

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK  
YOUTH FAITH FORMATION  
Catechetical

# Technology Planning Guide

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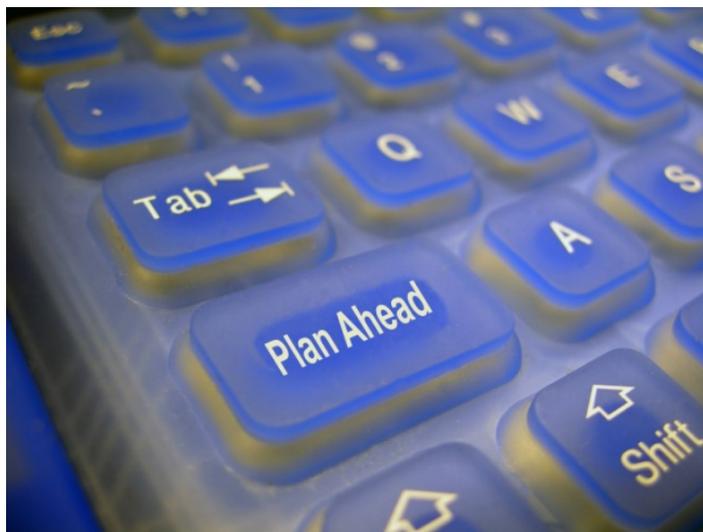
## Parish Faith Formation Programs

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The Church needs to advance the use of technology for the sake of the Gospel, and to understand and face the challenges inherent in its use.

*(The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium, 2011)*

Adults as well as children have eagerly adopted the use of technology transforming the ways we work, learn and recreate. What was once seen as a fad has become a way of life. As a result, catechetical leaders are called to work with pastors and key parish staff to use technology to transform and upgrade faith formation programs. However, catechetical leaders may not feel up to the task of addressing technology needs in their ministry. Here are some ideas to assist you.



There are varied ways to integrate technology into a parish faith formation program. You may wish to use multimedia projectors, tablet computers, or interactive white boards to enhance the sessions. You may want to build a new website or create a social media initiative to evangelize. You may desire to wire the building for Internet access so that parishioners are connected. Whatever the project, good planning is a key to success.

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A technology plan seeks to improve administrative tasks, increase communication, extend services, enhance education and/or help reduce costs. Such a plan is most effective when it is comprehensive in scope and extends over several years. However, an ad hoc approach may fit the needs of some parishes. Whether comprehensive or ad hoc, the following questions will help guide your decisions for incorporating technology into your parish faith formation program. A technology plan involves three steps: **Planning, Deciding and Implementing, and Evaluating.**

## Planning

Good planning saves time and money in the long run. Consider these questions when planning to introduce new technology into your faith formation program. Please note that all questions may not apply to all projects.

### *Planning the technology itself:*

1. What do you want to accomplish?
  - a. Identify your goals. What is the problem(s) you are trying to overcome?
2. What technology do you think would help accomplish your goal? (If you feel unsure about what would be the best technology fit, consider who you could ask for guidance.)
  - a. Why do you think this technology will help?
  - b. What other parishes use these products? Will they recommend it?
  - c. Did you compare it with other products of the same type?
  - d. Did you consider alternative solutions? (For example, to increase communication, don't get locked into just considering email products, but consider other solutions that take into account all the ways that people communicate, text, phone, social media, etc.)
3. Who in the parish has the expertise to put this technology into place?
  - a. What staff member will be responsible for the implementation?
  - b. You may not have the time or expertise to install the technology. Identify people in the parish who could help.
  - c. What kind of support does the vendor provide, if any?
4. What is the timeline for this project?
  - a. How long will it take to start/finish the project?
  - b. Can it be done in phases? Note: implementation over several years may help lighten the load on the budget.
5. What ancillary equipment needs to be considered to support the technology?
  - a. Technology use often means that there may be electrical, security, mobility, installation and other needs. For example, purchasing multimedia projectors entails having a secure place to store them, a screen to project the image, power strip extensions to supply power, etc. Identify the particular ancillary equipment needed, if any.

### *Planning concerning the people involved:*

1. What training will users need to make the most of this technology?
  - a. If training is necessary, who will do the training?
  - b. Does the vendor provide training?
  - c. You may not have the time or expertise to train. Identify people in the parish who could help.

2. How many people in the parish are potentially impacted by this implementation?
  - a. Is this technology just for a segment of the parish population? For example, staff, youth, children, etc.
3. Do you have the buy-in from those who will be impacted by the implementation of the technology?
  - a. You many need to “sell” the technology to those who will use it. Have you made it clear what the advantages are?
  - b. Have you reassured those who will use it that there will be training and support?
  - c. Listen carefully to their concerns and help allay any apprehensions.

### ***Planning the budget:***

1. What will the technology cost?
  - a. Consider not only the technology itself, but ancillary equipment, training, support and other one-time or ongoing costs.
  - b. Will there be recurring costs? Is there a monthly/yearly support charge?
2. What is the budget?
  - a. Are there funds available to cover the cost?
  - b. Sometimes technology will replace the current means of doing something which may result in some cost saving. Consider that savings when evaluating the budget/cost.
  - c. Beware of technology that is “free;” free isn’t always better. The technology may be free, but your time and hard work are not. Sometimes paying for something may be a better choice in the long run.

## **Deciding and Implementing**

Make your selections based on budget, the impact of the technology (don’t forget the human cost!) and other specific needs identified in the planning stage. As the technology is installed and training is being conducted, make note of any changes to your plan or unexpected/overlooked challenges so that you can use your observations in your evaluation.



## Evaluating

After the technology has been used for a period of time, an evaluation of the technology project should be made. A good evaluation will help you learn from your experience, tweak future plans and bring some wisdom to your future endeavors. Here are some considerations:

1. Did you need to change your plan in any way? If so, how? Were there any unexpected or overlooked aspects in your original plan? If so, what were they?
2. What, if any, changes to your plan did you need to make in light of your experience with the new technology? (For example, more training is needed than expected, etc).
3. What is going well with the technology? What roadblocks need to be addressed?
4. What input are your users giving about the new technology?
  - a. Was training/support carried out? Was it sufficient? Why/why not?
5. Were the timeline and budget sufficient to the project? If not, why?
6. Did the technology meet the goals you set out? Did it improve administrative tasks, increase communication, extend services, enhance education and/or help reduce costs?

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The Church challenges us to use technology for the sake of the gospel. The use of technology can add new outreach to your ministry. Planning can help develop the best way to help bring your faith formation program into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.