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## Developing Outreach Strategies to Sustain Diversity and Inclusion in Interfaith Partnerships With Local Government

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Dora Muhammad

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2025

Abstract

Developing Outreach Strategies to Sustain Diversity and Inclusion in Interfaith  
Partnerships With Local Government

by

Dora Muhammad

MPA, University of Phoenix, 2012

BA, Columbia College, 2002

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Public Administration

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February 2026

## Abstract

Local government has been hindered by a lack of sustained interfaith engagement. Faith leaders have not been consistent stakeholders in policymaking decisions. This gap in practice stemmed from a lack of research of self-transcendence within public administrative settings. Grounded in a review of 70 years of research into the conceptual framework of government needs analysis, this study's purpose was to explore principles and concepts of civic engagement and partnership shared among faiths. Qualitative research was designed to answer, "How do faith leaders describe the current civic participation, partnership, diversity, and inclusive strategies within their faith communities as they relate to local government policy decision making?" Twenty-four participants represented 10 faith traditions in Abrahamic, Dharmic, and contemporary faith communities in a Virginia municipality. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. A generic, bottom-up thematic analysis of shared motivations, attributes, emotions, and values extracted from interviews generated findings that included four themes: (a) humanity, (b) healing, (c) spiritual growth, and (d) freedoms. The findings connected the constructs of self-transcendence from the spiritual realm to the municipal realm. Recommendations included a new public administration framework using a faith lens to convert human needs into community needs met through outreach strategies from scopes of hospitality, community wellness, learning journeys, and breaking access to barriers, which were included in a needs analysis report, the client's deliverable. Potential implications for positive social change include the potential to build community resilience as an antidote and intervention for religious-based violence.

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## Dedication

To my mother, who cultivated my spiritual upbringing in an interfaith family as a lush garden of generational beauty—the cornerstone of my foundation to take on doctoral study; and who upholds every benchmark of my institutional learning as a grandchild.

In loving memory of my late uncle, who instilled a love of reading, research, and the infinite pursuit of learning dating back to ancient Egyptian scholars; who lived and remains an esteemed example of highly educated activism infused with deeply humble compassion; and who was a guiding force of ancestral wisdom as I completed my doctoral journey of this study. To my spiritual mother, Mother Tynnetta Muhammad who took the teaching of the Most Honorable Eljah Muhammad that music, color and medicine is the essence of God’s true religion and embodied this phenomenon in her spiritual artistry for the healing of nations; whose legacy I continued in my seminal work, “Sacred Synergy,” and endeavor to extend through the rich contribution of the social impacts of this study. To my beloved Minister Farrakhan who galvanized the Muslim community to seek justice on my behalf, a teenaged survivor of a sexual assault classified by the FBI as a hate crime; and for his rededication of the flagship Mosque Maryam in an interfaith celebration, “A New Beginning,” which rooted a vision in me that authentic interfaith engagement is a sanctuary wherein every faith has a place to co-create a new world from united humanity. To every survivor of racial or religious violence against the houses of our bodies and houses of worship, may you receive the Beloved’s gift of safety that inspires bold resilience, grounded and reinforced affirmation, and renewed freedom to live to your fullest.

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The successful completion of my study is the product of academic coaching and encouragement from my committee chair, Dr. Michael Brewer; committee member, Dr. Lydia Forsthye; residency professors Dr. Linda Sundstrom and Dr. Mark Gordon; and research advisor Dr. Victoria Landu-Adams. And I am grateful to Dean Rebecca Stout for her guidance in making a pivotal decision during a critical transition point.

This success is also directly connected to my enduring partnership with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP), upheld through the transition of executive leadership from Kim Bobo, who signed on as a partner at the start of my study, to Rev. Dr. LaKeisha Cook, who took the helm midway through my research process upon Kim's retirement. My previous work leading advocacy at VICPP on policies and programs addressing racial and religious violence that centered the wisdom and unity of people of faith was a foundational motivation to embark on my doctoral journey.

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## Section 1: Introduction

### **Introduction**

The county my client serves is one of the most diverse counties in the U.S. and the most diverse county in the state. The county government established my client organization in 2020 to serve the county government in partnership with the county's supervisors, executive management, departments, and the community by providing leadership, guidance, and coordination of policies, programs, and initiatives that build an inclusive culture and leverage diversity within the municipal workforce and services to the community. According to the office's head, one of the four goals is bringing underrepresented voices to the table.

The vitality of community partnerships is one of the three key performance indicators my client has established to measure the effectiveness and impact of its work, according to the office's head. Within this scope of administrative priorities, my client faces the challenge of establishing avenues to sustain the involvement of a broad base of faith leaders in its work. This public administrative study, through face-to-face interviews with faith leaders, was a qualitative exploration of how different faith communities describe and understand civic participation and partnerships through the lens of their faith.

My study's deliverable of a needs analysis provides information and recommendations for outreach strategies to my client as a solution to its administrative challenge. If my client expands its capacity to sustain partnerships with more

nondominant faith traditions, its staff can extend their reach and impact across all communities in the county and attain the desired diversity and inclusion in its work.

In this section, I provided background information on my client organization and details about its administrative problem, the purpose and design of my study to address this problem, and the significance of the results of my research to my client organization and other local governments in the public sector.

### **Organization Background and Problem Statement**

My client organization has two staff members with a limited budget. It established a public policy review working group of community, business, and faith leaders who meet monthly, as a central place for community engagement to support their mission. Of the nearly 200 members of this group, less than 10 are faith leaders in 2023, significantly fewer than the inaugural group meeting in 2021, where more than 50 faith leaders participated.

In the fall of 2023, the client established a faith affinity group for the municipal staff of the county, in addition to the existing racial affinity groups, as a vehicle to support interfaith engagement. My client organization set a priority goal to expand the diversity of faiths in the membership of this working group as an avenue to represent and include all communities across the county, which can enable them to support and address the needs and concerns of the broadest diversity of faith communities and municipal staff.

The administrative challenge of building long-lasting relationships with faith leaders who will be actively involved in public policy review and formation stems from difficulties in sustaining connectivity with faith communities. While my client

organization can invite faith leaders to come together for an event, community service project, or media appearance, they cannot develop these one-time engagement opportunities into sustainable connections and community partnerships with faith communities in the county. The findings of my study can increase my client's understanding and capacity to deepen its faith engagement as an avenue to build community cohesion and resilience and create a new model of practice for public administrations that other municipalities can replicate.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore and understand principles and concepts of current civic engagement and partnership shared among faith communities to develop effective outreach strategies to improve diversity and inclusion that local governments can utilize as an administrative tool for sustainable interfaith engagement.

My client organization will receive the study's findings in a needs analysis report. Over the past 50 years, needs assessments have evolved from evaluation and performance improvement in specialized sectors (Kilpatrick, 1959; Kaufman & English, 1979; Neuber, Atkins, et. al., 1980) to broader, holistic community planning that integrates asset/capacity building (McClelland, 1994; Altschuld & Watkins, 2014). Contemporary models of needs assessments that center on interaction and relationship-building have returned to a framework introduced in the 1950s (Maslow, 1954) that humanizes the analysis process. The practice is emerging within public administration as a key to strategic planning for communities. This contemporary scope of the value of needs

analysis grounded the purpose of my research to address the evidence of this gap in practice for my client, who seeks to strengthen civic partnerships with faith communities.

Through my study, I sought to answer one research question: “How do faith leaders describe the current civic participation, partnership, diversity, and inclusion strategies within their faith communities as they relate to local government policy decision making?”

My study resulted in recommendations and insight to increase my client’s understanding and capacity to deepen its faith engagement as an avenue to build community cohesion and resilience and create a new model of practice for public administrations that other municipalities can replicate.

### **Summary of Data Sources and Analysis**

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with a diverse pool of faith leaders were the source of data collected to meet the purpose of my study. A purposive sample of the client’s community partners and faith leaders in its jurisdiction generated the pool of study participants. A generic qualitative, bottom-up approach to data analysis extracted themes from participant responses on principles and concepts of civic participation to develop a needs analysis report. My client can operationalize the insights from the report into an administrative tool to sustain outreach to faith communities.

### **Definitions**

#### **Needs**

The concept of needs within the scope of my study and my administrative deliverable to my client is grounded in both the seminal work of Abraham Maslow’s

Hierarchy of Human Needs (1954) and its re-emergence in the contemporary concept of asset/capacity building (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014). Both concepts center on human beings in assessing the success of organizations. While the satisfaction of meeting human needs is an important factor when evaluating how an organization delivers direct services to people, my study upholds the value of a needs analysis for my client because a driving motivation to be better understood by public administrations is how human beings act in relation to one another when their needs are met (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017).

### Civic Participation

Civic participation has become an expansive concept covering direct, public activities such as voting, political action, social protest, and community service. For the purpose of my study and the administrative challenge of my client, civic participation is closely defined through a social framework where individuals see themselves as part of the public square and engage government entities as a part of their processes, which Ekman & Amna (2012) describe as an activity of “latent” political engagement.

### Significance

By addressing the gap in sustainable interfaith engagement, my client can deepen its impact on the community and within municipal infrastructures by actively involving more faith leaders in its policy review working group. Faith engagement is a powerful vehicle to drive social change in major issue areas where faith leaders can anchor or center the work of local government, such as hate crimes against houses of worship and people of faith, which have significantly increased every year since 2012 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022). Community cohesion and resilience can

improve reporting of hate crimes and support preventive measures against religious violence (U.S. Department of Justice, 2023), a priority not just for my client organization's geographic span. Current spirals of religious-based hate crimes call for cross-sector collaborations within municipal agencies to develop new, creative, and sustainable community-based solutions (Netto & Abazie, 2013).

### **Summary**

This public administrative study is designed to generate qualitative data that can be utilized to fill a specific gap in an essential practice of the municipal staff of my client. Local governments are positioned to develop the closest relationships with community leaders and thereby develop the most salient policies and initiatives to meet the needs of communities. Faith leaders are key stakeholders in this process—a reality that my client recognizes for the success of their work but needs help removing barriers to achieve.

The needs analysis generated from insights extracted from the study's participant interviews can deepen the administrative capacity of my client to sustain interfaith partnerships through better outreach strategies. Sustainable partnerships are the product of authentic relationship-building, a characteristic of needs analysis that has evolved since the 1950s. I examined this evolution in the next section through a review of seminal to contemporary literature.

## Section 2: Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

### **Introduction**

My client's administrative challenge of building long-lasting relationships with faith leaders who will be actively involved in public policy review and formation stems from difficulties in sustaining connectivity with faith communities. While my client organization can invite faith leaders to come together for an event, community service project, or media appearance, they have internally assessed the need to evolve these one-time engagement opportunities into sustainable connectivity and community partnership with faith communities in the county.

This study explored principles and concepts of current civic engagement and partnership shared among faith communities. The study's findings informed the development of recommendations for effective outreach strategies within a needs analysis as an administrative tool for sustainable interfaith engagement that local government can utilize to engage faith communities that expand the diversity and inclusion of municipal staff and the community partners that they serve through its policy review working group. The needs analysis addressed the gap in practice that a literature review made evident and justified the conceptual framework for my study, which is detailed in this section.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I accessed Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCO, SAGE, and Emerald databases as the central data resources in my literature review. This search utilized various chains of key terms, including needs analysis, needs assessment, strategic planning, capacity building, community, civic participation, partnership, local

government, diversity and inclusion, and faith/interfaith. The strategy covered 70 years of research literature and peer-reviewed articles, spanning 1954-2024.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Needs analysis is a flexible format for research relevant to public administration. It can take the form of a broad needs assessment, follow a broad needs assessment, or be a component within a broad needs assessment (Witkin, 1994). Needs analysis is grounded in the purpose of data collection to inform the process of developing a specific product that will be a solution to the needs of an organization.

The concept of “needs” first emerged in the early 1950s from the national discourse on the needs of every individual theorized as a hierarchy by psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954). In his seminal writings on the subject, he argued that the spiritual aspirations of human beings dominated their ability to function healthily in society (Celestine, 2017). His theory sparked a movement of thought that entered the educational sector and began to shape government policies that evolved into structured needs assessments.

### **Literature Review for the Study**

For the past five decades, practices and approaches to needs assessments shifted from evaluation and performance improvement focused on organizational development in specialized sectors to broader, holistic community planning that integrates asset/capacity building in contemporary qualitative practices (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014).

### **Seminal Models of Needs Assessment**

The seminal needs assessment model focused on improving performance through training (Kilpatrick, 1959) as an approach to increasing organizational success. The federal government absorbed this new practice into its requirements of a “needs determination” for programmatic funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014). Several years later, the CIPP evaluation model developed around four steps of assessing needs in public schools—context, input, process, and product—was published (Stufflebeam, 1968) and influenced curriculum development and heralded the public education reform era of the 1970s (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014).

