have you used? (*Optional*: ask to provide sample worship aids.)
- *If applicable*: What is your philosophy when considering the musical and personal needs of a parish with multiple churches combined in recent years?

If you are interviewing more than two or three people, now you should narrow your search down to two or three candidates to audition. From the people you interviewed, select those whom you will invite to audition for the committee. After these candidates have confirmed they wish to audition, you can notify the other candidates that they were not selected.

For a sample message to those not selected to audition, see [Appendix 2](#).

3. The Audition

The main parts of the audition of a Director of Music Ministries should include an assessment of the primary roles they will need to fulfill, such as directing a choir, directing and forming the cantors, or playing an instrument to lead the congregation. If singing is a major responsibility of the Director of Music Ministries, have them sing for the committee. Skills that the candidate is expected to demonstrate at the audition should be clearly communicated to the candidate well in advance. For committee members who need assistance in evaluating a candidate's musical skills relevant to liturgical music, sample audition forms are provided in [Appendix 3](#). Professional musicians may have their own method of evaluation. Committee members should keep track of their impressions and observations of each candidate to aid in their recall when discussing the candidates later.

Choral Audition

If the candidate is expected to direct a choir as part of their responsibilities, directing and choral training of the choir should be part of the audition. Plan to allow the candidate thirty minutes to work with the choir. As part of the audition, you may have the candidate warm up the choir. This can demonstrate the candidate's approach to developing vocal technique with the choir. You should have the candidate direct two pieces: one piece that the choir already knows that is sent to the candidate well in advance, and a second piece of the candidate's choice to teach to the choir. It should be suggested to the candidate that the second piece be in a contrasting style. If the candidate is expected to both direct and play (organ/keyboard/guitar), special attention should be given to their ability to direct while playing. You will need to contact the choir members to make sure all or most of them can be present. This may be easiest if the audition is held at the choir's regular rehearsal time or on a Saturday.

You may consider having the Director of Music Ministries do a five- to ten-minute coaching session with a cantor to work on the singing of a responsorial psalm to demonstrate an understanding of the vocal, textual, and liturgical dimensions of psalmody.

Organ/Piano Audition

Candidates should be permitted time to practice on the organ/piano in preparation for the audition. For an organ audition, you will want to assess the candidate's ability to lead the congregation in singing hymns or other songs in the styles appropriate to your parish while accompanying the cantor or choir. A parish may sing music in a variety of styles: traditional hymns, chant, gospel and contemporary liturgical styles. The committee

should decide, based on the musical styles reflected in parish liturgy, what skills an organist should demonstrate in the audition. These may include the following:

Hymn playing

Ask the candidate to prepare in advance one or two hymns reflective of the parish's worship. If two hymns are chosen, they should be in contrasting styles. The committee may also ask the candidate to, for example, transpose a hymn to a new key, include a brief interlude between stanzas, or sight-read an additional hymn. As the candidate plays, the committee may wish to sing along.

Accompanying a Cantor

Ask the candidate to accompany a cantor singing a responsorial psalm. The setting of the responsorial psalm should be typical of the style sung on most Sundays and should already be familiar to the cantor.

Prelude or Postlude

Ask the candidate to perform one or two pieces of his/her choice in contrasting styles that can be used as liturgical prelude or postlude.

Improvisation

In communities where the organist/pianist is expected to improvise (play extemporaneously, often to enhance hymns or provide additional music to cover a longer liturgical action), you may ask the candidate to demonstrate this skill by, for example, improvising on a hymn tune.

Sight-reading

You may ask the candidate to sight-read an organ/piano piece. If the organist/pianist is expected to accompany a choir in rehearsal, you may ask them to play at sight a passage of a choral piece in open score.

Guitar Audition

Candidates should be permitted time to warm-up in preparation for the audition. The audition may include the following:

Hymn playing

The committee may request to hear the candidate play several hymns that reveal the candidate's ability to perform in different musical styles reflective of the parish's worship such as traditional hymns, chant, gospel or contemporary styles. In addition, the committee may select another song or two for the candidate to play at the audition. The committee may wish to sing along as the candidate plays.

