

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. 1. Our emphasis at this time is on advancing the process of entry by troops. What is the role of Bahá'í Centers?

A. An answer to this question needs more than a few words. The National Spiritual Assembly gave guidance on the role of Centers in its November 28, 2007 letter to Local Spiritual Assemblies. This letter can be found on BCA's home page on this website.

Q. 2. Our community is talking about getting its first Bahá'í Center. What suggestions does BCA have?

A. First, the community should read and consult on the National Spiritual Assembly's letter of November 28, 2007 on the home page of this website. Also the community should read and consult on the first 4-5 chapters of the Local Bahá'í Centers Technical Assistance Manual, which can be downloaded free from this website. The consultation and study of these documents will help a community evaluate whether it has sufficient need for a Center in light of the Five Year Plan goals and help to prepare the community for the practical issues involved.

Q. 3. Often several communities provide funds for and use a Center. Who rents or owns the Center?

A. The Center must be rented or owned by the Assembly (or Registered Group) in whose jurisdiction the Center is located.

Q. 4. If the Assembly in whose jurisdiction the Center is located rents or owns it, does that Assembly also manage it?

A. That Assembly is also responsible for the Center's management. However, frequently a committee which is responsible to this Assembly provides the more detailed Center management. The committee members may come from other nearby communities.

Q. 5. Our community has saved funds for a future Center, but does not expect to have a Center in the near future. What can we do with these funds currently?

A. These funds can be invested in a way that gives a high level of protection for the principal, such as a certificate of deposit, and provides interest. The funds can also be loaned to the National Spiritual Assembly. Please contact the Office of the Treasurer at 847-733-3472 or finance@usbnc.org for more information. Investments such as stocks or mutual funds are not recommended because of the higher risk of loss of principal.

Q. 6. What size should a Center be?

A. The factors that affect the answer to this question are described in the National Spiritual Assembly's letter of November 28, 2007 on the home page of this website and the first chapter "Community Readiness" in the Local Bahá'í Centers Technical Assistance Manual, which can be downloaded free from this website.

Q. 7. Our Assembly is developing a checklist of Center procedures to serve as a reminder for Bahá'ís using the Center. Does BCA have anything that can help?

A. BCA collects documents about Centers which individual communities are willing to have shared with other communities. We currently have several types of documents, including policies on operations similar to what you are developing.

BCA does not give any recommendations about these documents, but provides them solely as examples of approaches used by one or more Bahá'í communities. BCA welcome additional documents to its collection that communities are willing to share.

Q. 8. What advice can you give us about insuring our Center?

A. The insurance policy of the National Spiritual Assembly does not cover communities that have a Center, regardless of whether the Center is rented or owned. Each community with a Center must have its own insurance. Also, Bahá'í activities held somewhere other than the Center are not covered by National's policy. The local community should arrange for liability coverage either on per event basis or have a general policy for such events. More information about insurance is found on pages 7.1, 7.4 – 7.5, 8.5 and 9.9 – 9.10 in the Local Bahá'í Centers Technical Assistance Manual which can be downloaded from the Essential Materials page of this website.

Q. 9. Will BCA consult with individual communities about specific issues?

A. Yes. BCA first requires a written request from the secretary on behalf of the Assembly or registered group. Go to the "Contact Us" page on this website for ways to contact BCA.

Q. 10. What are the backgrounds of BCA members?

A. BCA members come from throughout the United States. They have many different occupational backgrounds, such as finance, architecture, interior design, construction, facilities management, accounting, organization development, business and computer technology. All have direct experience with Bahá'í Centers. In addition, BCA holds many of its meetings in local Bahá'í Centers to talk with Baha'is and tour their Centers.

Q. 11. Several communities worked together to acquire a Center. May all the communities hold Feast together at the Center?

A. Occasional joint community Feasts at a Center are certainly possible. However, generally Feasts should be held within each community. *Developing Distinctive Communities* (2007 edition) at p. 13.22 in the section entitled "Joint Feasts" gives the following guidance:

"With respect to your question asking whether a Local Spiritual Assembly may cancel its Nineteen Day Feast in order to attend Feast in another community, the House of Justice advises that the Nineteen Day Feast should not be canceled. However, there is no objection to two or more local communities holding a joint Nineteen Day Feast occasionally, although it is not proper to allow such joint Feasts to be held on a regular basis. If members of a community find that the plan to hold such a joint Feast would produce inconvenience to them, they should take the matter up with their Local Spiritual Assembly.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated April 26, 1987, to an individual believer, in an unpublished compilation, *The Nineteen Day Feast*.

Joint Feasts do not fulfill the purpose of the Nineteen Day Feast in its strict sense, and should not become a regular practice among the Friends.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated February 15, 1982, to a National Spiritual Assembly, in an unpublished compilation, *The Nineteen Day Feast*.

Occasionally communities involved in collaborative projects may wish to hold joint Feasts as an opportunity to consult collectively on the progress of their projects or for other reasons. Joint Feasts should not take the place of cluster reflection meetings."

Q. 12. We have an urgent need for funds for a teaching project. May we use funds designated and set aside for a future Center?

A. The Office of the Treasurer explained in the December 24, 2007 issue of the "Bahá'í Treasurer's Bulletin" as follows:

The strict honoring of earmarking is one of the most important ordinances regarding the Fund. It is crucial that the friends be confident that their contributions will be used for the purpose they specify. In order to use funds for a different purpose, a release must be obtained from each person who designated their contribution for a Bahá'í Center. Any funds that were received from a person who is now deceased or cannot be located must remain as designated for a Baha'i Center.

Because earmarking absolutely prohibits using that contribution for any other purpose, the friends are not encouraged to restrict their contributions. A letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice dated August 21, 1980 states:

"...in general, although it is permitted for the friends to earmark contributions, it is apparent that it is often better that the friends allow the Assembly to use their contributions without restricting them. Furthermore, an Assembly is by no means obligated to accept an earmarked contribution; if it does, however, it is bound to respect the earmarking."