

WHAT is an INDEPENDENT LEARNING PLAN to improve our COMPETENCY?

Learning activities come in many forms that happen inside or outside of formal settings. You may have had ministry-related seminars, undergone training for acquiring specific skills or bodies of knowledge, or learned from life experiences. Independent Learning Plans (ILPs) can document prior learning or establish a process to learn something new. It all begins with thinking about our competencies, what we do, what we wish we could do better, and how will these competencies serve the church and our daily lives.

Some Sources of Learning:

Community and Work Projects

Involvement in community or work projects may be sources of learning. It may help to clearly outline your role, define the roles of others, state the scope of the project, and give your analysis of its progress, completion and/or implementation. The project need not have been a success; rather you should demonstrate how the project provided an opportunity for learning. You might also include newspaper accounts, letters of testimony, artifacts, and other evidence that affirms your learning. You making a direct connection between the experience and the competence you want to develop will clarify your learning. It's also a very nice place to invite others into the learning process and also the assessment process. It's a place to grow in ministry.

Non-Credit Courses, Training, and Seminars

Use education experiences as developmental sources if the content fits your learning needs. Accompany certificates of attendance or completion with course descriptions and any evaluations of your work help to document your learning by others if you need to do so. Your explanation of the seminar content, its connection to the competence you want to develop, and your application of the learning as you assess it by yourself or with others are the most important indicators of your learning.

Life Experience

Adults accumulate experiences from which they can derive most of the meaning connected to their lives and ministry. Such activities as positions in service, caring for others who have had extended illness, any or all relationships, raising a family—the benefit of reflection on these or other experiences as sources of learning provide meaning. [Kolb Learning Cycle is one way to do this.]

Assessment Standards

In general, all evidence for reflection and assessment should demonstrate:

- Conceptual understanding: An ability to explain particular events in relation to general concepts.
- Reasoning skills: The appropriate presentation and logical development of ideas and conclusions without unfounded assumptions, unsubstantiated claims, and logical inconsistencies or omissions.
- Relevance to the competence: Each piece of evidence should fit a claimed competence and/or provide direction for future competence development.

In particular, the following assessment areas may help to organize your best thinking.

Content

- The learner connects his/her experience and knowledge to the competence.
- The learner describes and reflects on personal and/or group experience and knowledge.
- The learner relates others' views to his/her own learning experiences and/or demonstrates the ability to view experiences from multiple perspectives.

Analysis

- Assertions are supported with evidence
- Focus and conclusion(s) are clear
- Presentation is well organized, coherent, and appropriate to both the topic and the audience even if, perhaps especially if, the learner is the audience.

Forms of evidence:

Learning in courses is assessed by a facilitator who carefully lays out a series of experiences that lead to desired goals. Each learner is measured in the same way, a paper, an oral presentation, participation in group discussions, tests, etc.

Evaluation of learning from life experience is more complicated because you draw on unique experiences and unique reflections about those experiences to demonstrate a common ability. That common ability is what we call competence.

Your task, as you provide documentation to your commission on ministry or archdeacon, is to create a specific, direct link from your experience to a particular competence you want to develop.

As you review your life experiences, you gain an extra measure of learning simply through the process of analyzing what you know, and showing others that you know and can do it.

Developing evidence from life experience is not a simple process. Beyond the important issues of what you did and what you learned, you connect what others have to say about the competence.

Essay

Most people create an essay that discusses the relationship between their learning and the competence they demonstrate. If you choose that as something to give the commission on ministry or archdeacon or bishop, it will help to note the competence you are trying to demonstrate, describe the learning experience, your reflections, concepts gained from the experience, and applications of the learning to new experiences. [This is really how the Kolb learning cycle works.] The written piece is made stronger when it includes any of the following: prevalent theories, historical background, or scientific data as well as insights particular to the competence at hand. Acknowledge sources whether they are persons, events, or written sources. These questions may help you get started writing a paper:

What is the meaning of the competence statement?
How does my experience relate?
What do others more experienced than I have to say?
What learning have I demonstrated?
What insight can I contribute?
How have my ideas been influenced by my learning?
How will what I've learned contribute to the development of my ministry?

Products/Artifacts

If you have published articles, participated in theatrical presentations, painted, photographed, or designed something, the product of these interests may be presented as evidence of learning. Photograph large or valuable objects. Accompany your tangible evidence with a written explanation of the process and meaning of the objects presented and their appropriateness to the competence.

Letters of Testimony

Letters of testimony in conjunction with other evidence such as an essay or oral presentation.

Other Supporting Material

Depending on your plan, you may also want to attach other forms of documentation such as the syllabus of a non-credit course, newspaper accounts, certificates of attendance or completion with descriptions and evaluations, or other kinds of material related to your plan.