Accompanying a Cantor

Ask the candidate to accompany a cantor singing a responsorial psalm. The setting of the responsorial psalm should be typical of the style sung on most Sundays and already be familiar to the cantor.

Accompanying a Choir

Ask the candidate to lead the choir on the guitar with a piece prepared in advance.

Accompanying Self

Ask the candidate to accompany themselves while singing, again observing an ability to effectively lead an assembly while playing and singing together.

Prelude or Postlude

Ask the candidate to perform one or two pieces demonstrating the ability to play a solo appropriate for prelude or postlude, producing an effective accompaniment with a noticeable melody line.

Improvisation

In communities where the guitarist is expected to improvise additional music within a liturgy, you may ask the candidate to improvise on a hymn tune.

Vocal Audition

If singing is a major component of the Director of Music Ministries position, you may wish to have candidates sing a solo and lead a responsorial psalm. One or more of the pieces should be in the language(s) the community uses for worship. Ask the candidate to provide the accompanist with the music of the vocal piece ahead of time, and allow some time for the candidate and accompanist to rehearse together. During the audition, the committee should sit in front of the candidate as though they were a small worshiping assembly. The committee should allot at least ten minutes for the singing of two pieces.

After the Audition

Contact the References

Following the interview and audition of candidates, the pastor and the committee should decide on the candidate they would like to have for the position. The pastor or one or more members of the search committee should contact that candidate's references. In the event that the committee cannot yet decide on one candidate, the committee may contact the references of the candidates remaining under consideration. Contacting references will help the committee to gain a fuller perspective of the candidate(s) and also may reveal details of the candidates not otherwise gained through the selection process. Contact the references by phone, because even a brief conversation that allows for follow-up questions will be more informative and efficient than an email exchange. Below are examples of questions you may ask, but in speaking with the reference be prepared to ask follow-up questions based on their responses.

Sample Questions You Might Ask the References

- What was your relationship to the candidate?
- Did they take direction well?
- What did you find their main strength to be?
- Can you describe the candidate's work ethic?
- Why did they leave the position?
- Did they have good communication skills?
- How did they interact with the pastoral staff and parishioners?
- Can you give an example of a stressful situation the candidate encountered and how they handled it?
- Do you think the candidate can successfully serve in the position for which we are considering them?
- Did they lead any large projects like building an organ, redesigning a new sound system, or starting another choir?
- If the candidate had an experience with a parish merger, how did they handle the situation?

If you are happy with the references and they affirm your choice of candidate, then you will contact the candidate to offer them the position and discuss the salary and benefits for the position. A reasonable time period should be allowed for the candidate to accept or reject the offer. Additionally, the candidate will need to complete any background checks or special training required by the diocese before accepting employment.

NPM strongly recommends that there be a written employment agreement between employer and employee. If there is no formal written employment agreement, there should at least be a letter confirming compensation, benefits, vacation, leave time, wedding and funeral policies, the scope of the musician's duties, and other significant employment conditions. If your diocese has a lay employment handbook, be sure to direct the candidate to the document before finalizing employment. In an offer for compensation, a salary should be within the range noted in the job description, taking into account that a candidate with more experience and qualifications should be offered an amount higher in the range. During the onboarding process, the parish or diocese needs to provide assistance to the new Director of Music Ministries in accessing their employment benefits and the payroll system.

All the candidates should receive notification regardless of whether or not they were selected. [Appendix 2](#) provides a sample letter which can be used. Remember to compensate the candidates who traveled to the interview/audition for their expenses.

9. Welcoming the New Director of Music Ministries to the Parish

Making the new director of music ministries a part of the parish family is just as important as the hiring itself. It is a mistake for the search committee to feel that its work is completed with the candidate's acceptance.

After all the effort that the search committee has expended to find the perfect Director of Music Ministries, make an extra effort to be sure that this person feels at home within the parish community.