The evolution of needs assessments continued with the development of the Organization Elements Model (OEM) by Roger Kaufman (1972), who would become known as the father of needs assessment. He utilized a systems engineering approach that shifted the definition of “needs” from performance evaluation to an operational gap in results along three levels—societal, organizational, and individual (Kaufman & English, 1979). Needs assessments became an essential component of the education reform movement, which culminated in the National Needs Assessment Conference held in 1976 by the National Institute of Education and International Society of Educational Planners (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014).

### **Specialized Scopes of Needs Assessment**

The popularity of needs assessments in public education led to the adoption of adapted models within new sectors during the 1980s. The Community Oriented Needs

Assessment (CONA) model was developed within public health departments (Neuber, Atkins, et. al., 1980) to monitor the effectiveness of social services delivery. The decade also saw the evaluation model expand into the private sector. A significant business model emerged in the publication of a three-phase approach that firmly focused on process (Witkin, 1984). While considered the heyday of the development of needs assessment, the decade marked a period of staunch criticism of the existing models that stemmed from the reliance on quantifiable needs assessed by executive/senior leadership who excluded those impacted and categorized as subjects (Chiu, Thompson, et. al., 1999). These critiques spurred the next decade of evolution of models to humanize the needs within workforces while assessing opportunities along with deficiencies.

### **Contemporary Return to Qualitative Approaches**

Fearing the emphasis on business profitability as an indicator of organizational success marginalized the needs of the workforce and ultimately threatened worker satisfaction (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014), assessors designed new models framed by the human nature of needs that Maslow first espoused in the 1950s, which he later updated (Koltko-Rivera, 2006), to add self-transcendence as the highest human need that guides interpersonal relationships and behaviors. Humanizing the needs assessment process became the aim of a significant shift in the field as qualitative methods, such as one-on-one interviews, focus groups, on-site observation, and surveys (McClelland 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d), replaced quantitative data collection practices.

During the next decade, the concept of needs analysis broadened across public administration as a critical component of strategic planning and holistic community needs

assessments. Achieving organizational success and optimal results in governance aligned with relationship-building and centered human interaction in new asset and capacity building frameworks (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014). More public-private partnerships emerged in educational reform (MacQuarrie-Tomey, 2024) during the past decade, and governments have only now begun to explore how to strengthen civic partnerships as keys to strategic planning for communities (Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities, 2015). This contemporary scope of the value of needs analysis grounds the purpose of my research to address the evidence of this gap in practice.

### **Recent Concepts and Approaches: Civic Engagement & Partnerships**

My client's tendency to approach interfaith relationship-building within the community has leaned toward one-dimensional ecumenical strategies of gathering diverse faith communities together in one place. These occasions have achieved a fleeting unity. Local public administrations have not been able to implement initiatives that cultivate interfaith relationships that build long-term community cohesion. A shift in research is needed to better explore solutions to fill this gap in the capacity of local public administrations to build community trust and cohesion by empowering community members (Menon & Allen, 2020), particularly through civic engagement and partnership with their faith communities.

The challenge exists within public administrations to sustain support for structural changes that address social cohesion through attitudes and behaviors amidst conventional empirical approaches to other policy goals (Sinnar, 2022). This problem impacts a variety

of public administration agencies such as public safety, educational systems, community development, and—in the case of my client organization—diversity and inclusion.

Researchers have found that patterns of experiences, language, and concepts as reference points (Wigfield & Turner, 2013) and art and knowledge of traditions, history, and culture as inspirational and educational “soft power” (Cao, 2022) are key elements of valuable strategies that local public administrations should consider in the construction of outreaches and sustainable community partnerships.

Extensive studies of community cohesion have produced research on racialized, ethnic, and intimate partner violence (Menon & Allen, 2020) as contexts that keep communities divided. Little research is available in historic and contemporary studies that explores the nature and impact of religious divisions and how to address them beyond individual cases to develop sustainable community-based solutions and interventions (Netto & Abazie, 2013). Only recently have researchers expanded the scope of studies beyond racial microaggressions to begin to focus on religious microaggressions and the complex dynamics of intolerance and discrimination (Dupper et al., 2015) that hinder community inclusion and cohesion along religious lines.

Past approaches to increasing civic engagement have revolved around concepts of social quality (Beck et al., 1997, p. 3), which includes subset concepts of social inclusion and social cohesion (Berman & Phillips, 2004, p. 4), and how these concepts link to the self-actualization of individuals within various groups and communities that shape their identities and drive connectivity with other individuals, groups and communities. This approach framed relationship-building and day-to-day interactions as practical tools to

cultivate sustainable engagement among faith communities and between faith communities and local government (Wigfield & Turner, 2013, p.3).

Other recent research approaches into developing recommendations to deepen civic engagement include identifying barriers and opportunities for improvement of the underrepresentation of racial demographics in more diversified communities through interviews, focus groups, and SWOT analyses with administrators, board members, volunteers, organizational leaders, alums and current members of programs (McLemore, 2022); as well as evaluating the level of influence that member involvement, voices, interests, and needs have on the development and growth of an organization (Delu, 2022, p. 11; Barber, 2020). These approaches focused exclusively on organizations' internal structures while obscuring the dynamics of external stakeholders in the community. Consequently, they limited the broader social impact of the research findings. Even when public administrations have sought to develop stronger partnerships with faith-based organizations for intensive health interventions with mutual objectives (Hippolyte et. al., 2013), the approach is transactional, temporary, issue-focused, and process-oriented, where faith communities are engaged as a pass-through, though influential, vehicle or venue for the dissemination of information and direct services.

The most relevant past approach was a public administrative study that framed its research within the theory of collaborative governance and utilized research questions that centered on principles of cooperation, partnership, and participation to develop recommendations for effective collaboration within a feasible development plan with long-term sustainability for a local public agency (Brooks, 2023). Building on this

previous research, my public administrative study will offer insight that sharpens a local government agency's empirical knowledge of how to leverage social interaction better to develop more practical understandings (Wigfield & Turner, 2013) of interfaith relationship building.

### **Recent Concepts and Approaches: Outreach Strategies**

#### ***Marketing Scope***

Community outreach strategies within the business sector are focused on people relating to organizations, corporations, and other entrepreneurial entities as a consumer base. The development of these relationships depends upon the legitimacy of the business entity, which has been defined and theorized by Mark Suchman (1995) as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” According to Suchman's legitimacy theory, the sustainability of consumer relationships depends on how well societal systems accept an organization's actions, linking an entity's legitimacy to its public profile (Margiono, 2018).

When applied within theoretical frameworks of qualitative public administrative studies, researchers have generated data to recommend marketing techniques and methods as outreach strategies, such as brand collaborations with other groups and increased digital presence on social media platforms (Wallace, 2022), to increase the visibility and awareness of the work and missions of nonprofits, strengthen their market presence, and position them to better connect with targeted demographics within communities.

### ***Technical Scope***

A primary function of public administrations is the delivery of services, yet a common challenge is connecting with communities to inform them about available resources (Pouraryan, 2021). This approach to community outreach faces limitations because one municipal staffer can be responsible for a significant percentage of the population (Pouraryan). This dynamic becomes critically strained during emergencies and disasters and exposes gaps in practice that public administrative studies have sought to address.

By examining needs and practices, researchers have been able to recommend outreach strategies that boost capabilities on the ground in communities from a technical scope, such as centralized digital spaces to obtain reliable information, preparedness kits, solar-powered generators, and even personal tablets with integrated wi-fi hotspots (Pouraryan). Outreach strategies by local government thus become driven by goals to put basic survival tools in the hands of community members. Though temporary and short-term in the face of disasters, these types of outreaches can reinforce community cohesion built around a culture of shared preparedness.

### ***Community Organizing Scope***

Some social issues require critical interventions by public administrations, such as intimate partner domestic violence prevention and intervention. Beyond direct services provided by local government agencies, researchers have found community organizing to be a beneficial scope of outreach strategies for municipal staff. Christens and Speer

(2015) point to the need to address isolation and civic disengagement as drivers that have increased public administrations' emphasis on community organizing.

At the center of community organizing is the approach of drawing marginalized people together to engage collectively to find solutions to their common problems (Christens, 2019). Specific to addressing domestic violence, researchers have provided public administrations with findings that help them leverage communities to address cultural taboos that inhibit the disclosures of domestic violence and facilitate community-wide responses and solutions to violence (Menon & Allen, 2018).

Grassroots organizations that can shift domestic violence from being a private personal problem to a public social issue have become a focal point of outreach by public administrations. Researchers have recommended outreach strategies through the scope of community organizing with grassroots leaders, such as building networks of support and empowering both individuals and communities as a whole (Menon & Allen), which has expanded the capacity of public administrations to create opportunities to increase civic engagement and partnerships.

## **Recent Concepts and Approaches: Inclusion of Vulnerable Stakeholders**

### ***Racial Scope***

A review of the literature on inclusion focused heavily on studies examining racial diversity within communities. A prevalent scope of research utilized the theory of social disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942) to frame studies based on factors that contribute to the inability of neighbors to find common values. Contemporary frameworks of social disorganization theorists, such as Bursik and Grasmick (1993),

expand the concept to assert that social relationships can prevent crime because community members develop cohesion and work together to create systems to address the social problems they face (Social Disorganization and Rural Communities, 2003). Researchers (Ciabanu, 2016) have found that the ethnic diversity of a community is one criterion that has a moderate significance on the rates of hate crime for a neighborhood. This correlation revealed the challenges that public administrations face in cultivating social inclusion of different religions and cultures, which bring variances in deeply rooted beliefs and practices related to family, child rearing, and other traditions of social life (Ciabanu).

Researchers (Ciabanu) have also found that isolation and irregular contact between racial groups lead to hostilities and violence. Therefore, recommendations to public administrations to prevent and reduce hate crimes have included community-based projects that can foster consistent contact among community members. Building strong social relationships within communities helps eliminate social isolation and produce safer neighborhoods through sustainable inclusion.

### ***Class Scope***

Public administrations are responsible for safety net service provisions to the most vulnerable in their jurisdiction. At the lowest end of economic classifications of communities in need, homeless people are one demographic that the government prioritizes, and veterans are more likely to be a part of that group (Coker, 2021). Establishing community partnerships as a method to improve the delivery of services to homeless veterans is a well-recognized solution for public administrations. However,

researchers have highlighted strategies that deepen the inclusion of people experiencing homelessness within the operations of organizations, such as employing them (Coker). Through this approach to inclusion, public administrations can find better alignment of their mission to serve homeless people and perceptions from their staff when evaluating their organizational performance.

### **Recent Concepts and Approaches: Interfaith Relationship-Building**

A review of the literature about constructs of transcendence revealed the weakness of quantitative instruments designed to measure them, such as the Self-Transcendence Scale, the Spiritual Transcendence Scale, and the Mysticism Scale (Akyalcin et al, 2008). When tested for internal validity, researchers faced challenges clearly defining, fully replicating, and efficiently operationalizing transcendence using these scales and were compelled to develop subscales (Akyalcin). Translating the core constructs that the literature has identified for transcendence —sacredness, interconnectedness, unity, and a higher consciousness (Akyalcin)—into tangible realities and practical tools for public administrations will expand their capacity through a deeper understanding of concepts that ground sustainable faith engagement.

Researchers agree that there are multidimensional constructs of self-transcendence (Fishbein et al., 2022), which demand more study than is currently available. This evidence of a gap in conceptualizing and understanding self-transcendence from a scientific perspective presented a justified opportunity for well-designed, carefully implemented qualitative research despite self-transcendence anchoring well-being practices in religious and secular settings for thousands of years

(Fishbein et al). The potential of this new research area to add to the literature of public administrative studies was a landscape for my study to generate emergent ideas and solutions to fill the evident gap in practice.

### **Summary**

The logical connections between the conceptual framework presented and my study were based on the specificity of data that a needs analysis generates. A needs analysis narrows a study's focus on an already identified need, rather than a broader starting point to identify a gap. Therefore, one-on-one interviews structured data collection that helped directly meet one known need within a complex problem rooted in layers of needs for my client. One-on-one interviews fostered an inclusive setting for discussions with faith leaders, which reinforcing my study's purpose. The specificity of the findings of my study facilitated the analysis of themes and patterns in the data with a greater probability of developing recommendations for effective outreach strategies that can be a relevant administrative tool practically operationalized by the client. The next section is a detailed look at each step of the data collection and analysis process of the interviews.

### Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

#### **Introduction**

The problem addressed through this study is developing effective outreach strategies of a local government agency to engage faith communities that expand the diversity and inclusion of its municipal staff and the community partners they serve through its policy review working group. The qualitative design of this study is the best research design to explore the deeper meanings and dynamics of social phenomena (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Qualitative design methods aligned with the goals of my study to uncover shared language, concepts, and principles from a diverse range of faith leaders. Using interviews as a central method in qualitative questioning formed a reliable framework for my study to capture the complexities of the concepts and principles that ground civic engagement for faith communities and generated rich descriptions of narrative (Collingridge & Gantt) that helped shape my data analysis. The findings of the study analysis can enhance and enrich the working knowledge and capacity of my client's municipal staff and their practical application of these concepts and principles in their outreach strategies to faith leaders to foster sustainable interfaith engagement.

