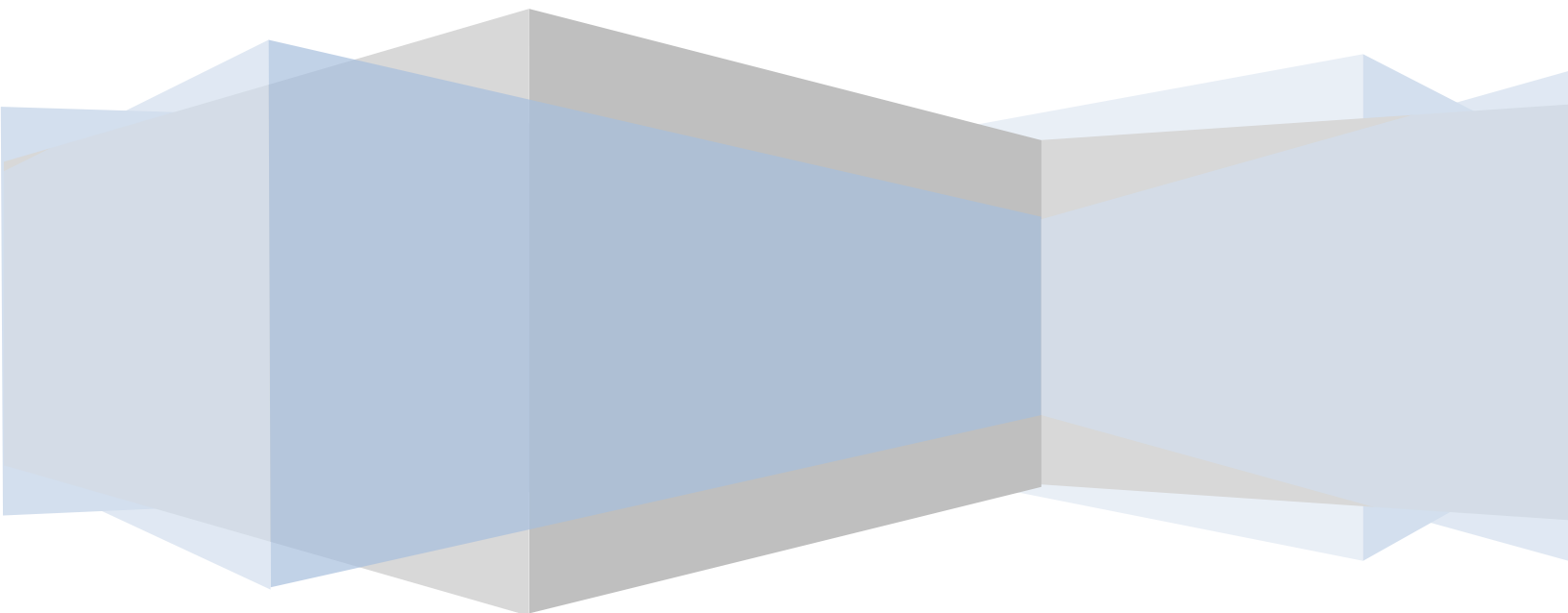


# Evaluation of CREDO's Impact

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Over the years, through multiple evaluation tools, the impact of CREDO on individual participants has been well documented. This report focuses on the systemic impact of CREDO on entities *beyond* the individual—congregations, dioceses, and the larger Church. It analyzes and interprets the findings of a recent two-part study of past CREDO participants designed to measure CREDO's broader impact.

### Background

In 2005, an in-depth, interview-based study was conducted as part of the five-year Periodic Review of CREDO to determine its impact on participants and their families, congregations, dioceses, and the larger Church. In this 2005 study, interviews were conducted with 50 participants from three randomly selected CREDO groups. A structured interview protocol was designed to ask participants about changes they experienced and observed as a result of CREDO. A trained graduate research assistant conducted the interviews, and they were transcribed professionally. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to one hour. Transcripts were coded and analyzed by two researchers from the University of Cincinnati using a qualitative software program. Results from this in-depth interview-based study were reported in the document *Report on the EOC Survey and Findings of the CREDO Periodic Review*. In brief, systemic effects were found in four areas: spouse/family, parish, diocese and national Church.