This is especially important if the parish does not have a history of professional Directors of Music Ministries, either full- or part-time, or if there was a problem with or a sense of great loss at the departure of the previous director.

1. An Announcement

Start making the new director feel welcome with an announcement in the parish bulletin or newsletter. Crafting this announcement might provide an opportunity to re-emphasize the importance of the music ministry in the life of the parish and to explain why the parish staff and the search committee consider it important for the parish to have (or to continue to have) a full-time (or part-time) professional Director of Music Ministries. It may be helpful to outline the selection process. If, through the search process, the parish has established new directions for the parish's music ministries—for example, starting a children's choir, a bell choir, etc.--this might be an opportunity to include that information.

2. Introducing the New Director to the Parish

The new Director of Music Ministries should be introduced to the members of the music ministry. This could be a special reception with a welcome from the pastor and prayer. They should be introduced to the parish professional and volunteer staff, most appropriately by the pastor. Finally, the new Director of Music Ministries should be formally introduced to the parish at their first or second weekend of Masses. There could be a reception with refreshments after Mass for parishioners to meet the new Director of Music Ministries. Some communities may wish to have a formal installation of the Director of Music Ministries separate from a Mass, which may include special intercessions, a blessing, and a hymn or two.

3. Beyond the Parish

The new Director of Music Ministries should meet and associate with other musicians in the area, such as the local chapters of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM), the American Guild of Organists (AGO), other appropriate organizations, the diocesan worship and music office, and music directors of area churches of other denominations. Be sure that the new director is registered with the appropriate diocesan offices to receive newsletters, email notices, and event information.

The parish should expect its Director of Music Ministries to be an active member of these professional organizations; therefore, the parish should pay all membership fees and convention expenses associated with such involvement.

4. Helping with Relocation

If the candidate is relocating from another city, the committee members may inquire if any assistance is needed. Such extra efforts will not only ensure a great beginning of this person's new ministry but will also benefit the parish and the musician for years to come.

Appendix 1 - Sample Position Description

Sample Position Description for a Director of Music Ministries and Organist

A job description for the **Director of Music Ministries and organist** at **St. John's Parish, Anywhere, U.S.A.**

1. The Director of Music Ministries will:

- ❖ care for the sung prayer of the assembly through celebration, preparation, evaluation, education and personal ministry;
- ❖ with the cooperation and assistance of all the parish ministers, support the Gospel message through song, and challenge the assembly to live it more fully.

2. Important goals for the Director of Music Ministries will be to:

- a. build and sustain congregational song at the 9:15 and 10:45 Sunday liturgies;**
- b. deepen the liturgical understanding and prayer of these assemblies through a program of liturgical formation;**
- c. help to increase regular attendance at these liturgies through the quality of music;**
- d. develop a plan to expand the 10:45 choir membership this year;**
- e. recruit, train, and sustain three regular cantors for the 10:45 liturgy;**
- f. develop sung liturgy three days a week at the morning Eucharist.**

3. Duties and Responsibilities

- ❖ The Director of Music Ministries will be responsible for all music associated with worship, religious education, social ministry, and evangelization in the parish.
- ❖ The Director of Music Ministries will ordinarily perform two liturgies as accompanist (organ or other instrument), cantor, or choir director per Sunday or major feast.
- ❖ The Director of Music Ministries will be responsible for coordinating and staffing all other liturgies with competent musicians. For playing or singing for weddings and funerals that are paid by the service, the Director of Music will have first right of refusal.
- ❖ The Director of Music Ministries will participate in planning the liturgies with the Parish Liturgy Committee and will have primary responsibility for the music selection of all regular

and special celebrations (listed below).

The regular liturgical celebrations this year include:

- a. Eucharistic celebrations on 52 Sundays (4 per Sunday), Easter Vigil, Holy Thursday, Good Friday; the holy days of obligation, the parish secular feasts, Thanksgiving, Labor Day, Memorial Day, and All Souls Day.
- b. Communal sacramental celebrations of Confirmation (1); Baptism (4); Reconciliation (8); Anointing of the Sick (1).
- c. Weddings (21 last year); funerals (28 last year).
- d. And the following special days: First Communion (1), opening day of school (1),
_____.

