

# **Summary of Suggestions: Involving Community**

- Discuss candidates with local community Imams and Masjids
- Peer interviews of candidates conducted by local Imams and board
- Decision making of hiring is not in hands of only a few
- Host an open forum/town hall meeting to discuss what the role of the imam should be and understand needs of community

# **Summary of Suggestions: Involving Community cont.**

- Host an open forum with potential candidate
- Have an 'open audition' by inviting candidate to come for a series of weekend activities (Juma'a, Friday night lecture, weekend seminar)
- Keep in mind need to keep employment confidential
  - Can do a smaller Q&A with potential Imam and a selected diverse committee with various backgrounds/school of thought (youth, men, women, etc.)

# **Summary of Suggestions: Involving Community cont.**

- **Hiring committee should be qualified individuals who are held accountable to board**
- **Address nationalist views and issues that come into the Masjid**

# Summary of Suggestions: Building Standards

- Define and clarify roles of an educator, a resident scholar, an Imam, and/or Chaplaincy position
  - Define what is a ‘thriving community’ first in order to outline roles and qualifications
  - Make templates available for all
  - Consider keeping in two categories: Resident Scholars and Imams/Executive Directors
  - Have Imams be part of creating description
  - Definition needs to be changeable to tailor to each community
  - Include expectations

# **Summary of Suggestions: Building Standards cont.**

- Clearly define role to Imam before hire
- Have a mediation committee built into infrastructure of Masjid
- Hire Imams as Independent Contractors for specific tasks
- Create key performance indicators for Imams at different size centers with suggested salaries
- Resources to train Imams
- Succession planning and institutionalize succession training for new Imams
- Understand cultural differences – expectations abroad differ than Western Standards
- Understand standards at institutions where imams studied and how they differ

# **Summary of Suggestions: Building Standards cont.**

- **Build new organization, i.e. ‘American Council of Imams’ or a union tasked with:**
  - **Matching Imams with community**
  - **Mediating when issues arise**
  - **Move Imams to communities that may be a better fit when relocation needed**
  - **Handle all HR issues with Imams**
  - **Set minimum standards for shuyukh**
  - **Set minimum wage and benefits**
  - **Also provide other personnel, i.e. Quran Teachers**
- **Hire legal consultants to help with contracts**

# Summary of Suggestions: Building Standards cont.

- Hire multiple individuals in order to speak to the community, reflective of community make-up (ethnicity, gender, etc.)
  - Example team would include: an Islamic teacher, counselor/therapist, community organizer, and so on.
  - Include women
- For centers that are hiring religious directors in order to fill the educational and spiritual guidance needs of communities, and not primarily to lead the prayers, consider sisters to fill these roles as well

# **Summary of Suggestions: Building Standards cont.**

- Provide opportunities for Imams to participate to continue their education in needed fields (i.e. seminaries, in areas of interfaith, media, finance management, public speaking, etc.)
- Standardized process of hiring:
  - Search, solicit input from community of what the expectations are, and vetting the candidate (look at their current work and record)

# **Summary of Suggestions: Qualifications/Criteria**

- **More interested in community building rather than public speaking or teaching on a national stage (the later is more for national organizations).**
- **Does not necessarily have extensive knowledge of fiqh, tafsir, etc.**
- **Be able to connect to people**
- **Understand context of Muslims living in U.S.**
- **Understand faith**

# **Summary of Suggestions: Qualifications/Criteria**

- Religious knowledge
- Fluent in English and speaks dialect of community
- Soft skills: communication, diplomacy, human relations, problem solving, community organizing
- Public speaking skills
- Understand how communities of other faiths work

# **Summary of Suggestions: Qualifications/Criteria**

- **Understands American culture:** This does not mean they have to be aware of pop culture or have to participate in it, but it means to be aware of different issues. For example:
  - How race functions and the race issues we are facing in America;
  - How the education system works here;
  - How business works;
  - How communities are diverse;
  - How communities interact with each other;
  - Understands youth and how to address issues pertaining to youth in their perspective; and
  - Knowledge of the generation gaps including between immigrant parents and students.
  - Understand the experience immigrants face. A lot of younger imams grew up in this country and experienced something radically different.

# **Summary of Suggestions: Qualifications/Criteria**

- **Religious practice: meaning the knowledge they have actually live in their lives and have spiritual presence**
- **Ability to communicate with community members at their same level**

# **Summary of Suggestions: Benefits**

- **Competitive compensation package to have a comfortable living, including:**
  - Reasonable salary
  - Healthcare
  - Retirement
  - Annual bonuses
  - Housing stipend/salary meeting cost of living in local area
  - Match their level of experience; should not be same rate for all
- **You get what you pay for**

# **Summary of Suggestions: Benefits**

- **Proper vacation time**
  - **And vacation time should be taken within the year and not delayed; Imams need time to rejuvenate**
- **Weekend time off**
- **Paternity time off**
- **Sabbatical time for research or spiritual rejuvenation**
- **Investing in their continual training/education**

# **Summary of Suggestions:**

## **Board Governance/Role in process**

- **By-laws of Masjid need to be very clear, accessible to community and Imam, and implemented**
- **Roles for board members need to also be clearly defined**
- **Accountability for board needs to exist**
- **Imam should be protected from internal politics; Imam should only provide guidance but excluded from political decisions**
- **Implement institutional care of the Imam**

# **Summary of Suggestions:**

## **Board Governance/Role in process**

- Leadership must be engaged
- Board make up should be representative of community (i.e. diverse)
- Have one board member who is point of contact with Imam
- Make sure have a proper contract in place for Imam to sign
- Hold periodic performance reviews
- Be accountable/commit to financial responsibility to be able to provide for Imam properly

# **Summary of Suggestions: Board Governance/Role in process**

- **Implement overall best practices**
  - Proper board terms and turn over
- **Clearly outline governance over execution/management and who is responsible for what**
  - Example: Board is responsible for governance and vision (with input); Imam/CEO is responsible for management
  - Includes allowing Imams to have a little more decision-making power for everyday activities

# **Summary of Suggestions: Board Governance/Role in process**

- **Find balance between transparency, keeping confidentiality, and protecting the community in terms of announcing reasons why an imam left a Masjid**