The intentional selection of participants in qualitative studies using a purposive sampling method further aligned with the objectives of the study. Purposive sampling methods are best suited for researchers who are seeking to understand social phenomena from distinct and different perspectives of selected participants, rather than seeking to generalize the results of a study beyond those who participated in the study, which is a reliable outcome of quantitative studies (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Differences in

results can be a reliable outcome of qualitative inquiry of social phenomena, differing from quantitative research in this aspect, because these differences reflect the multidimensional realities of the social phenomena (Collingridge & Gantt) explored by researchers.

The data collected from these qualitative design methods shaped a needs analysis report as an administrative tool of recommendations embedded in outreach strategies for my client. This section contains the rationale of the participant sample, strategies for data collection and analysis, and the methodology's trustworthiness and ethical standards.

### **Research Question and Research Design**

I utilized a semistructured interview protocol as my generic qualitative method to explore answers from each participant's perspective and knowledge base. This approach allowed participants to delve deeper into their descriptions of their views and experiences relevant to the focused research question while simultaneously giving them the attention, time, and pace (Kallio et al, 2013), which reinforced their roles as key stakeholders in the research outcomes.

A needs analysis prepared from the findings of the research collected from the analysis of the research question (RQ1), "How do faith leaders describe the current civic participation, partnership, diversity, and inclusion strategies within their faith communities as they relate to local government policy decision-making?"

Needs analysis is a flexible format for research relevant to public administration. It can take the form of a broad needs assessment, follow a broad needs assessment, or be a component within a broad needs assessment (Witkin, 1994). Needs analysis is grounded

in the purpose of data collection to inform the process of developing a specific product that will be a solution to the needs of an organization.

The value of a needs analysis is based on the specificity of data that it generates; a needs analysis narrows a study's focus on an already identified need (Witkin, 1994), rather than a broader starting point to identify a gap. Therefore, I was able to structure one-on-one interviews to collect data that helped meet one known need of my client, existing within a complex problem rooted in layers of needs.

One-on-one interviews fostered an inclusive setting for rich dialogue (Kallio et al, 2013) with faith leaders, reinforcing the purpose of the study. The specificity of my findings facilitated the analysis of themes and patterns in the data with a greater probability of developing effective outreach strategies as a relevant administrative tool that my client can practically operationalize.

### **Roles of the Researcher and Client Organization**

In 2022, I developed an interfaith initiative from a state-funded grant to work to combat hate crimes in my client's jurisdiction, working with my client organization in partnership with the local police department. There was a high probability that the faith leaders who engaged in that initiative would be interested in participating in this study and would be selected to participate.

One limitation of this study was my personal bias that interfaith relationships contain an intrinsic power to drive civic engagement and connection to local governance, because of my personal experiences within a deeply interfaith family with members representing every major faith tradition. To mitigate this bias, I remained open-minded in

my listening during all interviews and committed to reflexivity and transparency about my assumptions. I documented my rationale with objectivity along every step of my research process to embed within my findings. So, my bias did not interfere with the trustworthiness of my findings.

One challenge of this study was establishing objectivity in the data analysis predicated upon utilizing a sampling technique to successfully solicit the participation of faith leaders who may never have been actively engaged in civic participation or interfaith relationship-building.

The client facilitated communication about the project from the researcher to its community partners and provided me with the contact information of the faith leaders who have engaged the client, so I could conduct direct follow-up of the invitation to participate in the study. The client also provided data on its past public engagement activities with faith leaders and communities, participation of faith leaders in its meetings, and background on its current outreach strategies.

### **Methodology**

One-on-one, face-to-face interview protocols was the instrument to collect data to address the research question and produce recommendations for outreach strategies for my client. My interviews with faith leaders provided appropriate data about the principles and concepts of civic engagement and partnership shared among faith communities. Patterns emerged in the various categorizations of these principles and concepts, which then determined themes to create the framework for the needs analysis. The analysis

highlighted effective outreach strategies to improve diversity and inclusion that my client can utilize as an administrative tool for sustainable interfaith engagement.

### **Participants**

I sought to recruit at least one adult male, one adult female, and one young adult (aged 18-40) faith leader/influencer within 10 faith traditions identified to have an active congregation or community, for a maximum range of 20-30 participants in the study. This purposive sample established a gendered and generational diversity of responses represented in the findings.

The participant pool existed within my client's current group of community partners and the group of faith communities that supported a previous initiative combating hate crime in the region. Members of both groups received an invitation email (Appendix A) to solicit their interest in participating in the study. Participant recruitment also included the dissemination of fliers and social media posts to announce and share the study. I made follow-up calls to the faith leaders who received emailed invitations and those who contacted me through the public announcements in the community. Participant selection based on the purposive sampling criteria ensured diversity and inclusion of each faith tradition: Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Catholic, Unitarian Universalist, and Baha'i.

### **Procedures**

The first step in the process was obtaining written consent agreements for all participants and then scheduling interviews. Data collection from participants spanned 3 months. Before the date of their interview, participants received the list of questions (See

Appendix B) developed from the concepts of the gap in practice, phrases in the literature, and general probing styles for qualitative research approaches.

Participant one-on-one interviews lasted one hour. Google Meet and Zoom platforms recorded and auto transcribed each interview. The data collection phase concluded with manual formatting and corrections for each interview transcript.

### **Strategy for Data Analysis**

Data analysis strategies supported a generic qualitative design. I used a conventional bottom-up approach to qualitative content analysis methods (Humble & Mozellius, 2022) to identify patterns and themes: coding my interviews, combining codes to create categories, and then identifying themes to summarize the essence of the dimensions of the patterns that emerged. These themes formed the basis of my interpretation of the impact and implications of the study's findings.

I began by identifying codes of repeated words, surprising details, descriptions, and meanings in each interview. I created these codes from participant responses after immersing myself in multiple readings of interview transcripts. From my in vivo coding approach (Hernandez, 2009), I developed codes that captured four descriptive areas: (a) motivations that lead to civic participation, municipal partnership, community inclusion, and interfaith engagement; (b) attributes of these motivations; (c) emotions experienced during and after positive and negative experiences of civic participation, municipal partnership, community inclusion and interfaith engagement; and (d) faith values that ground these interactions. Data reduction continued in a second cycle of code analysis to identify codes that appeared in the data for multiple participants belonging to the same

faith tradition, from which I developed categories. The third cycle of data analysis further reduced the data by identifying categories that appeared across all faith traditions within each of the three faith families – Abrahamic, Dharmic, and Contemporary – which generated patterns in the data. The final cycle of analysis identified four themes from the patterns that appeared in all three faith families to create an interfaith lexicon of concepts and principles of civic participation, municipal partnership, community cohesion, and interfaith engagement.

Microsoft Excel facilitated the sorting, annotation, and extraction of words and phrases from the data. An audit trail of notes (Carcary, 2009) documented the rationale for choices in the analytic process. I intentionally sought connections and contrasts in codes to add authenticity of participant voices and include discrepant codes (Cho & Lee, 2014) to add nuance to the findings. Thematic analysis (Humble & Mozellius, 2022) helped formulate recommendations for outreach strategies for sustained interfaith engagement to complete the needs analysis report for my client. The production of the needs analysis report concluded the data analysis phase of the research.

My needs analysis report will be prepared as an administrative tool to help my client develop effective outreach strategies to sustain interfaith engagement. Along with a summary of my client's administrative problem and my research approach and method, the report will offer insights from my findings on several dimensions of my client's need to find solutions to fill this gap in practice: (a) excerpts of participant narratives that embody attributes and motivations of engagement with their faith community that may sustain civic participation and community partnership, (b) highlights of the emergent

themes of emotions and values that ground inclusion, and (c) recommendations of shared language and faith principles that can be amplified to ground outreach strategies. The needs analysis report will not stipulate rigid directions for outreach; it will provide grounded guidance to forge an interfaith scope with broad creative latitude wherein my client can tailor unique solutions (Smith & Wyatt, 1998) to improve their outreach strategies to faith communities.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Member checks (McKim, 2023) and peer review (Stahl & King, 2020) established credibility and confidence in the findings. Thick description established transferability (Stahl & King) to convey the narratives within the responses of each participant and the collective narrative of my overall findings. The outline of recommendations is framed within the context of best practices and a grounding lexicon for future studies (Stahl & King) by researchers and public administrators who seek a greater understanding of how to develop diverse and inclusive community partnerships. A former institutional researcher, an independent colleague, reviewed my process and analysis to complete an inquiry audit (Carcary, 2009) and establish the dependability of the findings. Walden University's Review Board conducted further scrutiny of my methodology.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Before conducting my research, I ensured my methodology upheld the principle of beneficence to do no harm to human research subjects (De Roche & Silver, 2024) by obtaining the mandated institutional permissions from the Walden University Institutional Review Board. To conduct my research demonstrating respect for

participants (De Roche & Silver), I committed to not releasing any raw data to third parties and obtaining written informed consent from each participant after establishing a clear understanding of the purpose and use of my research. Assurances of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and to their privacy by maintaining the confidentiality of participants and my client organization reinforced participant autonomy (De Roche & Silver). Interview audio recordings and data analysis files are stored in an external hard drive that will remain in my possession. I also committed not to change, modify, transfer, or delete the data I have stored, and to destroy the data after 5 years.

### **Summary**

My generic qualitative research design utilized a careful, strategic methodology to data collection and analysis that controlled my bias and generated trustworthy data on the diversity of views held by faith leaders about civic engagement and partnership. The success of this approach determined the effectiveness of the findings to contain meaningful answers to the research question. The analysis of the findings facilitated the formulation of recommendations for outreach strategies for local public administrators seeking to sustain interfaith engagement of community partners.

## Section 4: Results and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

I designed a public administrative study to generate qualitative data that can be utilized to fill a specific gap in an essential practice of the municipal staff of my client. Local governments are positioned to develop the closest relationships with community leaders and thereby develop the most salient policies and initiatives to meet the needs of communities. Faith leaders are key stakeholders in this process—a reality that my client recognized for the success of their work but needed help in removing barriers to achieve.

The needs analysis generated from insights extracted from participant interviews has the potential to deepen the administrative capacity of my client to sustain interfaith partnerships through better outreach strategies. Sustainable partnerships are the product of authentic relationship-building, a characteristic of needs analysis that has evolved since the 1950s. I examined this evolution through a review of seminal to contemporary literature as the foundation for my research.

The qualitative design methods of this professional administrative study aligned with the goals of the study to uncover shared language, concepts, and principles from a diverse range of faith leaders. The research question was, “How do faith leaders describe the current civic participation, partnership, diversity, and inclusion strategies within their faith communities as they relate to local government policy decision making?” Using interviews as a central method in qualitative questioning formed a reliable framework for this study to capture the complexities of the concepts and principles that ground civic engagement for faith communities.

This section provides details on the demographics of the study participants, the process of data collection, and the coding rounds of the analysis of the interviews. The findings highlight the categories that emerged within each of the 10 faith traditions, the patterns consistent among the traditions within each of the three faith families (Dharmic, Contemporary, and Abrahamic), and four themes found inclusive of all 24 participants that shape an interfaith lens for local government engagement. Discrepant codes were integrated into the findings. Recommendations to my client consisted of four outreach strategies framed from the concepts and principles of the interfaith themes, followed by three areas of practical applications of these strategies to sustain interfaith engagement.

### **Data Collection**

Participant invitation emails were the primary source of potential participants. While I received several responses via social media posting of the study invitation, individuals who contacted me with interest in being a participant did not follow up to schedule an interview. All participants completed a digitally signed consent agreement.

Participant recruitment yielded 24 individuals representing faith, gender, and generational diversity (see Table 1). The findings reflected gender diversity, with 13 female participants and 11 male participants, ages ranging from 27 years old to 79 years old. The findings also reflected age diversity with seven young adults (18-40 years old), eight adults (41-55 years old), and nine elders (56 years and older). Abrahamic faith communities (Jewish, Muslim, Mainline Christian/Catholic, and Black Protestant), were the largest demographic, each represented with four participants. Contemporary faith communities (Baha'i and Unitarian Universalist) were the second largest demographic,

represented by three and two participants, respectively. The Dharmic faith communities (Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh) were the smallest demographic, each represented by one participant.

I conducted and recorded one-on-one interviews with each participant virtually. Data collection began in December 2024 via Zoom. However, Google Meet provided better transcriptions, so data collection switched to Google Meet in mid-January and concluded in February 2025. On average, interviews spanned one hour, with one interview lasting 45 minutes and two interviews lasting approximately two hours.