4. For weddings and funerals, the Director of Music, who has first right of refusal, will be paid a separate mutually-agreed-to stipend. [The specific payment arrangement should be expressed in writing.]

5. In addition to the general duties and responsibilities, the Director of Music Ministries shall be responsible for the following special projects this year (*examples of some of the items that might be mentioned*):

- a. Special liturgical celebrations, viz., ordination of a permanent deacon, the pastor's 25th anniversary of ordination;
- b. Starting a children's choir;
- c. Preparing wedding and funeral guidelines for the parish;
- d. Establishing a more effective process for obtaining parish consultation on repertoire selection;
- e. Developing a plan for the implementation of new repertoire connected with our new worship aid;
- f. Participating in the revised parish budget process by submitting a timely budget through committee;
- g. Providing musical accompaniment for the parish musical;
- h. Designing, planning, coordinating, and promoting three concerts this year for promoting Christianity to our parish neighbors.

6. The Director of Music Ministries reports directly to the **Director of Liturgy (or pastor)**.

7. The Director of Music Ministries will be responsible to attend the following meetings:

- The parish staff meeting (weekly);

- The parish council meetings (4 times/year);
- The liturgy committee meeting (monthly);
- And the preparation team of the parish liturgy committee (every two weeks).

8. The Director of Music Ministries will be responsible for participating in the parish budget process by:

- a. preparing a music budget;
- b. submitting the budget to the Budget Committee of the Parish Board;
- c. participating in the budget revision process.

9. The Director of Music Ministries will engage in continuing **musical-liturgical** education, funded by the parish.

10. The Director of Music will receive time off during the week to compensate for Saturday and Sunday duties. If their presence is required on a day normally off, the Director of Music Ministries will be permitted to take an equivalent amount of time off in compensation.

11. The Director of Music Ministries will be allowed **one paid weekend for a three-day** retreat at the Diocesan Retreat Center.

12. The Director of Music Ministries will receive an annual performance appraisal by the pastor or supervisor (in the first-year review the pastor may wish to consult with members of the search committee):

The purpose of the performance appraisal is to let the Director of Music Ministries know their efforts are appreciated, have clearly articulated performance standards, let them know how well they are meeting standards, and have opportunities to develop and improve. The review will determine whether the expectations in the job description are clearly stated and whether the employee is meeting those expectations. The review will emphasize performance improvement and growth rather than fault-finding, and will include self-assessment, supervisory assessment, and, where applicable, feedback from those whom the employee serves. In addition to a standard performance review, here some questions specific to the position of the DMM that could be added:

- Your development of the singing ability of the assembly?
- Your level of preparation and practice for rehearsals and services?
- The variety of music experiences that you provide?
- The leadership that you give in vocal and choral training?
- Your ability to develop music that supports the parish's liturgical worship?
- Your stewardship of the church's physical and digital music resources and

maintenance of the choral library?

- Care and maintenance of instruments?
- Fulfilling contractual and licensing obligations?
- Hiring other musicians such as substitutes and instrumentalists?
- Organizing concerts and other special programs?
- Necessary custodial work?

This appraisal may serve as the basis for a salary increase in addition to any cost of living adjustment. In addition, obtaining an advanced degree or specialized training, changes in job description, or consistently high evaluations, could also call for an increase in salary level.

Appendix 2 - Sample Letters/Emails

These sample letters/emails will need to be adjusted for your particular process. Feel free to change as needed.

Initial Response to the Candidate's Inquiry

Dear _____,

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the position of Director of Music Ministries here at [insert name of church].

If you would like to be considered for this position, we would be happy to review your written résumé. Please send it, along with the names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of three references, to:

Name of Contact Person

Title of Contact Person

Name of Church

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Or you may email the résumé and reference information to [insert email address], or upload to [insert website address].