### Current Study and Sample

The current study takes a fresh look at the systemic effects of CREDO, building on the results of the 2005 interview-based study. It includes both quantitative and qualitative components. For the quantitative part, second-order themes derived from the 2005 interview-based study findings were included as items in an online quantitative survey. In other words, the findings of the 2005 study were condensed into 15 items, and respondents in the current study were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that these items were impact factors associated with CREDO. The items were clustered into three impact categories: congregations, dioceses, and the larger Church. (See *Appendix A* for items.) For the qualitative part of the study, three open-ended questions asked respondents to identify *any* impact that CREDO has had on their congregation, diocese, and the larger Church.

A survey link was sent to 388 past CREDO participants, and 172 usable surveys were obtained. Thus, the response rate was 44 percent, well within the acceptable range by social science standards. In the current study, 64.7 percent of the respondents were male (35.5 percent were female); the average age was 57, with a range from 34-78; and respondents were from 63 different dioceses. In the Findings sections below, results from the quantitative and qualitative portions are summarized and analyzed.

## Findings: Quantitative Part of the Study

Responses to the 15 items derived from the 2005 Periodic Review study are included in *Appendix A*. Using a 7-point scale, in all but one case, respondents uniformly selected “6,” indicating their agreement that the item represented an impact factor associated with CREDO. (See shaded boxes in *Appendix A*.) To derive a total agreement score *for each item*, all of the “agree” options (“agree slightly,” “agree” and “agree strongly”) were summed. The three items for which there was most total agreement are illustrated in the following table.

### Top Three CREDO Impact Factors

<i>Item</i>	<i>Total Agreement Score</i>
Through energizing leadership, CREDO helps energize congregations.	96.5 percent agreed
CREDO equips participants to better deal with stress within congregations.	95.3 percent agreed
CREDO leads to a healthier Church	92.9 percent agreed

Two of these factors describe CREDO’s impact on congregations, and one describes CREDO’s impact on the larger Church. None of the top three impact factors were diocese related.

Next, to derive a total agreement score *for each category* (congregation, diocese, and larger Church), all of the “agree” options within each category were summed. Based on this analysis, in the eyes of respondents, CREDO had a greater impact (statistically significant at the highest level) on congregations and the larger Church than on dioceses. It should be kept in mind that this is a relative comparison. That is, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that CREDO’s impact extended across congregations, dioceses and the larger Church. However, the percentage of their agreement was highest for congregations and the larger Church.

As can be seen in *Appendix A*, some of the items asking about impact are worded the same way, except that the “target” of impact (congregations, dioceses, national Church) changes. That is, the items have the same stem, but a different impact target. For example, respondents were asked whether CREDO led to healthier [congregations], [dioceses], and [larger Church]. The responses to this health impact question were analyzed using a statistical comparison of means test. The means for “CREDO leads to a healthier congregation” and “CREDO leads to a healthier Church” were comparable; however, both of these means were significantly higher (at the highest level of statistical significance) than the mean for “CREDO leads to a healthier diocese.” This statistical comparison can be seen more clearly in the pie charts shown in *Appendix B*. Looking at the pie charts, one can see that respondents overwhelmingly agree that CREDO leads to healthier congregations and dioceses and a healthier larger Church. However, the “agree strongly” and “agree” pieces of the pie are larger for congregations and the larger Church.

## Findings: Qualitative Part of the Study

As mentioned above, three open-ended questions were also included in the survey. These open-ended questions asked respondents to identify any impact that CREDO has had on their: (1) congregation; (2) diocese; and (3) the larger Church. Responses to these questions were

analyzed for the three most predominant themes, which are reported in Appendix C. A brief description of the themes follows.