**Table 1**

*Demographics*

Faith	Total	Male	Female	18-40	41-55	56+
Baha'i	3	1	2	1	1	1
Black Protestant	4	2	2	1	2	1
Buddhist	1	1	-	-	-	1
Catholic	2	1	1	-	-	2
Hindu	1	1	-	-	1	-
Jewish	4	2	2	3	-	1
Mainline Protestant	2	-	2	-	2	-
Muslim	4	2	2	1	1	2
Sikh	1	1	-	-	1	-
Unitarian Universalist	2	-	2	1	-	1
Totals	24	11	13	7	8	9

**Data Analysis**

I utilized the conventional process of data coding on printed transcripts to analyze all participant interviews and maintained an audit trail of notes on the printed copies of each transcript, and the extracted quotes clipped from color-coded transcripts. The first round of data analysis consisted of sorting these quotes into categorized groups of codes.

The coding framework involved motivations, attributes, emotions, and values that each participant provided through their narratives of understanding and experiences of civic engagement, partnership with local government, and building inclusive communities through interfaith engagement.

Data analysis explored the motivations that provide purpose and lead a participant from their faith lens to civic engagement, partnerships with local government, and interfaith relationships; attributes that define and shape these motivations; emotions experienced in civic and interfaith activities or when facing challenges to their participation in these activities; and values that ground and sustain their involvement.

### **Codes and Categories within Faith Traditions**

Phrases extracted from participant interviews generated more than 300 codes (see Appendix D). These phrases shaped a lens of fundamental concepts and principles that established categories unique to each faith tradition. These concepts are illustrated through quotes extracted from each interview.

#### ***Baha'i***

Regarding attributes, Participant #20 said:

The nature of our work is supposed to be transformative. This speaks to our moral purpose. Some institutions are unjust. Some institutions are corrupt. They might be working on outdated models or policies. These man-made institutions, be it government or a school, can be great if they can glean wisdom from spiritual teachings.

Also, in relation to attributes, Participant #19 shared:

We don't teach the Baha'i faith. We talk about all religions. The children are Catholic, some Christian, and a couple are Muslim. So, we talk about all our religions, how important they all are, and how the Qur'an and the Bible are holy books, very special books.

Participant #21 said describing attributes, "You don't want to build a garden in the middle of a desert. You cannot focus on one issue and forget the other issues. You can't focus on one community and forget the other communities."

***Black Protestant***

Regarding motivations, Participant #8 said:

You don't have to participate in everything. Be clear about what your purpose is, be clear about what your call is, be clear about how you're supposed to shift atmospheres, shift the environment for people, [and] make an impact in the earth. God also places us on the earth to be a helping hand. We say there are angels on earth. Where are the angels on earth meeting human needs?

Regarding values, Participant #6 said:

Jesus wanted to make sure that everybody knew that they had a seat at the table. Sometimes people feel like they have to be invited to have a seat. Sometimes, we don't want an invitation. Sometimes, we want someone to see we have something to offer and invite us to the table. Many times, we don't know about the tables.

There are tables that I don't know about where my voice might be helpful.

Regarding emotions, Participant #7 said:

There's a lot of loss that you experience if you don't engage in the world. If you engage in the world, you're going to get hurt, but it won't harm you. Your heart's going to break. People are going to let you down. Things are going to go badly but it won't harm you. You'll actually grow as a person because that's how God designed us to be. We're social beings, so we're designed to engage with other people. That is the truest expression of faith. It's not what you say you believe; it's how you actually treat people. It won't harm you to engage in the world. This fear of being hurt or misunderstood is a barrier.

In respect to attributes, Participant #5 said:

We were hearing the condemning voices more than we were hearing the loving voices. Who are the clergy that will support the positive voice? You have some that everything that comes out of them is judgment. What people need to hear is support. Speak truth, uplift love and working together, and hopefully, they will speak louder than the ones that spew hate.

### ***Buddhist***

Regarding emotions, Participant #24 said:

One of the Buddhist teachings that's very important, that's not easy to do normally, is you must find where you can protect the other's mind. If you say you always care for people, you don't say something that will make people have anxiety, hurt or harm people, cursing people. Talk with love. This is compassion.

### ***Catholic***

In respect to values, Participant #3 said:

We're all unconditionally loved by God regardless of if we are the poorest or a convicted criminal. With that comes a responsibility in a world where the ultimate values are not material, financial or position but rather measurements based on how we are with [people], and what we do with and for other people.

Describing values, Participant #4 said:

Respect for the human person is a basic for me. That's what God wants of us—respecting the dignity of the human person and helping, for everyone to have that respect. We have a duty to our fellow man and woman to improve things.

### *Hindu*

Regarding attributes, Participant #23 said:

It's difficult for a Hindu individual to get involved because our population is small. To the municipality, we just don't have the clout. Having a small population means your voice is less, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't have a voice. One of the tenets of Sanatana Dharma is service to man, service to human beings, service to society. This is one of the foundations of Sanatana Dharma.

### *Jewish*

Describing motivations, Participant #15 shared:

A big part of things that we do in engagement and sometimes being involved with our community is out of a sense of gratitude. We don't take for granted as a Jewish community every day that we get up and we're able to live freely. It's really not something that has come naturally to us throughout history, and it's not something we should take for granted going forward.

Also, in relation to motivations, Participant #16 said:

Everything to do with the lived social experience of Jewish communities is persecution and exile. Just because it didn't happen for us doesn't mean that we can't do it for others. What was missing in our historical narrative perhaps should be enough obligation to do it for others.

With respect to values, Participant #13 shared:

In a place where there are no humans, be the human. If there is distress in the town, you cannot go home and have yourself a feast. You have to go help the distress in town.

Also, in relation to values, Participant #14 said, "To save a life is to save the world."

### ***Mainline Protestant***

Regarding attributes, Participant #1 said:

We are so quick to judge our enemies, whatever that is—people who have different beliefs, a different culture. We label them as enemy, but they were good all along. We wouldn't know that unless we allow ourselves to cross that boundary and engage in conversation. I could go on and on about stories of Jesus in texts where he's crossing boundaries. He's breaking stereotypes. He's inviting people to the table who others judge and say shouldn't be there. We're called to follow that.

Describing emotions, Participant #2 shared:

Our sacred space allows another faith community to live and breathe fully into who they are. It's a more accepting community, recognizing that everybody's on

their own path in their growth. We can come together with common decency, knowing that we're trying to follow our God to do good.

### ***Muslim***

With respect to values, Participant #9 said:

Part of visibility is being present in the community and not being complacent and thinking, "If I'm good, my family is good, then whatever happens outside doesn't matter." People feel that they don't have time for other people. Greater brotherhood and sisterhood and the need of community are highly stressed in Islam. Your neighborhood is spread out 40 households in every direction.

In relation to motivations, Participant #10 said:

As Muslims, it is incumbent for us to get involved in the civic process to make sure that the local politics are equal for everyone, not just for Muslims. If there are any marginalized communities and they happen to be non-Muslims, it is incumbent upon us to speak up for them. When Islam teaches us about taking care of our neighbors—that if your neighbor goes to bed hungry, we will be asked—it does not say that your neighbor has to be Muslim.

Describing attributes, Participant #11 shared:

How do we show solidarity, that we are one community? Will you turn against me, is it lip service or, when you're really tested, will you come to my aid? That is support and solidarity. There is a hadith: A delegate from Yemen that were Christians came to visit Prophet Muhammad. He gave them a section of the masjid to make their prayers. They had their bells and everything. He allowed

them to worship their way of worshiping. Interfaith is not a new thing. They were treated with respect and were free to practice their religion in the mosque.

Describing emotions, Participant #12 shared:

Controlling your egos, having compassion or wisdom for your time affects your relationships for the rest of your lives and changes the pages of history. That is the key. [Prophet Muhammad during one early pilgrimage (umrah)] agreed to work with the government officials. He did not go against them, regardless of whether they were of the same faith. They did not agree on values. Maybe, some people were against him. He still respected whatever he was being asked by government officials. When he went back the next year, things became in his favor.

### ***Sikh***

Participant #22 (motivations): The biggest principle for the Sikh community is service to humanity. We must serve anyone and all, without any distinction about faith and color and age. Wherever there is need, we see a need, we actively look for a need, or somebody needs any kind of help, the Sikh community will go.

### ***Unitarian Universalist***

Describing values, Participant #17 said:

It's about seeking answers. Anytime I find myself saying no, that's an answer.

That's a dead end. So, I continually strive to be open to things. I have people in

my life whose spiritual understanding is radically different from mine. I don't

really know how I can say to myself, I don't believe in ghosts, but my best friend

speaks to them. That's okay for me. I had to grow to the point where I could believe their belief without it being the same as mine.

Also, in relation to values, Participant #18 shared:

Everything around me is beautiful. There are all these possibilities. All world religions value the beauty of nature and how the earth is just giving to people. We have to take care of the earth. It went hand in hand with gratitude. The universe is so vast and powerful and chaotic. What if that is God to me? When I tell people I'm pantheist, they're like, "So you don't believe in God?" I'm like, "No, God is everything and everywhere."

### **Integration of Discrepant Codes**

One discrepant code found within the Dharmic faith communities was the link between civic influence and the size of a faith community. Commonly understood, large demographic groups will have a significant influence on municipal direction. The small Hindu faith community in the municipality has experienced its size as a group as a hindrance to engagement with municipal staff and officials. However, the equally small Sikh population has not experienced its size as a barrier, a direct result of the election of a Sikh adherent winning a local seat in a Virginia county that did not have a large Sikh constituency. For the Hindu community, their experiences tell them that their electoral power is only possible in a county if it has a significantly Hindu constituency.

Another set of discrepant codes that emerged in my analysis of patterns across families of faith traditions was the fear of engaging other religions. The breadth of experiences by participants spread across engaging with faiths that do not align with their

own, faith traditions where they experienced harm, and faith traditions that are considered opposed to the truth of their own and truth at all. This was a significant barrier to sustaining engagement and building deep relationships across faith traditions. Some faith leaders limit the extent of their engagement so as not to feel like they are compromising their values, while other faith leaders, even within that same faith tradition, on the other end of this lens, hold it intrinsic to their faith values to be open to other faiths. A provocative tension exists within the faith traditions where this dichotomy exists.

Some participants strongly want school curricula to include faith values, not just teaching general information about the history or observances of a faith, while other participants do not want any faith values taught in schools. An unexpected discrepant code emerged in a pattern with at least one participant across faith traditions having experiences that shaped a negative lens of advocacy as pushing policy, but not significant enough to be a pattern across all faith traditions to become a theme. The majority of participants held a positive lens on both the potential and actual impact of advocacy and engagement with local government.

### **Findings**

Within the patterns, concepts that are a faith-inspired motivation in one faith family were also an articulated value of faith in another faith family. Significant insight can be synthesized when considering the concepts and principles found across all 10 faith traditions from the lens of all aspects explored in the study: motivations, attributes, emotions, and values. These themes form a profound lens to guide outreach strategies for local government to sustain interfaith relationships and engagement.

### **Patterns Unique to Each Faith Family**

Within the patterns, concepts or principles existed across faith families but described in different wording, as well as the same wording used in different categories across faith families. For example, the concept of humanity is understood as a value in one faith tradition, a motivation as a duty in another faith tradition, and a demonstrated attribute of civic participation in a third faith tradition.

#### ***Dharmic***

Only one participant representing each faith within the three Dharmic faith traditions participated in interviews and provided data. Therefore, the generation of patterns within the Dharmic faith family was limited to a small set of categories found across these three interviews. One uniquely Dharmic pattern was the continued reminder in civic life that Hindus and Sikhs are foreigners, which leaves them with the feeling that their community is only a place of residence and not their home. This emotion grounds the impact of having representation of their faith community in municipal elected and staff positions as a significant attribute of engagement and partnership with local government.

#### **Table 2**

##### *Dharmic Findings*

Categories	Patterns
Motivation: Service to humanity	Motivation: Service to humanity
Attribute: Size and influence	Attribute: Size and influence
Attribute: Holistic community	Attribute: Holistic community
Attribute: Shoulder to shoulder	Attribute: Shoulder to shoulder
Emotion: Transformative	Emotion: Transformative
Value: All flourishing/universal consciousness, self-improvement	Value: All flourishing/universal consciousness, self-improvement

### *Contemporary*

The denominations that evolved in the United States under the umbrella of contemporary religions—Baha’i and Unitarian Universalism (UU)—were established during the late 1700s to mid-1800s, the historic period of the war for independence from Britain and the establishment of the first U.S. presidency. This climate of political revolution and puritanical conflict against a church-backed monarchy grounds fundamental patterns in these faiths that emerged in my interviews. Civic participation was shaped through the lens of the government’s history of intentionally fracturing and dividing the community. This attribute fuels the motivation within the explicit goal within the Baha’i mission to dismantle the fabric of racism. Within the UU faith tradition, a clear commitment exists to disavow the traditional indoctrination of Christian-branded justifications of violence against anyone who didn’t believe as they believed. When the government upholds this same commitment, it is an attribute that invites the sustained civic participation of people of faith.

