

# What Works: Denominational Leadership

The below recommendations represent learnings from the work of The Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative initiative and are meant to catalogue the best practices for communicating with mainstream religious denominations with the intent of obtaining formal partnerships for working to end the HIV epidemic within our communities.

A core component of the initiative's work in this regard included formalizing relationships with religious denominations as a means to broaden awareness of the initiative throughout the overall faith community and encourage faith leaders to take action knowing they had the support of the denominational leadership.

The NAACP strategically leveraged existing relationships and formed new ones to work towards its goal of being endorsed by religious denominations. Certain methods proved more impactful in moving the needle towards the ultimate goal of getting faith leaders and others in the faith community invested in the initiative and its goals. The following recommendations are best practices for working with denominations for those who are involved in similar HIV work.

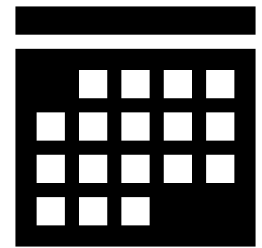


## Plan Ahead

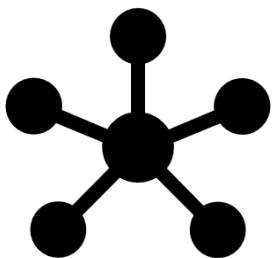
In preparation of reaching out to a particular denomination, it will be important to familiarize yourself with your initiative's purpose and goals, the denomination's core beliefs, and how those two things align with each other. This information will be vital when communicating with contacts at the denomination to convince them of the value in formally partnering with your initiative.

Additionally, brainstorming how you are connected to the denomination and members within it is also important as having contacts will be useful in getting the opportunity to engage with leaders who might not always be accessible to members of the general public.

Finally, it's important to note that the process of endorsement by a denomination can take an unspecified amount of time. Be prepared to spend a significant amount of time working through this process.



## Build Relationships



Once you decide which denomination will be most beneficial to engage with, start researching contacts at the organization and begin thoughtful outreach, making touchpoints where possible.

# What Works: Denominational Leadership Cont.

## QUICK TIP: Growing Relationships

*Initiative experience has proven that relationships are key to making meaningful touchpoints with members and leaders of religious denominations. Growing relationships with contacts at a particular denomination will be crucial to success. Outreach and activities to help grow these relationships include:*

- *Brainstorm existing connections you may have to that denomination (e.g.: a friend or colleague) and reach out to those individuals.*
- *Numerous phone calls, emails, face-to-face meetings, and follow-up touchpoints. Face-to-face meetings have proven important in building these relationships.*
- *If not already affiliated, consider reaching out to your local NAACP who may already have a relationship with the denomination.*

## Establishing Confirmation and Engaging



If and when a particular denomination agrees to publicly partner with your initiative, establish written confirmation and plan to meet with leaders of that denomination to formalize your partnership.

## QUICK TIP: Forms of Engagement

*An official partnership can take several forms, including:*

- *Attending major conventions, conferences, and or annual meetings and presenting on your initiative's work and its significance.*
- *Having a spokesperson of the denomination attend your initiative's events.*
- *Having your initiative listed on the denominations website as a formal partner and vice versa.*
- *A plaque or document noting that official resolution.*