### **CREDO's Impact on Congregations**

- As reported in the 2005 Periodic Review, the congregational impact most frequently mentioned by respondents was CREDO's impact on congregations through improving the health, energy, and focus of clergy. Several respondents used language similar to "a healthy priest leads to a healthy congregation" to describe this impact.
- The second theme at the congregational level was that CREDO stimulates a wellness dialogue within congregations. Some respondents described a "common language of wellness" and dialogue simulated by the CREDO attendee's experience, by assessors completing the 360-review of the attendee, and by references to wellness in sermons, bulletins, and other communications.
- The third theme at the congregational level was that CREDO impacts systems within congregations. For example, clergy returning from CREDO have engaged vestries, leadership, and lay people in their churches in creating or revising systems as diverse as personnel management, succession planning, and long-range visioning. Both this theme and the previous one were not noted as top themes in the 2005 data, suggesting greater dissemination of wellness information and integration of wellness within congregations in the ensuing five years.

### **CREDO's Impact on Dioceses**

- Similar to in the 2005 Periodic Review report, respondents feel CREDO impacts dioceses through its impact on clergy. A common thread in the responses to the diocese question was that strengthening clergy and diocesan leaders strengthens the diocese as a whole.
- The second theme at the diocesan level was that CREDO creates community, conversations, and collaboration within the diocese. Many respondents mentioned that having a shared experience in attending CREDO created strong bonds of collegiality within the diocese among other clergy who also attended the conference. CREDO contributes to cooperation and collaboration among these clergy. Some mentioned this was particularly true when the bishop attended a conference.
- The third theme at this level was that CREDO impacts dioceses through institutionalizing wellness. Quotes categorized in this theme mentioned events (e.g., meetings, conferences) and processes (e.g., selection, succession, letters of agreement) in the diocese becoming increasingly permeated with wellness awareness and ideals.
- It is worth noting that of all three categories, there were more often quotes in the diocesan impact question in which respondents reported a lack of awareness of how CREDO had impacted the diocese. Some suggested that top-down structures in the diocese or behaviors on the part of the bishop impeded wellness. Even so, the majority of respondents did, in fact, share perceived diocesan impacts.

### **CREDO's Impact on the Larger Church**

- Once again, as in the 2005 report, respondents overwhelmingly noted that CREDO impacts the Church through its impact on clergy. Several participants made links between personal and *corporate* wellness. Many stated that this ripple effect on the Church is something that has increased and will continue to increase as more lay people and clergy attend CREDO conferences.
- The second theme at the larger church level was that CREDO contextualizes and unifies the Church through providing a climate of wellness. This theme encompasses quotes in which respondents mentioned the bridges built across the Church as a result of relationships formed at the CREDO conferences. Many mentioned that CREDO has changed their view of the larger Church, made them more sensitive to different perspectives, and increased caring for and involvement in the larger Church.
- The third theme in this category is simply that CREDO provides a safe harbor. In several of the quotes, respondents mentioned Church rivalries, conflicts, issues, and stress. They identified CREDO as a safe nonthreatening setting in which they are able to weather the storms within the Church and focus on common goals.