### **Table 3**

#### *Contemporary Findings*

Categories	
Bahai	UU

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Motivation: Social betterment	Motivation: Standing for right
Motivation: Serving humanity	Motivation: Social betterment
Attribute: Incorporate spiritual wisdom	Attribute: Free thinking
Attribute: Focus on all faiths	Emotion: Gentle/no judgment
Emotion: Healing/prayer	Value: Free/open to new thinking
Value: Unity of mankind is wellness	Value: Healing/sacred care
Value: Sacrificing for others is justice	
Value: Lifting veil of hearts/operating with love	

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Patterns

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Motivation: Societal betterment/serving humanity
Motivation/value: Sacrificing for others is justice, standing for right
Attribute/value: Free, open to spiritual wisdom
Emotion/value: Healing, sacred gentle care, lifting veils from hearts

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### *Abrahamic*

A pattern across Christian, Jewish, and Muslim participants was the sentiment that it was safer to stay within the bubble of their faith community. This emotional response to civic engagement in community-wide municipal spaces emerged from a fear of retaliation that has compelled either silence or an intentional shrinking of their voice to ensure they are not too loud in their feedback, complaints, requests, or evaluation of municipal actions and policies.

This pattern further shaped how members of these faith communities navigate their engagement with government. Various approaches emerged in my findings from seeking balanced bipartisanship by finding alignment with all political parties, to remaining apolitical without any articulation of ideology or agenda to withstand the winds of change as political power shifts from election to election, to maintaining an impartial influence by holding the center across the political ideological spectrum.

Data analysis also revealed two significant values specific to Abrahamic faith engagement that are worth understanding to help local government build capacity. Within the Muslim community, gendered roles that instill value in women who are focused on their responsibilities within their households limit their consideration of the value of their involvement in public civic life. Similarly, within the Jewish community, one principle of great esteem is “save a life, save the world,” which sets a high standard for civic participation activities to hold value for their involvement.

**Table 4***Abrahamic Findings*

Categories		
Jewish	Muslim	Christianity
Motivation: Repair community	Motivation: Custodians/care	Motivation/value:
Motivation: Preventative	Attribute: Active concern	Paradigm of community
Attribute: Time and attention span	Attribute: Constant communication	care/future vision/not self, others
Emotion: Fear of retaliation	Attribute: Advises, navigates, facilitates	Attribute/emotion: Active and passionate concern
Emotion: Cold, empty, performative	Attribute: Develop solidarity for safety	Attribute: Listening to link, less talk/red
Emotion: People believing lies	Attribute: Unique visibility in common space	tape/collaborative
Value: Welcome the whole individual	Emotion: To be heard but not too loud	Attribute: Understanding distinctions of faiths
Value: Humanity is helping distress in town	Emotion: Convicted by beliefs, no limits	Emotion:
	Emotion: Discomfort in Christian interfaith spaces	Home/acceptance
	Emotion: Patience in overcoming mistrust	Emotion: Deep collective spiritual connective experience
	Emotion: Welcome, shun exclusion	
	Value: Clear conscience	
	Value: Actions earn respect	
	Value: Wisdom not emotions	
	Value: Responsibility for neighbors	
Patterns		
Motivation/attribute: Paradigm of care		
Motivation/attribute: Preventative solidarity collaboration		
Attribute/emotion: Active and passionate concern		
Attribute/emotion/value: Spiritual wisdom, faith distinctions/believing lies, discomfort		
Emotion/value: Welcome home, whole acceptance		

**Interfaith Themes**

The analysis of patterns generated four themes that are grounded in a shared lexicon of principles across all faith traditions: (a) the demonstration and duty of humanity, (b) a paradigm of healing, (c) spiritual growth, and (d) forging freedoms. These four themes formed a new framework of needs analysis for my client.

### *Addressing the Gap in Practice*

Over the past 5 decades, the concept of needs analysis has evolved into broader, holistic community planning that centers on the human needs of people. Contemporary conceptual frameworks of needs analysis are based on Maslow's hierarchy, where self-transcendence is the highest human need. The review of the literature spanning 70 years of research on needs analysis revealed that self-transcendence has been understood through qualitative scientific perspectives in religious settings. Existing research into settings of public administration has not been available. Sustaining interfaith engagement has been an administrative problem for local government because meeting this highest human need has not been conceptualized in research outside of religious practices.

The findings addressed this gap in practice by conceptualizing the constructs of self-transcendence, the highest human need, into elements of a needs analysis tool for local government interfaith engagement. The conceptual framework of my needs analysis effectively moved the constructs of self-transcendence from the spiritual realm to the municipal realm, to expand my client's capacity for interfaith engagement.

The recommendations in my needs analysis presented a pathway for my client to meet the highest need of community members because sustained interfaith engagement can be achieved when constructs of self-transcendence are framed within public administrative settings. In my needs analysis, I utilized the lens and language of faith concepts and principles that emerged in my findings and translated them into a public administrative framework that centers the highest human need as a community need to be met as a goal of local governance. The insight generated by the findings offered emergent

approaches to link self-transcendence to public administration and subsequently craft an innovative needs analysis tool for local government that addresses the gap in practice hindering interfaith engagement.

### *Needs Analysis Summary*

Thematic analysis generated the four emergent scopes of hospitality, community wellness, learning journeys, and breaking barriers to access as the framework to develop recommendations for my client to sustain interfaith engagement as a pathway to meet the highest human needs of the members in the communities they serve. The core of the recommendations offered outreach strategies to equip local government leaders and staff to recognize the humanity of all people and demonstrate humanity to all people through key channels of engagement; holistically transform communities with their proactive presence in faith-rooted programs and municipal-focused events; prioritize learning and understanding of all the faith communities they serve through specific exchanges; and challenge social norms to create new opportunities for all community members.

The recommendations also offered practical ways for local government leaders and staff to sustain communication, relationships, and partnerships with the full spectrum of faith communities. This set of recommendations operationalized the insight of the thematic analysis into the practical ways they extend invitations to participate in civic activities and municipal programs, develop a yearlong calendar of community-wide events that build interfaith relationships and partnerships with a municipal agency or office, hold direct interaction with faith community members and leaders, and navigate, circumvent, or eliminate bureaucratic blocks for the constituencies.

**Table 5***Interfaith Themes: Humanity, Demonstration and Duty*

Dharmic	Motivation: Service to humanity
Contemporary	Motivation: Societal betterment
Abrahamic	Attribute/emotion: Active and passionate concern

**Table 6***Interfaith Themes: Paradigm of Healing*

Dharmic	Attribute: Holistic community Emotion: Transformative
Contemporary	Emotion/value: Healing, sacred gentle care, lifting veils from hearts, unity is wellness
Abrahamic	Attribute/emotion: Paradigm of care

**Table 7***Interfaith Themes: Spiritual Growth*

Dharmic	Value: All flourishing/universal consciousness, self-improvement
Contemporary	Attribute/value: Free, open to spiritual wisdom
Abrahamic	Attribute/emotion/value: Spiritual wisdom, understanding faith distinctions/people believing “lies”, discomfort

**Table 8***Interfaith Themes: Forging Freedom*

Dharmic	Attribute: Shoulder to shoulder Attribute: Size and influence
Contemporary	Motivation/value: Sacrificing for others is justice, standing for right
Abrahamic	Motivation/attribute: Preventative solidarity, collaboration Emotion/value: Welcome home, whole acceptance

These findings of this study will enhance and enrich the working knowledge and capacity of my client's municipal staff and their practical application of these concepts and principles in their outreach strategies to faith leaders to foster sustainable interfaith engagement.

### **Recommendations**

The specificity of the interview responses of the study participants facilitated the analysis of patterns and themes in the data to develop recommendations for effective outreach strategies grounded in a shared lexicon across the faith traditions collectively represented by study participants. A compilation of previous activities that participants shared they considered successful engagement with local government informed recommendations for sustainability practices for my client. These findings shape the needs analysis as a relevant administrative tool my client can operationalize to fill their practice gap in sustaining interfaith engagement.

### **Outreach Strategies**

Participants in all three faith families shared that elected officials were always receptive when their house of worship reached out to them. However, they confirmed that this was not a reciprocal reality. The lack of consistent outreach by municipal leadership and staff sparked insight into how local government can improve its efforts. Several improvements apply to existing outreach strategies discussed in my literature review. The four themes generated by participant responses offer emergent concepts and approaches that will build the capacity of local government to operationalize practical tools from the spiritual concepts and principles that ground interfaith engagement.

## **Existing Concepts and Approaches**

### ***Marketing Scope***

Increasing digital presence on social media platforms is one of the marketing techniques that researchers have recommended as outreach strategies (Wallace, 2022) to amplify the visibility, presence, awareness, and position of nonprofits. Participant interviews generated several recommendations for my client to leverage digital technology to improve outreach to faith communities. Social media used wisely, particularly YouTube videos and subscription-based platforms, can be beneficial avenues to reach as many people as possible with municipal information and messages. Outreach using text messaging apps has been an effective strategy to convey municipal information, such as school closing notifications during snowstorms. Notifications of upcoming meetings relative to policies need to provide more information than location details. To attract the interest of faith communities, notifications should reference how policies on the meeting agenda will touch their lives, either based on their faith or the impact on their faith community.

### ***Technical Scope***

Centralized digital spaces that provide resources to citizens have been recommended by researchers as an essential outreach to communities from a technical scope (Pouraryan, 2021), especially relevant in creating a culture of shared preparedness for short-term disaster relief. Participant interviews generated similar recommendations for a resource hub but with a long-term scope for local government outreach efforts. From short videos, flyers, posters, and newsletters, various media types should be utilized

to connect faith communities with resources that meet their needs that are not widely known and convey to faith communities how to connect and engage in the initiatives of various municipal agencies. To support interfaith relationship-building, the hub should include a directory of houses of worship in the municipality.

## **Emergent Concepts and Approaches**

### ***Hospitality***

The insight generated from the patterns under the humanity theme (Table 5) can guide local government outreach as municipal officials and staff who are focused on extending hospitality to faith communities. The theme's core concepts and principles can be practically operationalized in the ways local government extends invitations to participate in civic activities and municipal programs. This outreach strategy can leverage the language and lens of faith traditions in recognizing the humanity of all people, demonstrating humanity, and fulfilling our duties to humanity through several key channels of engagement identified by participants in my study.

**Meetings.** In addition to sending general public hearing notices, invite faith leaders by name and with intention. Find the chief staffer or direct liaison for the administration or governing body of the house of worship who is best positioned to respond, engage, and follow up. Tailor messages that can speak to each faith community, not only those with the strongest lobby voice. Reach out with the visibility that you are also inviting businesses and residents near the house of worship, so the desired engagement is initiated as a collective community endeavor for that location.

**Online Clearinghouse.** Local government agencies should set up easy, highly visible, structured online clearinghouses to collect, filter, and vet ideas and suggestions from constituents. This dedicated portal should invite feedback, not complaints, like an ombudsperson site. The public can become aware of issues, pinpoint where the public's desire for change exists, and identify common policy recommendations received from the public. In a transparent cycle of input, they can track the government's response, analysis, progress, and impact of the issues they have given input and feedback on, as well as what the next steps are on the horizon. Current cycles stop after the public gives input to municipal staff and officials. The cycle should be framed and grounded in meaningful program evaluation and general accountability of agency heads and managers. Study participants expressed frustration over the lack of responsiveness by elected officials after initially meeting or responding to confirm receipt of their messages over issues they are passionate about addressing. Responsiveness should not be relegated only to advocacy groups but should include individuals.

**Surveys.** Local government should take a more inviting tone with surveys and make a dedicated effort to reach faith leaders who may be unable to attend public meetings. Surveys should share the issues affecting their faith community, positively and negatively, and they would want to ensure a policy is attached to them. Questions should solicit where they would like to see policy change, their interest level in an issue or policy, and if they would participate in follow-up conversations. All general surveys of the community should also include the identification of a respondent's religion to ensure municipal government is serving all the people they are elected to represent and serve.

### *Community Wellness*

The insight generated from the patterns under the paradigm of healing theme (Table 6) can guide local government outreach as municipal officials and staff who are focused on the community's holistic wellness. The theme's core concepts and principles can be practically operationalized in the ways local government develops a regular (monthly, quarterly, annually, biennially), yearlong calendar of community-wide events that build interfaith relationships and partnerships with a municipal agency or office. This outreach strategy can leverage the language and lens of faith traditions in transforming communities with proactive presence in faith-rooted programs and municipal-focused events identified by participants in my study.