We ask that you send us this information by [insert date]. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Acknowledgment of Receipt of the Candidate's Application and Résumé

Dear _____,

We have received the application and résumé that you sent regarding the position of Director of Music Ministries at [insert name of church]. Our Search Committee will be reviewing all such applications in the near future. We hope to complete this part of our selection process by [insert date]. We will be contacting you after that date.

Thank you very much for your interest in a very important role in our community life.

Sincerely,

Notification to Non-Candidates

Dear _____,

In our process to select a Director of Music Ministries for [insert name of church], we have completed our review of the applications that have been submitted.

Having discussed your résumé and in view of the expectations that we have established for this position, we will not be moving forward with your application at this time. [Specifically, our committee was looking for candidates with more experience in _____.]

Please accept our thanks for your interest and your application.

Sincerely,

Request to Candidates for an Interview

Dear _____,

In our process to select a Director of Music Ministries for [insert name of church], we have completed our review of the applications that have been submitted.

At this time, the members of the Search Committee invite you for an interview. Interviews will be conducted by either phone or video conference the week of x, between the hours of x and x. Please let us know of your availability during these dates/times.

Please contact [insert name], our interview coordinator, [insert hours and time zone] to work out the details. [Insert name] phone number is [insert phone number], and [his/her] email address is [insert email address].

Thank you once again for your application. We are looking forward to your visit.

Sincerely,

Confirmation of Interview

Dear _____,

I am contacting you to confirm the arrangements for your interview.

Date

Time

Phone Number

Meeting Link

We will be very happy to talk with you on [insert date].

Sincerely,

Request to Candidates for an Audition

Dear _____,

In our process to select a Director of Music Ministries for [insert name of church], we have completed our interviews. At this time, the members of the Search Committee invite you to visit our parish for an audition.

Audition requirements:

Please contact [insert name], our audition coordinator, [insert hours and time zone] to work out the details of the visit. [Insert name] phone number is [insert phone number], and [his/her] email address is [insert email address]. If travel over 30 miles is required, we will compensate your travel and lodging expenses.

Thank you once again for your application. We are looking forward to your visit.

Sincerely,

Confirmation of Audition

Dear _____,

I am contacting you to confirm the arrangements for your audition.

Date

Time

Name of Church, Address

Arrangements have been made for you to rehearse on the church [organ/piano] at [time].

Attached is the piece of music you will work on with the choir.

Please bring with you the music you will need for this audition, and we will make copies for the choir.

[Insert name of contact] has informed us that you will be traveling via _____ and that you will arrive on [day] [and stay at/with _____]. We will reimburse your expenses in the amount of \$____.

We will be very happy to welcome you to our parish on [insert date].

Sincerely,

Notification of Those Who Interviewed/Auditioned and Not Selected

Dear _____,

In our process to select a new Director of Music Ministries for [insert name of church], we have completed the review of the applications, the interviews, and the auditions.

In view of the expectations that we have established for this position, we have made a selection from among some outstanding musicians. Although we have selected another candidate, we want to thank you very much for your interest and for the time you spent in visiting us at your audition and interview.

Please accept our gratitude for your involvement with us in this process and our encouragement in your musical ministry in the church.

Sincerely,

Appendix 3a – Choral Audition Evaluation Form

This form allows committee members a way of evaluating the musical skills of a candidate.

Candidate's Name _____

Each underlined category is accompanied by questions to help form an evaluation:

1 = poor 2 = average 3 = good 4 = excellent 5 = outstanding

1. Warm-ups _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did each warm-up exercise seem to have a purpose? Did the director make comments or suggestions for what the choir could improve? Did the warm-ups get the singers' bodies engaged? Did the candidate seem to use the warm-ups as a means to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the choir?

2. Rehearsal Pacing _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the candidate dwell on one spot for a long time or just sing through without making any comments or suggestions for improvement? Did the candidate seem to have a plan or purpose for what they wanted to accomplish in the rehearsal?