### **Conclusion**

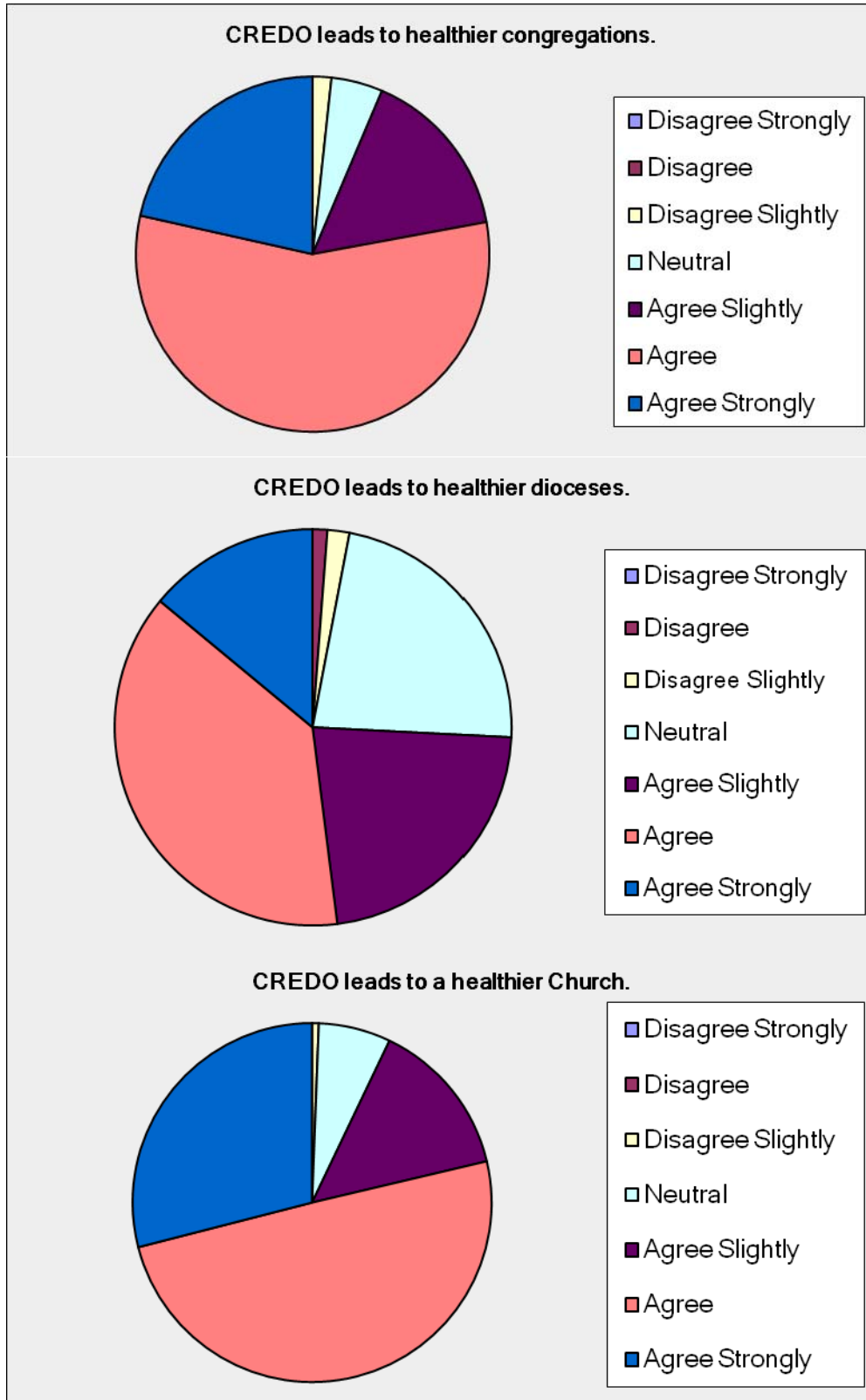
Based on the results reported herein, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that CREDO has not only had an impact on individual participants, but also on congregations, dioceses, and the larger Church. In this study, CREDO's impact on congregations and the larger Church was found to be greater than on dioceses; however, effects do also exist at the diocesan level. The data from this study strongly support CREDO's impact not only *on* individuals, but *through* individuals, on entities and systems across the Church.

**Appendix A**  
**CREDO Impact Survey: Quantitative Items**

	Numbers in each column refer to the percentage of people selecting that choice.						
	<i>Disagree strongly</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree slightly</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree slightly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree strongly</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Impact on Congregations</b>							
CREDO leads to healthier congregations.	0	0	1.7	4.7	15.7	56.4	21.5
Through energizing leadership, CREDO helps energize congregations.	0	0	0	3.5	17.4	54.7	24.4
CREDO raises awareness of wellness within congregations.	0	1.2	5.8	15.8	28.7	35.1	13.5
Through attending CREDO, participants model wellness within congregations.	0	0	.6	10.0	21.8	41.8	25.9
CREDO equips participants to better deal with stress within congregations.	0	.6	1.2	2.9	12.3	45.0	38.0
<b>Impact on Dioceses</b>							
CREDO leads to healthier dioceses.	0	1.2	1.8	22.8	22.2	38.0	14.0
Through energizing leadership, CREDO helps energize dioceses.	0	1.8	2.3	20.5	28.7	33.9	12.9
CREDO raises awareness of wellness within dioceses.	0	3.6	3.0	11.8	26.6	42.6	12.4
Shared experiences of CREDO lead to greater interaction within dioceses.	0	5.9	6.5	22.9	29.4	25.3	10.0
CREDO equips participants to better deal with stress within dioceses.	0	1.8	2.9	14.7	21.2	44.7	14.7
<b>Impact on Church</b>							
CREDO leads to a healthier Church.	0	0	.6	6.5	14.2	49.7	29.0
Through energizing leadership, CREDO helps energize the larger Church.	0	0	.6	17.3	22.0	42.3	17.9
CREDO raises awareness of wellness within the larger Church.	0	.6	1.2	12.7	23.6	46.1	15.8
As a result of CREDO, there is a shared language of wellness within the Church.	0	1.8	6.4	20.5	27.5	31.0	12.9
CREDO equips participants to better deal with stress within the larger Church.	0	1.2	3.6	10.7	25.6	44.0	14.9