**Faith-Rooted Programs.** Annual holy days and observances of non-Christian faith communities are ideal opportunities to build interfaith relationships with local government. Gatherings traditionally convened by a faith community for its members can be expanded to amplify broader interfaith principles and presence creatively. One example of a faith-rooted program heralded by participants was the traditional iftar meals during the month of fasting during Ramadan observed by the Muslim community, which has expanded to community-wide iftars hosted by mosques, and now the local government hosts an annual interfaith iftar. Participants also recollected a special "Patriot Shabbat" that could return as an expanded event on the municipal calendar. On the Friday closest to September 11, the Jewish gathering centered on the presence of first responders in the city, with local elected officials and regional dignitaries invited.

Another example of faith-rooted programming that can build interfaith relationships is mindfulness meditation practices that can become a part of physical education in the school system. In other venues, such as prisoner restorative projects or juvenile disciplinary initiatives, mindfulness meditation is a recognized method of trauma-informed resilience; however, the practice is not recognized as originating in the yoga practice of Hindu faith. Integrating 10-15 minutes of breathing exercises or a five-minute meditation into physical education classes, while teaching how a Hindu practice can contribute to the physical well-being of all children, regardless of their faith, epitomizes inclusion and demonstrates how holistic faith practices can transcend all boundaries.

A powerful example of the impact of creatively expanded interfaith engagement is a community water blessing held with faith leaders nearly a decade ago that still resonates today. Each leader brought water that is considered holy to their faith tradition and poured it into one basin, from which a member of the Shaunie tribe performed a ceremonial blessing on the group.

**Municipal-Focused Events.** Participants stressed the need for minority communities to have more exposure to local government agencies and the services available. The most referenced agency was the health department. They recommended more health fairs in more diverse venues across the municipality to bridge this gap. A reciprocal recommendation was to provide a table for houses of worship to share information on their activities and programs during community fairs and cultural conferences convened by local government agencies and offices. One participant recalled

a creative example of a community-wide engaging school district event held years ago called Superintendent Day that could return as a feature on the municipal calendar.

Another example highlighted by several participants was the deep interfaith engagement fostered by a special community-wide fair held on International Day of Prayer for Peace, which all recommended should become a regular event for the municipality. Seventy-five agencies participated to discuss their services, how they help the community, and how to develop partnerships and collaboration. Various houses of worship hosted gathering spaces for special programs that featured the cultural elements of their faith through music, readings, and dance to engage the community successfully.

### *A Learning Journey*

The insight generated from the patterns under the spiritual growth theme (Table 7) can guide local government outreach as municipal officials and staff who are focused on creating open spaces that foster relationships among faith communities and with municipal staff. The theme's core concepts and principles can be practically operationalized in the ways local government holds direct, personal interaction with faith community members and leaders. This outreach strategy can leverage the language and lens of faith traditions in prioritizing learning and understanding through specific exchanges identified by participants in my study.

**Interfaith Council or Committee.** Monthly meetings where faith leaders can share the activities of their ministries and explore how they can make their resources available to the municipality, and municipal staff can share new initiatives and explore the possibilities for partnerships.

**Expertise Consultation.** Deliberate consultations with the spectrum of community groups who have been working in the areas and fields the municipality has targeted for improvement plans, before the municipality makes decisions. Municipal staff will demonstrate respect for the knowledge gained from community expert ideas and information on feasible next steps, rather than making decisions perceived as unilateral. One of the primary homeless shelters in the county was first established by several churches, which the county later offered to fund, and today it is a county-managed facility.

**Congregation-Wide Listening Sessions.** Regularly scheduled visits by municipal staff and local officials across all agencies, especially lesser-engaged ones like marshals in the fire department. An opportunity to check in on issues, answer questions on emerging issues, and offer recommendations.

### ***Breaking Access Barriers***

The insight generated from the patterns under the forging freedoms theme (Table 8) can guide local government outreach as municipal officials and staff who are focused on breaking access barriers for faith communities. The theme's core concepts and principles can be practically operationalized in the ways local government navigates, circumvents, or eliminates bureaucratic blocks for residents. This outreach strategy can leverage the language and lens of faith traditions in challenging social norms to create new pathways and opportunities along several priority areas identified as barriers by participants in my study.

**Hierarchy.** Participants experienced blocks within the school system where teachers felt they could not address issues with administrative positions above their principal. Despite the existence of a Citizens Review Board for the police department, participants did not have any opportunity to speak directly with the police department. Participants experienced a general block in local government leadership who do not want to work on new programs or develop innovative ideas unless they create the parameters and maintain ownership of the work.

**Obscurity.** Specific to the smaller Dharmic faith communities within the municipality, some houses of worship for Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh communities are nondescript homes and buildings, without prominent steeples or domes, stained glass, or bells to call attention to their location. This physical obscurity contributes to the safety the faith community seeks to foster for its members but, in turn, the isolation of this insulation creates a significant block to efforts to raise awareness and build relationships with the community.

**Reentry.** The difficulty that vulnerable demographics face in accessing services and benefits is often overlooked when considering the effective delivery of social services. The need to streamline processes and procedures for people struggling with homelessness and low incomes could be facilitated by innovative methods to deliver information and provide vital services like health care screenings or obtaining a driver's license, such as mobile units. Participants highlighted that when people are released from local jails, they must retrieve their IDs from another location in the city than the one where they surrendered their belongings upon incarceration.

**Representation.** Having members of faith communities in elected positions and on municipal boards and commissions can start policy conversations and raise awareness of issues within houses of worship earlier. They can facilitate municipal leaders and staff connections with members of faith communities, especially if they are active in a house of worship. This representation helps break the barrier of faith communities freely and easily visiting the offices of public servants. Eventually, it motivates members of faith communities to seek these municipal roles and elected positions.

## **Sustainability Practices**

### ***Communication and Engagement***

Miscommunication was equally an issue for participants as the lack of communication. Time can be misspent trying to solve the wrong problem because local government representatives did not hear the problem correctly. It is better to overcommunicate with transparency to ensure the effective articulation of issues and appropriate solution-making. Several recommendations emerged in participant interviews to reinforce outreach strategies with practical ways to sustain engagement.

**Dedicated Staff.** A professional faith-based liaison, trained to engage with people of different faiths. Establish a community outreach department and identify appropriate staff who will be direct contacts for faith communities. Interdepartmental peer-to-peer training so municipal staff who have adequate capacity in building trust with faith communities and facilitating conversations over policy can help build the capacity of other municipal staff who need to improve their outreach efforts and can glean from what is working for the good communicators that exist in other agencies.

**Regular Communications.** Monthly newsletters with highly detailed information covering a broad range of activities of municipal agencies. One-stop shopping menu and updates. A continued explanation of the benefits of engaging with local government.

**Filling Gaps.** A continuing schedule of one-on-one conversations with parents throughout the year, not only during the orientation period at the start of the school year, was deemed essential in the absence of PTAs in schools and the lack of knowledge of any structure that would have replaced traditional PTAs. Resources in multiple languages to have a broader reach, especially into the Muslim community, a gap exposed tragically during the COVID pandemic when language barriers resulted in extended weeks of delays in message translations into Arabic, Urdu, Bangla, Pashto, and Farsi.

### ***Relationship-Building and Inclusion***

**Formal Meeting Format.** More interactive. Small group discussions to deepen degrees of trust to share their stories within distinct groups, composed of individuals with political, generational, or gender differences. Creates a common space to find common ground, have an authentic voice, close intergenerational gaps, and build partnerships. The police department created a group where different community members meet monthly to discuss their issues. A goal should be set to have a chaplain from every faith tradition that engages all municipal agencies. The police department also coordinated presentations from members of each faith tradition to share their faith values as a method to equip officers with the necessary sensitivities for encounters with members of their faith community.

**Interfaith Crisis Rapid Response.** A municipal office hosted a solely Jewish conversation in rapid response to the October 7, 2023, attack with materials explicitly referencing religious hate and antisemitism. Upon complaints from the Muslim community, the office convened a secondary meeting weeks later. Still, participants considered the municipal promotion too general, inviting the public to simply learn about Islam. Participants from Muslim and Dharmic faith traditions highlighted that convening two separate conversations and the silence about the violent backlash on the Muslim community in the municipality demonstrated local government's lack of capacity for true interfaith engagement.

**Community Book Club.** Collective interfaith learning space convened by municipal staff to discuss books from each faith tradition that teach the complex histories of faith communities, with the aim of learning not to hate because of it, but to learn to appreciate other faiths.

### ***Partnership and Policymaking***

The focus of policy meeting agendas should also encompass dialogue on the prevention of issues, not only reactionary or crisis response. It is also vital for municipal agencies to map the resource capacity of faith communities. Some have vast resources that can continually be a helpful bridge for municipal staff, such as one church that helped the Department of Social Services find housing for more than 300 people after doing it for a few people in need. Smaller faith communities without a lobbyist to petition on their behalf and with limited resources, who provide services independently from municipal agencies, could benefit from municipal funding to support and expand their

programs. Despite this lack of financial support from the state or local governments, one Hindu temple in the municipality was on its own in providing COVID relief for multiple families.

### **Future Research**

This study involved only one participant from each Dharmic faith tradition, so future research focused on interviews with a greater number of these faith communities will contribute further depth and insight to engage this demographic. Greater civic participation and engagement with faith communities can be stirred with findings from further research that evaluates the conceptual framework, language, timing, and channels used to disseminate information to faith communities about current municipal policies, programs, initiatives, processes, and systems.

This study also revealed the need for a better understanding of civic participation beyond voting and elected officials, the area where most participants immediately framed their initial responses. Follow-up questions prompted their reflection on engagement with staff of the health department, school system, police divisions, special commissions, and other municipal offices. A valuable dimension in local public administration can be improved with research into the levels of engagement with the public that municipal staff has over a period of 1 year in the execution of their responsibilities.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study provide insight into language, approaches, and specific practices that would effectively reach a broader spectrum of people of faith in my client's municipality. Municipal officials and staff can be equally empowered to improve their

outreach and relationship-building outcomes. This administrative capacity can be modeled and adapted in other municipalities based on their composition and ratio of faith demographics. Local government conversations over policy development, evaluation, and revision can be widened with increased feedback and ideas resulting from the implementation of the recommended outreach strategies and sustainability practices.

The implications of the findings will also be reciprocal for municipalities that implement the recommendations. As trusted relationships are built with elected officials and municipal staff, more people of faith will also build greater confidence in the government's response and outcomes of reporting critical issues, such as hate crimes, vandalism, and targeted violence against members of their community and their houses of worship. Sustained interfaith relationships between faith communities and local government build community resilience as an antidote to hate and the isolation within which hate breeds. By applying the shared lexicon that grounds interfaith concepts and principles of civic engagement, local government partnerships, and community building, the constitution of community will expand to intrinsically include houses of worship. A further implication of this study's recommendations is the capacity to co-create with faith communities to envision the policy table in new formats, processes, and locations that will foster sustained engagement to generate input and review of all faith communities.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I established credibility and confidence in my findings through member checks (McKim, 2023) and peer review (Stahl & King, 2020). I established transferability using thick description (Stahl & King) to convey the narratives through quotes from the

responses of each participant and the collective narrative of my overall findings. I outlined my recommendations within the context of best sustainability practices and a grounding lexicon for future studies (Stahl & King) that can be used by researchers and public administrators who seek a greater understanding of how to develop diverse and inclusive community partnerships. I established the dependability of my findings by completing an inquiry audit (Carcary, 2009) with an independent colleague who was a former institutional researcher who reviewed my process and analysis. Walden University's Review Board will conduct further scrutiny of my methodology.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

Every faith community in my client's jurisdiction, more than the initially proposed seven targeted traditions, is represented in the study, which embodies one strength of my study. The 10 faiths notably included diversity within the Jewish faith, with members of Reform, conservative, and orthodox synagogues, and geographic diversity with members of the county's eastern and western assemblies of Baha'i congregations. This study's strength is also reinforced by narratives of participants who have engaged with more than local elected officials on the County Board of Supervisors, but also the school system, police department, fire department, health department, and human rights commission.

The starkest limitation of this study is two-fold: Only one participant from each of the three Dharmic faiths (Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh), and all three participants were male. The Dharmic communities in this jurisdiction are very small, more tight-knit, and obscured from public visibility. These characteristics indicate the isolation of these faith

communities, whether as an intentional protective measure or an unavoidable and undesired fact of their community's life. One Buddhist monastery, which did not participate in the study, unequivocally upheld its isolation by explicitly stating on its website that they do not collaborate with other Buddhist communities, and prioritizes serving the needs of its members, who predominantly do not speak English. This reality of isolation compounds language barriers facing Asian ethnic faith communities and left me wondering whether they accurately estimated the value of creating an avenue to connect with local resource providers to support the needs of its members. Furthermore, the absence of female perspectives and experiences in these faith traditions limited the wisdom and scope of the Dharmic concepts and language within the findings.