3. Choral Style _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was there an evident sound that the candidate wanted for the choir? Did the candidate give feedback or suggestions for how they wanted to change the sound? Was the candidate looking for expression in the choir's singing?

4. Diction and Text Expression _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the candidate make sure the choir's text was audible and clear? Did the candidate discuss and apply the meaning of the text the choir was singing?

5. Pastoral Awareness _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the candidate have a pastoral approach as to how they conducted the rehearsal, or did they focus only on the technical aspects of the music? Did they have a sense of spirituality while running the rehearsal? Did they encourage the choir to think of themselves as ministers rather than just musicians?

6. General _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the director seem musically competent? How did the director correct the choir? Was it in a positive/constructive way? Did he/she strive for improvement in the choir's singing? Did the director energize the choir?

7. Cantor Formation and Training _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the candidate demonstrate a knowledge of the psalm text and its meaning in the liturgy? Did the candidate help the cantor convey the musical quality of the psalm setting? Did the candidate assist the cantor in proclaiming the responsorial psalm with the participation of the assembly in mind?

Appendix 3b – Organ Audition Evaluation Form

This form allows committee members a way of evaluating the liturgical organ skills of a candidate. It may be adapted for situations in which the primary instrument is piano.

Candidate's Name _____

Each underlined category is accompanied by questions to help form an evaluation:

1 = poor 2 = average 3 = good 4 = excellent 5 = outstanding

1. Prepared Hymn Playing

Creativity _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the playing interesting, or did it all sound the same? Was there a special introduction or interlude between verses? Was there a change in the harmony or use of "free accompaniment"?

Can You Sing with It? _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was there a steady beat? Was the tune clear? Was it clear when to begin singing each stanza? Was there a breath when phrases ended? Was the "free accompaniment" too complex to be able to keep the singing going?

Use of the Organ _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did it all sound the same? Were there registration (sound) changes? Did the registration changes reflect the text of different verses? Were there so many sound changes that it became a distraction from the hymn? Was the comparative volume between the melody and accompanying sounds appropriate?

Accuracy of Notes and Rhythm _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were there any obvious mistakes in the rhythm of the hymn or wrong notes in either the hands or feet?

2. Hymn Playing—Sight Reading

Creativity _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Can You Sing with It? _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Use of the Organ _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Accuracy of Notes and Rhythm _____ 1 2 3 4 5

3. Repertoire: Prepared Service Pieces and Recital Pieces

Accuracy of Notes and Rhythm _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were there places that had obvious wrong notes? Did the tempo of the piece seem steady? Did the candidate seem to be playing too fast for his/her ability to maintain accuracy?

Style/Selection Choice _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the pieces all sound the same? Were they all at the same volume? Did the pieces seem to come from different periods of history (baroque, romantic, modern, etc.)? Did the selections seem to be appropriate for the worship of the parish community?

Use of the Organ _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the registration (choice of sounds) appropriate to the style of the pieces? Were changes in registration made with ease? Did the registration take advantage of the particular tone colors available in this organ? Was the candidate comfortable with the controls of the organ?

4. Improvisation (Optional)

Consistency of Style _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did it start out sounding like Bach and end up sounding modern?

Interesting _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did it keep your interest? Would it have been appropriate for liturgy? Did it seem like lots of notes going nowhere? Did it start and end well?

5. Sight-Reading of an Organ/Piano Piece or Choral Score _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were there any wrong notes or obvious mistakes in the rhythm? Did the music maintain its continuity without stopping? Did the candidate use appropriate phrasing (expressiveness), dynamics (changes in volume), and registration (sounds)?

Other Comments:

Appendix 3c – Guitar Audition Evaluation Form

This form allows committee members a way to evaluate the musical skills of a guitar candidate.

Candidate's Name _____

Each underlined category is accompanied by questions to help form an evaluation:

1 = poor 2 = average 3 = good 4 = excellent 5 = outstanding

1. Prepared Hymn/Song

Playing Creativity _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were the picking/strumming patterns appropriate for each style of song? Was there a special introduction or short interlude between verses?

