

How To Build A Small Groups Ministry
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STEP ONE:

Planning to Plan

- RESOURCES: people, time, and finances
- CONDITIONS: spiritual, emotional, and experiential circumstances that surround the planning process
- IDENTIFYING: means to recognize and select the resources needed to accomplish the task.
- SECURING: means to obtain the identified, necessary resources and then to guard against the loss or misuse of those resources.

Planning Goals

- TIME: When will the planning process be completed?
- PERSONNEL: What type and how many leaders do you need?
- RECRUITING: How many leaders will you recruit and by when?
- TRAINING: What training will you offer and when will it be held?
- PUBLICITY: How much publicity and what type and when?

Step Two:

Clarifying Authority

- Who says you can plan a small-groups ministry for your church?
 - This “pessimism” should come from the highest authority in your church. It may be the pastor, a certain board, or whoever.
- What authority (power) do you have, or what decisions can the planning team make and not make as they plan?
- If necessary, who must approve the team’s plan and/or budget prior to implementation?

Step Seven:

Nailing Down Organizational Specifics

S1 – Group Size

- How many members in a group?

S2 – Groups Membership

- Is group membership cross-generational or from approximately the same age group?

S3 – Groups Availability

- Is group membership open or “closed”?

S4 – Groups Formation

- How are groups formed?

S5 – Groups Life Cycle

- How long should a group remain a group?

S6 – Groups Meeting Frequency

- How often do groups meet?

S7 – Groups Meeting Schedule

- When should groups meet?

S8 – Groups Meeting Location

- Where is the best place for groups to meet?

S9 – Groups Meeting Length

- How long should each group meeting last?
- Pitfalls of Longer Meetings:
 - Mental and physical fatigue.
 - Easier to waste time.
 - Some people drop out or simply choose not to participate.
- Pitfalls of Shorter Meetings:
 - Insufficient time to accomplish the agenda, task, purpose, etc.
 - A “rushing-it” atmosphere.
 - Relationships suffer in favor of “getting on with it.”

S10 – Groups Format and Agenda

- SET STRUCTURE: Every group is structured the same and does the same thing, following the same predetermined, set agenda.

- OPEN STRUCTURE: More than one group format is made available, or individual groups can select their own format and agenda.
- VARYING STRUCTURE: Groups rotate between several formats and agendas.

S11 – Groups Meeting Leadership

- Who leads the meetings?
 - Identified or designated leader
 - Rotated among group members
 - Shared leadership
 - Host/hostess
 - Combination

S12 – Child Care

- What do you do with the children?
 - Have the children attend a church-sponsored program.
 - Trade off with other groups.
 - If the groups meet in homes and the particular home in question has a separate large room, one group member, on a rotating basis, cares for the children.
 - Find volunteers or hire sitters.
 - Include the children.

S13 – Groups Covenant

Step Eight:

Deciding on Leadership

- What qualifications must the leaders possess?
 - Faithful (reliable and consistent)
 - Available (willing and with adequate time)
 - Teachable (eager to learn)

JOB DESCRIPTION

Small Groups Ministry Planning Team

Task

- Serve on the planning team to design and implement a small-groups ministry in our church.

Responsibilities

- Contribute the time, energy and ideas necessary to assist in planning a groups ministry.
- Attend all planning sessions.
- Accept and accomplish specific subtasks related to planning and implementing the groups ministry.
- Help promote the small-groups ministry.
- Pray for wisdom, for yourself and the team as a whole.

Qualifications

- Excited about the vision for small groups in our church.
- A church member (or regular attender).
- Committed to being a team player.
- Ideally, prior experience with group ministries.
- Willing to serve until the groups ministry is implemented.

Resources

- A small, but adequate budget.
- Necessary clerical assistance.
- Continuing support for our pastor.
- All expenses paid to attend the Heartlands Small-Groups Conference.

SAMPLE OF TWELVE WORKSHEETS AVAILABLE FOR REPRODUCTION

STEP TWO WORKSHEET: CLARIFYING AUTHORITY

Church Name: _____ Date: _____

2-1. The person filling out this worksheet:

Name: _____

2-2. Who can you ask about the planning team's level of authority?

Name (individual or group): _____

2-3. Who says you can plan a small-groups ministry for your church?

Name (individual or group): _____

2-4. Level of authority granted (check one):

1. Level One (no authority)
2. Level Two (some authority)
3. Level Three (all authority)

2-5. What authority (power) do you have, or what decisions can the planning team make and not make as they plan? (Write "D" on the line in front of the items that are areas in which the planning team can make the final decision, and "ND" in front of those they cannot.)

- ___ Begin planning the groups ministry.
- ___ Conduct a survey to identify small-groups needs and goals.
- ___ Determine how small groups will fit into the church's ministry and programming.
- ___ Select the type of groups needed.
- ___ Determine small-group organizational and operational specifics.
- ___ Recruit potential small-groups leaders.
- ___ Train potential small-groups leaders.
- ___ Promote and publicize small groups.
- ___ Formulate a system to provide ongoing small-groups administrative leadership.
- ___ Evaluate the planning process and the first six months of offering small groups.
- ___ Formulate a budget.
- ___ Spend church money.
- ___ Other (specify):

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2-6. What specific decisions are reserved for the following individuals?

Top Leadership:

Planning Team:

Individual Groups:

How did you arrive at your answer to this question? (Briefly explain.)

2-7. If necessary, who must approve the team's plan and/or budget prior to implementing the plan?

Is it necessary to have the plan approved prior to implementation?
(Check one.)

Yes

No

I don't know. (How will you find out?)

If yes, who must give the needed approval?
Name individual or group:

Is it necessary to have the budget approved prior to implementation?
(Check one.)

Yes

No

I don't know. (How will you find out?)

2-8. If you need a contact person to coordinate decisions with the church leadership, who is it?"

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Is the above-named person a member on the planning team?

___ YES ___ NO

2-9. What other authority issues, if any, related to your specific situation must you resolve? (Briefly describe the issues and whom you must deal with.)

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