Only four of the 24 study participants were involved in my 2022 initiative with the jurisdiction's police department to combat hate crimes, which was lower than the anticipated probability that participants would know me and therefore provide biased responses based on their familiarity with my previous work and this study's approach to the client's problem. This high level of objectivity among the participants contributes to the trustworthiness of the findings.

### **Summary**

This study generated patterns in concepts and principles unique to each family of faith traditions, which are significant keys for local government to open the door to connect and sustain engagement with faith communities. The interfaith themes that thread these patterns amplify demonstrations and duties of humanity, healing and care, spiritual growth, and holistic community solidarity, and are an essential body of knowledge for

local governments to understand how to shape outreach strategies and apply practices better to sustain engagement. The words shared across the interfaith themes highlighted in the findings reveal a grounded lexicon that can be infused throughout the recommendations. With the effective dissemination of the findings to my client, elected officials, municipal staff, and faith communities, I can raise awareness of the significant implications of this study and equip all stakeholders for the effective implementation of its recommendations.

## Section 5: Dissemination Plan and Conclusion

### **Dissemination Plan**

Upon the approval of this research by Walden University, I will deliver my findings to my client organization as a needs analysis via an emailed PDF and a post-mailed hard copy. I will schedule an appointment with the head of my client organization to review my recommendations and confirm a date to present to its policy review group members at one of their monthly meetings.

I will also present my research during a symposium for all municipal staff in coordination with the county government to enable other municipal agencies to utilize the insight from my research to expand their administrative capacity to achieve sustainable interfaith engagement in their area of municipal governance.

Over the course of a year immediately following the publication of my study by Walden University, I will further disseminate my research findings to broader audiences through a series of collaborative community events hosted by a house of worship for each of the 10 faith traditions represented by participants in my study to help increase community-wide understanding of the key themes within their faith tradition as a foundation to establishing or reinforcing interfaith relationships.

### **Summary**

The insight of my findings is a key for local government to unlock the doors to understanding interfaith engagement to help craft policies that will benefit the whole community, not just one faith community. One of the greatest implications for positive social change is the potential for municipalities to sustain interfaith engagement that will

build community resilience, hope, and healing to address the needs of community wounds, family scars of memory, and individual devastation caused by the increasing religious and racial violence consuming human interactions. Through highly engaged interfaith relationships and partnerships, local government can enact and reinforce public policies that bring, protect, or restore the wholeness of their communities, wherein sustained interfaith engagement itself becomes a cardinal element of community life and experience.

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## Appendix A: Participant Invite Email

Dear Mr./Ms.,

I am a doctoral student in the School of Public Policy and Administration at Walden University. I am conducting research to explore principles and concepts of current civic engagement and partnership shared among faith communities in your county. From my study's findings, I will develop effective outreach strategies within a needs analysis as an administrative tool for sustainable interfaith engagement that local government can utilize to engage faith communities that expand the diversity and inclusion of municipal staff and the community partners that they serve through its policy review working group.

Faith engagement is a powerful vehicle to drive social change in major issue areas where faith leaders can anchor or center the work of local government, such as hate crimes against houses of worship and people of faith, which has significantly increased every year since 2012. Community cohesion can improve reporting of hate crimes and supports preventive measures against religious violence, a priority not just for my client, but will be of interest to community leaders, scholars, citizens, advocates, law enforcement, policymakers and elected officials.

This is a new but important area of research in public administration. The tendency to approach interfaith relationship-building within the community of my client has leaned toward one-dimensional ecumenical strategies of gathering diverse faith communities together in one place. These occasions have achieved a fleeting unity. Sustainable partnerships are the product of authentic relationship-building. Through one-

on-one interviews with 14-21 faith leaders and faith influencers representing the seven faith traditions identified within my client's jurisdiction, my study's findings have the potential to deepen the administrative capacity of my client to sustain interfaith partnerships.

The records of my study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, I will not include any information that could identify the agency or individuals who participated. Interviews will take approximately 60 minutes to complete via Zoom or in-person based upon the availability and convenience of selected participants. Interview questions will be provided to you at least 1 week prior to the date of the interview.

Eligible participants must be (a) 18 years of age or older, (b) active members within a faith community or denomination, (c) have a knowledge of sacred texts, history, concepts, and principles of their professed faith, and (d) have experience engaging local government. If you meet those requirements and are willing to participate in my study, or have any questions or concerns, please call me at (404) 447-6465 or email me at [dmuhammad@waldenu.edu](mailto:dmuhammad@waldenu.edu).

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dora Muhammad

Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

Public Administration and Policy

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### Civic Participation

1. What does your faith wisdom teach about adherents getting involved in the decision-making of civic life?
2. What do you believe are the benefits and consequences of active involvement in civic life, generally?
3. What do you believe are the advantages and disadvantages of engaging with the local government offices and agencies?
4. How do you communicate with members of your congregation regarding interactions with the county government staff to shape local policies?
  - a. How would you encourage or guide members of your congregation in enhancing their relationships with municipal staff?
  - b. What faith-rooted words, phrases or quotes have you found to be effective?
5. What specific principles in your faith do you use to inform and justify your active participation as a stakeholder in local government policy decision-making?
6. What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of your faith community at the table?

### Partnership

7. How does the local government currently relate to your faith community?
8. How are partnerships with government portrayed within your faith tradition's texts?

- a. How has your faith community historically experienced partnerships with government?
  - b. In what ways do you think this history impacts the effectiveness of current outreach efforts by the Prince William County government?
9. How would you describe the current outreach efforts to your faith community by the county government?
- a. What in your opinion could be improved?
  - b. Have you ever lived in a municipality that utilized contrasting outreach strategies?
  - c. What specific practices and principles would you measure to assess the success of municipal outreach strategies?

#### Interfaith Relationships & Inclusive Communities

10. Tell me about a time or occasion when you witnessed either first-hand or as a third party an authentic interfaith partnership with local government?
11. What do you believe lies at the core of the gap of interfaith engagement and perpetuates the isolation of members of your faith community? What do you see as barriers to interfaith engagement?
12. What do you believe your faith community can contribute to building interfaith relationships and inclusive communities in the county?

Wrap up

13. What additional faith principles or concepts would you like me to know about that we did not discuss? Is there anything else that you would like me to know that I did not ask?

## Appendix C: Codes

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	
P#	Codes
	Bahai
19	MOTIVATION: community building - providing resources, education
21	MOTIVATION: dismantling racism
19	<b>MOTIVATION: serving humanity</b>
21	<b>MOTIVATION: serving humanity, God, creation</b>
20	<b>MOTIVATION: societal betterment - healing through unity</b>
20	<b>MOTIVATION: societal betterment - allegiance to laws</b>
21	<b>MOTIVATION: societal betterment - pure and goodly deeds</b>
19	ATTRIBUTE: releasing the past hurts
19	ATTRIBUTE: time commitment considered
19	ATTRIBUTE: small incremental actions
19	ATTRIBUTE: guidance to preserve peace
21	ATTRIBUTE: familiarity with issues
21	ATTRIBUTE: offer your resources to solutions
21	ATTRIBUTE: universal participation
21	<b>ATTRIBUTE: incorporate spiritual knowledge/wisdom</b>
20	<b>ATTRIBUTE: incorporate spiritual knowledge/wisdom</b>
20	ATTRIBUTE: government fractures community
21	<b>ATTRIBUTE: can't focus on one community and forget others</b>
19	<b>ATTRIBUTE: don't press views of one religion on others, talk about others</b>
20	<b>EMOTION: healing</b>
21	<b>EMOTION: as a prayer</b>
20	EMOTION: friendliness (listening ear)
20	EMOTION: patience
21	EMOTION: valued
21	EMOTION: awkward in non-faith oriented conversations
21	VALUE: respect for other beliefs
20	<b>VALUE: operate with love</b>
19	<b>VALUE: lifting veils of our hearts</b>
21	<b>VALUE: cultivate divine gems in each individual</b>
19	<b>VALUE: selfishness, sacrifice for your neighbor</b>
21	<b>VALUE: helping justice</b>
21	<b>VALUE: sacrifice is a gift to others</b>
21	<b>VALUE: oneness of mankind/care for wellbeing</b>
19	<b>VALUE: mankind is citizens of the earth</b>
20	<b>VALUE: unity of mankind</b>
	Black Protestant
7	MOTIVATION: reconciliation of all to God, one another
5	<b>MOTIVATION: minister to marginalized, defy social norms, servanthood, thread humanity, humility</b>
7	<b>MOTIVATION: minister to marginalized, defy social norms, servanthood, thread humanity, humility</b>
6	<b>MOTIVATION: community care, transformative leadership to leave better world</b>
7	<b>MOTIVATION: community care, transformative leadership to leave better world</b>

- 5 **MOTIVATION: divine expectation, angels meeting needs, purpose shift**  
 5 atmospheres, test of love  
 7 **MOTIVATION: divine expectation, angels meeting needs, purpose shift**  
 7 atmospheres, test of love  
 8 **MOTIVATION: divine expectation, angels meeting needs, purpose shift**  
 8 atmospheres, test of love  
 8 ATTRIBUTE: those with access inviting others to join them at the table  
 5 ATTRIBUTE: can't be blind, responsibility to see others  
 6 ATTRIBUTE: time involved, know agenda ahead of time  
 5 ATTRIBUTE: louder voices of empathy than condemnation, counter negative media  
 5 narratives  
 7 ATTRIBUTE: deconstruct inhumanity, interconnection across all backgrounds  
 7 **ATTRIBUTE: incremental change, quiet steady work of relationship building**  
 8 **ATTRIBUTE: incremental change, quiet steady work of relationship building**  
 5 **ATTRIBUTE: strength in numbers, constituent influence, mobilizing masses**  
 7 **ATTRIBUTE: strength in numbers, constituent influence, mobilizing masses**  
 6 **ATTRIBUTE: well-rounded understanding of all faiths to build respect**  
 7 **ATTRIBUTE: well-rounded understanding of all faiths to build respect**  
 8 **ATTRIBUTE: well-rounded understanding of all faiths to build respect**  
 5 **ATTRIBUTE: collaborative, common table, growing beyond initial transaction**  
 6 **ATTRIBUTE: collaborative, common table, growing beyond initial transaction**  
 7 **ATTRIBUTE: collaborative, common table, growing beyond initial transaction**  
 5 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds active concern, delivering promises, accountability**  
 6 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds active concern, delivering promises, accountability**  
 7 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds active concern, delivering promises, accountability**  
 5 **ATTRIBUTE: understanding stories of past struggle to understand progress**  
 8 **ATTRIBUTE: understanding stories of past struggle to understand progress**  
 5 EMOTION: god complex of electeds  
 8 EMOTION: direct impact of voice  
 8 EMOTION: alignment, understanding capacity  
 6 EMOTION: lack of support due to mistrust  
 5 EMOTION: safe haven for electeds than neighborhood  
 5 **EMOTION: passionate concern**  
 6 **EMOTION: passionate concern**  
 8 **EMOTION: passionate concern**  
 7 **EMOTION: deep collective spiritual experience**  
 8 **EMOTION: deep collective spiritual experience**  
 5 EMOTION: room for everybody, politically impartial, central, no judgement  
 5 **EMOTION: valued, deserving of attention & invite to the table**  
 6 **EMOTION: valued, deserving of attention & invite to the table**  
 5 **EMOTION: home, understood, courageous vulnerability, authenticity, may hurt**  
 5 **but not harm**  
 7 **EMOTION: home, understood, courageous vulnerability, authenticity, may hurt**  
 7 **but not harm**  
 8 **EMOTION: home, understood, courageous vulnerability, authenticity, may hurt**  
 8 **but not harm**  
 5 VALUE: integrity in service  
 7 VALUE: constant learning

- 7 VALUE: authentic faith, unchanging in order to reach people
- 6 **VALUE: paradigm of care**
- 7 **VALUE: paradigm of care**
- 7 **VALUE: sacred humanity, bridging, assembly of saints, relationships**
- 8 **VALUE: sacred humanity, bridging, assembly of saints, relationships**
- 7 **VALUE: empowerment through vision of the future**
- 8 **VALUE: empowerment through vision of the future**

Buddhist

- 24 **MOTIVATION: humanity, we are brothers and sisters**
- 24 MOTIVATION: cultivating peace
- 24 **ATTRIBUTE: acute listening**
- 24 ATTRIBUTE: balance/the middle
- 24 ATTRIBUTE: sharing understanding
- 24 ATTRIBUTE: respect differences
- 24 EMOTION: deeper comfort in faith
- 24 EMOTION: care not to harm others
- 24 **EMOTION: transformative - self-control**
- 24 **VALUE: self-examination, self-improvement**