Can You Sing with Them? _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was there a steady beat? Were the tunes clear? Was it clear when to begin singing each stanza? Was there a breath when phrases ended?

Use of the Guitar _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did it all sound the same? Were different picking/strumming patterns used throughout each of the songs? Were there too many picking/strumming changes? Were the tone and volume of the playing appropriate?

Accuracy of Chords and Rhythm _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were there any obvious wrong chords or mistakes in the rhythm of the hymn?

2. Hymn Playing

Sight Reading Creativity _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Can You Sing with It? _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Use of the Guitar _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Accuracy of Chords and Rhythm _____ 1 2 3 4 5

3. Accompanying a Cantor and Choir

Musical Support of the Cantor _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the cantor able to easily sing along? Was the guitarist aware of the cantor's place in the music, or were they too focused on their own playing? Was there a good musical connection made with the cantor?

Leadership of the Choir while Playing _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the leadership of the choir clear while the candidate was playing guitar? Did the guitarist make eye contact with the choir while leading? Did the guitarist have good musical mastery of their own playing while leading the choir? Was the guitarist able to provide good communication with the choir?

4. Accompanying Self

Playing and Singing Together _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was there a good awareness of both playing and singing? Were the playing and singing effective together? Were there any noticeable mistakes with either playing or singing? How easily could you sing along?

5. Improvisation (Optional)

Presence of the Melody Line _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the melody line recognizable throughout the entire piece?

Interesting _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the arrangement hold your interest? Was it musically appropriate?

Appendix 3d – Vocal Audition Evaluation Form

This form allows committee members with a way of evaluating the vocal and musical skills of a candidate.

Candidate's Name _____

Each underlined category is accompanied by questions to help form an evaluation:

1 = poor 2 = average 3 = good 4 = excellent 5 = outstanding

Solo Piece

Intonation/Tone Quality _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the singer have a pleasing tone? Was the singer's voice engaging?

Diction and Expression of Text _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the text understandable? Did the singer seem to understand the text and convey the meaning?

Accuracy of Notes and Rhythm _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were there places that had obvious wrong pitches or rhythm? Was the rhythm of the piece clear?

Breathing _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the breathing seem planned? Did the breathing contribute to or interfere with the musical expression?

Tempo _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the tempo (pace) steady? Did it seem to change for no apparent reason? Did it seem appropriate (not too slow or fast) for the character of the piece? Was the singer able to stay together with the keyboard player?

Musical Expression/Style/Phrasing _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the singing expressive, unemotional, or overly expressive?

Dynamics _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Were there different volume levels, or was it all the same?

Presence _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was their visual presentation appropriate to what they were singing? Were any movements engaging or distracting?

Responsorial Psalm

Diction and Expression of Text _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the text understandable? Did the singer seem to understand the text and convey the meaning?

Musical Expression/Style/Phrasing _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was the singing expressive, unemotional, or overly expressive? Did the singer's approach vocally seem appropriate for a liturgical context as opposed to a concert setting?

Can You Sing with Them? _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Did the singer elicit your participation vocally/visually as he/she sang? Was it easy to follow/join with the singer? Did they make eye contact with the "assembly"?

Stage Presentation _____ 1 2 3 4 5

Was their visual presentation appropriate to what they were singing? Were any movements engaging or distracting? Were their gestures graceful, inviting, and timed appropriately (the cantor gesture should occur slightly before the assembly should sing)?

Appendix 4 - Additional Resources

These are general resources that may be useful to those responsible for hiring a musician.

[AGO Professional Standards and Employment Handbook](#)

Go to the Professional Standards webpage and then click "Employment Guide."

[Internal Revenue Service: Independent contractor \(self-employed\) or employee \(irs.gov\)](#)

[Internal Revenue Service: Hiring Employees \(irs.gov\)](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

[MIT Living Wage Calculator Online](#)