**Appendix B**

**Comparison of CREDO's Impact across Entities: Congregation, Diocese, Larger Church**



**Appendix C**

**CREDO Impact Survey: Three Most Predominant Qualitative Themes in Each Category**

*I understand CREDO as being first and foremost at the grassroots level, providing for the strength of the ministry of the Church's clergy. From there, the models of health and well-being, and the spiritual resources needed, are spread...to the people in the pews and on the streets...and to the diocese and national Church...ultimately upwards...to the Kingdom of God.*

*--Survey respondent*

Theme	Sample Quotes
<i>What impact do you think CREDO has had on your congregation?</i>	
<p><b>CREDO impacts congregations through its impact on clergy</b></p>	<p>By helping me set better boundaries, I model good boundaries for the parish.</p> <p>I can speak from first-hand experience of a priest in my diocese who, because his CREDO wellness plan completely changed his life, became a beacon of healthy choices for his congregation and the diocese.</p> <p>Creating a balance for me has worked its way into the system.</p>
<p><b>CREDO stimulates wellness dialogue within congregations</b></p>	<p>This morning, I had a parishioner in my office tell me she had an eating disorder because I was talking about my coaching with Mayo. Without CREDO, that conversation, and moment of vulnerability, would have been lost.</p> <p>We do share a common language of wellness...we have held workshops on spiritual, vocational, and financial wellness within our parish.</p> <p>[There is] conversation within the congregation about the relationship between clergy health and congregational health</p>
<p><b>CREDO impacts systems within congregations</b></p>	<p>I formed a support-feedback group to help with my job description...I believe this will plant seeds of understanding, especially regarding personnel practices.</p> <p>[It has] made me and my leadership more aware of what constitutes healthy partnerships for governance, annual parish program review, and mutual leadership assessment.</p> <p>The setting of structured goals has become a firm part of our parish life. I have my goals and the parish is creating her goals.</p>

**Continuation of Appendix C**

Theme	Sample Quotes
<i>What impact do you think CREDO has had on your diocese?</i>	
<p><b>CREDO impacts dioceses through its impact on clergy</b></p>	<p>By strengthening individual clergy, it has a strengthening impact on the larger body.</p> <p>Whatever energizes leaders helps the whole diocese.</p> <p>...a more grounded priest involved in diocesan committees [is] a stabilizing factor on those committees.</p> <p>I think the beginning of a critical mass of CREDO alumni is forming...down the road that cannot help but lead to greater health and cohesion.</p>
<p><b>CREDO creates community, conversations and collaboration within dioceses</b></p>	<p>When [we] get together for conference or reflection days, we share the CREDO experience in common; it helps us focus on common experience rather than competitive events.</p> <p>CREDO...provided us an opportunity to gain insight and perspective on our ministries which results in a more collegial and less isolated clergy....more likely to collaborate with others.</p> <p>We are more likely now to reference what is happening in other places and to turn to our extended network of support when issues arise.</p> <p>We can talk about our common experience with common language.</p>
<p><b>CREDO impacts dioceses through institutionalizing wellness</b></p>	<p>CREDO has helped establish a baseline for healthy norms...encouraging each other to set sustainable patterns.</p> <p>Our current slate of bishop finalists in our diocese is a much stronger and healthier group of leaders than we produced in either of the last two elections...a sign of CREDO percolating through the diocese.</p> <p>I have utilized the learning from CREDO with the C.O.M., of which I am chair. So, display rules, emotional labor, triangulation, self-differentiation have all become part of education and formation in our diocese.</p>