Catholic

- MOTIVATION: fruitful life is building improved future for community, not individual**
- 3 **MOTIVATION: fruitful life is building improved future for community, not individual**
- 4 **MOTIVATION: fruitful life is building improved future for community, not individual**
- 3 MOTIVATION: align policies to make even playing field, address suffering
- 3 **MOTIVATION: social justice commitment to the poor**
- 4 **MOTIVATION: social justice commitment to the poor (care for others needs)**
- 3 ATTRIBUTE: welcome ideas, persistence in requesting response
- 3 **ATTRIBUTE: transparent communication**
- 3 ATTRIBUTE: civic leadership, offer direct services through house of worship
- 3 ATTRIBUTE: personal public access to electeds in the community, sharing info is power
- ATTRIBUTE: honoring diverse perspectives, not imposing autocracy, listening to link**
- 3 **ATTRIBUTE: honoring diverse perspectives, not imposing autocracy, listening to link**
- 4 ATTRIBUTE: staff engagement: connections with same faith groups with staff and electeds (affinity groups)
- 4 ATTRIBUTE: regular meetings with the board
- 4 **ATTRIBUTE: understanding difference in access to Catholic vs Protestant services**
- 3 **EMOTION: accepted**
- 4 **EMOTION: beauty in interfaith spaces**
- 3 **EMOTION: resilient connectivity**
- EMOTION: open to ecumenical spaces, fears of proselytization, superiority of Christians**
- 4 **EMOTION: open to ecumenical spaces, fears of proselytization, superiority of Christians**
- 3 EMOTION: desire to feel empowered by information shared
- 3 EMOTION: frustration in meetings, dismissed, placated
- 3 EMOTION: too much red tape
- 3 VALUE: servant leadership
- 3 VALUE: justice, equal treatment and opportunity, rights
- 4 **VALUE: respecting dignity of all human beings**
- 4 **VALUE: accepting not condemning “the wrong way”**

3 **VALUE: responsibility of how we are with others, do with and for others**

Hindu

- 23 **MOTIVATION: service to humanity**
- 23 **ATTRIBUTE: size & influence**
- 23 **ATTRIBUTE: holistic community**
- 23 EMOTION: not at home/foreigner
- 23 EMOTION: fear of repercussions
- 23 **EMOTION: transformative - courage**
- 23 **EMOTION: transformative - upliftment**
- 23 VALUE: common/universal consciousness

Jewish

- 15 MOTIVATION: create a welcoming space
- 13 MOTIVATION: electorate power, tell them what we want
- 15 MOTIVATION: community is on the radar to be looked after
- 14 MOTIVATION: example for future generations to appreciate others
- 16 **MOTIVATION: preventative - obligation to others, persecution, exile**
- 14 **MOTIVATION: preventative - deal with problems before they become threats**
- 15 MOTIVATION: finding common ethics to build/base society
- 14 **MOTIVATION: repair of the community**
- 13 **MOTIVATION: repair - change unjust laws not just break them**
- 15 **MOTIVATION: repair - cycle of justice is charity, balance, partner with God**
- 16 **MOTIVATION: repair - advocacy for others, make world better, rep of God**
- 15 MOTIVATION: human dignity, respect for others, connection is responsibility
- 15 MOTIVATION/ATTRIBUTE: winds of change of power, not supporting one ideology
- 14 ATTRIBUTE: skilled communicator with sensitivity and courage to challenge
- 14 ATTRIBUTE: enhance opportunities to work with local staff
- 16 ATTRIBUTE: cultivate dialogue in sound bite social media age
- 16 ATTRIBUTE: learning together to fix things
- 15 ATTRIBUTE: not catering to one faith, dominating space, protect rights
- 15 ATTRIBUTE: apolitical, no agendas or religious beliefs pushed
- 13 **ATTRIBUTE: considering time and attention span**
- 15 **ATTRIBUTE: considering time and attention span**
- 16 **ATTRIBUTE: considering time and attention span**
- 16 ATTRIBUTE: taking initiative to learn, vulnerable asks
- 15 ATTRIBUTE: mend the past, open to conversation
- 13 ATTRIBUTE: asking public for recommendations and explanation on improvement
- 13 ATTRIBUTE: creating safety in groups to discuss concerns will build unity
- 15 ATTRIBUTE: creating safety in groups to discuss concerns will build unity
- 16 ATTRIBUTE: being proactive, preventative, less reactionary
- 16 EMOTION: fear of unknown outcome, relationship will open up
- 16 EMOTION: not being reactionary, reaching out only in need
- 14 EMOTION: origin country govts were not kind
- 15 EMOTION: public service is beautiful without ego, making names
- 13 **EMOTION: fear of retaliation**
- 14 **EMOTION: fear of retaliation**
- 15 **EMOTION: fear of retaliation**
- 13 **EMOTION: cold, empty, performative**
- 15 **EMOTION: cold, empty, performative**

- 14 **EMOTION: working with people believed to have faith in lies**  
 15 **EMOTION: working with people believed to have faith in lies**  
 16 **EMOTION: working with people believed to have faith in lies**  
 15 VALUE: ethical moral challenges relevant to policies  
 14 VALUE: save a life, save the world  
 15 **VALUE: steward to every individual, humility, protect dignity**  
 16 **VALUE: pursuing justice, divine spark in everyone, worthy**  
 13 **VALUE: be the human, help the distress in the town**  
 13 **VALUE: meeting needs of everyone in the community**  
 15 VALUE: spiritual authority of rabbis not to take political positions  
 15 **VALUE: seeing a person as a person and not religious label**  
 13 **VALUE: welcome for the whole self of each individual**  
 16 **VALUE: see the stranger in your concept of self**  
 13 VALUE: equality - do not do unto others what is hateful to you
- Mainline Protestant
- 1 MOTIVATION: crossing boundaries, breaking stereotypes, inviting all to the table  
 1 MOTIVATION: make change from mass voices heard  
**MOTIVATION: community care responsibility, impact of upstream change,**  
 1 **alleviate suffering**  
**MOTIVATION: community care responsibility, impact of upstream change,**  
 2 **alleviate suffering**  
 1 **ATTRIBUTE: transparency**  
 1 ATTRIBUTE: staff engagement: meeting for coffee, accepting walk-ins  
 1 ATTRIBUTE: staff engagement: dedicated outreach staff  
 1 **ATTRIBUTE: keep it simple, removing red tape**  
 1 **ATTRIBUTE: sustainable action, less talk**  
 1 **ATTRIBUTE: learning from neighbors**  
 2 ATTRIBUTE: expanding outreach beyond head leaders to next level of leadership  
 2 ATTRIBUTE: appreciation of small/minor differences and progress  
**ATTRIBUTE: improving evaluation process, retaining relational aspects when**  
 2 **streamlining**  
 2 **ATTRIBUTE: understanding distinctions in Christian denominations services**  
 2 EMOTION: fear of retaliation  
 2 **EMOTION: fear of engaging other religions**  
 2 EMOTION: forgotten based on geography, wealth  
 2 EMOTION: absorb, understand issues beyond self  
 2 EMOTION: impersonal regulations, loss of community, not engaging with community  
 2 EMOTION: constructive criticism, open process in evaluating programs  
 1 EMOTION: tension with govt, protect faith from perversion of power  
 1 **EMOTION: religious freedom**  
 2 **EMOTION: religious freedom**  
 1 EMOTION: restoration of all - igniting that principle to engage others  
 1 **EMOTION: transcend religious beliefs, finding religious resonance across faiths**  
 2 VALUE: outreach for relationships not just the punitive  
 2 **VALUE: attention to community needs**  
 1 **VALUE: universal restoration, communal salvation - unity in the community**  
 2 VALUE: faith over contending laws and instructions

1 **VALUE: not self, others; living simply so others can simply live, actualizing change in relations**

2 **VALUE: not self, others; living simply so others can simply live, actualizing change in relations**

Muslim

10 MOTIVATION: accountability of electeds

9 MOTIVATION: reward/virtue in assistance, comfort, dignity of others

10 MOTIVATION: fight for your rights requires engagement

9 MOTIVATION: visibility builds relationships, counters misinformation in media

11 MOTIVATION: voice/input to change society for better

12 MOTIVATION: voice/input to change society for better

9 **MOTIVATION: custodians/obligation to care for the earth/community beyond our own**

10 **MOTIVATION: custodians/obligation to care for the earth/community beyond our own**

11 **MOTIVATION: custodians/obligation to care for the earth/community beyond our own**

12 **MOTIVATION: custodians/obligation to care for the earth/community beyond our own**

11 ATTRIBUTE: foster climate to welcome complaints

12 ATTRIBUTE: counter citizen complacency

12 ATTRIBUTE: healthy people with attitude to solve problems

12 ATTRIBUTE: timely response, avoid life-altering delays

12 ATTRIBUTE: Understanding limitations (gender, socioeconomic)

10 ATTRIBUTE: balanced bipartisan

9 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds community presence, active concern**

10 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds community presence, active concern**

11 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds community presence, active concern**

12 **ATTRIBUTE: electeds community presence, active concern**

9 **ATTRIBUTE: leverage influence into constant communication**

10 **ATTRIBUTE: leverage influence into constant communication**

12 **ATTRIBUTE: leverage influence into constant communication**

10 **ATTRIBUTE: advises, navigates, facilitates**

11 **ATTRIBUTE: advises, navigates, facilitates**

9 **ATTRIBUTE: develop solidarity that fosters safety**

10 **ATTRIBUTE: develop solidarity that fosters safety**

11 **ATTRIBUTE: develop solidarity that fosters safety**

9 **ATTRIBUTE: unique visibility in common space (not one size fits all)**

11 **ATTRIBUTE: unique visibility in common space (not one size fits all)**

12 **ATTRIBUTE: unique visibility in common space (not one size fits all)**

11 EMOTION: unwilling to give up voting power

12 EMOTION: not comfortable with status quo; take action

11 **EMOTION: to be heard, humanity seen; fear of being too loud**

12 **EMOTION: to be heard, humanity seen; fear of being too loud**

9 **EMOTION: convicted by beliefs; no limits**

12 **EMOTION: convicted by beliefs; no limits**

9 **EMOTION: discomfort in Christian-dominated "interfaith" spaces**

12 **EMOTION: discomfort in Christian-dominated "interfaith" spaces**

- 9 **EMOTION: patience overcoming mistrust, corruption**
- 11 **EMOTION: patience overcoming mistrust, corruption**
- 10 **EMOTION: bipartisan welcome; shun exclusion; refuse competition**
- 12 **EMOTION: bipartisan welcome; shun exclusion; refuse competition**
- 11 VALUE: appreciating legacy of US civil rights movement
- 9 VALUE: virtue of doing good
- 11 **VALUE: clear conscience, representing God in our best way, not others**
- 12 **VALUE: clear conscience, representing God in our best way, not others**
- 12 VALUE: flourishing together
- 12 VALUE: humanity of all, egalitarian, no gender, race, faith distinction
- 10 **VALUE: actions earn respect**
- 12 **VALUE: actions earn respect**
- 11 VALUE: protecting vulnerable, humane treatment
- 10 VALUE: standing for justice
- 9 **VALUE: wisdom, not emotions**
- 11 **VALUE: wisdom, not emotions**
- 12 **VALUE: wisdom, not emotions**
- 9 **VALUE: responsible for neighbors**
- 10 **VALUE: responsible for neighbors**
- 11 **VALUE: responsible for neighbors**

Sikh

- 22 **MOTIVATION: service to humanity**
- 22 ATTRIBUTE: representation that inspires
- 22 **ATTRIBUTE: shoulder to shoulder / gentle talk**
- 22 **ATTRIBUTE: size & influence**
- 22 **ATTRIBUTE: holistic community**
- 22 **EMOTION: transformative - confidence**
- 22 **EMOTION: transformative - innovation**
- 22 VALUE: protect and flourish the country

Unitarian Universalist

- 17 MOTIVATION: building positive future
- 18 MOTIVATION: expanding circle of engaged people
- 17 **MOTIVATION: societal betterment - addressing hurt**
- 18 **MOTIVATION: societal betterment - greater impact locally**
- 17 **MOTIVATION: standing for right**
- 18 **MOTIVATION: standing for right**
- 17 **ATTRIBUTE: pulling in unique perspectives**
- 17 ATTRIBUTE: countering Christian-only media
- 17 ATTRIBUTE: assuming good intentions in discussions
- 18 ATTRIBUTE: no justification for violence against others
- 18 **ATTRIBUTE: critical free thinking**
- 17 **EMOTION: make room for views that don't resonate**
- 17 **EMOTION: be gentle with one another**
- 18 **EMOTION: judgement free zone**
- 17 EMOTION: disadvantaged by ignorance of their faith
- 17 **EMOTION: vulnerable comfort in opening up**
- 17 **VALUE: healing**
- 17 **VALUE: sacred wellspring of refreshing**

- 17 VALUE: inherent worth and dignity
- 18 **VALUE: beauty of the earth/care for the earth**
- 17 **VALUE: creating freedom for individuals to contribute meaning**
- 17 **VALUE: open to new spiritual understandings**
- 18 **VALUE: no group think/forming own opinions**