




Module 3

STARTING A GOOD DADS GROUP:
Where You Begin Matters

SAMPLE
NOT FOR CLASS USE



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Good Dads is for all dads,
but no one can reach everyone
at once. Unless you have unlimited
resources to reach your community,
you will probably need to set small,
attainable goals you can build on
as you expand your influence.
Here are some things to consider
as you move forward.

Accessibility

Is there a group of dads to whom you might have access? A group most likely to respond positively and enthusiastically to your recruitment efforts? If so, this is typically a great place to start. It's what is known as "low hanging fruit" and harvesting these participants will boost morale and enthusiasm right from the start.

Community Champions

Who, in your community, might be most enthusiastic to support and assist you in the mission of helping all fathers be more engaged with their children? Often, it's a leader in the faith community. Sometimes, this is a judge. Now and then, it's a business owner who grew up without a dad and is passionate about helping others avoid the same fate. It's difficult to know, but if you can identify these persons and get them together in the same room, you may just ignite several sparks you can fan into flame.

Greatest Need

A common practice to starting something new is to conduct a “Needs Assessment” to evaluate potential for involvement and growth. In some cases, this is a very reasonable approach, but in others there may be unanticipated drawbacks to beginning in this way. Here’s why:

RAISING AWARENESS IS CRITICAL. We found that father absence and the importance of father engagement was not on the radar of many folks with whom we initially talked. They simply had not thought about it and were unaware of the correlation between father absence and almost all of our social problems. Before we could make much headway with these folks, we had to make the case for why father engagement was essential to child well-being. It took time and persistence. It was necessary, but it may not be the place to start if you want to quickly build momentum. It lacks the requisite “feel good” component needed for a groundswell of enthusiasm.

HOW YOU START, THE IDENTITY YOU DEVELOP FROM THE BEGINNING, WILL LIKELY DETERMINE HOW YOU ARE VIEWED FOR YEARS TO COME. If you begin by serving under-resourced, at-risk fathers, you will probably be viewed as an organization focused on helping one segment of our population. We have repeatedly experienced queries about what kind of dads we serve, such as:

- “Are you about bad dads becoming good dads?”
- “Are you about ‘dead-beat’ dads?”
- “I think I’m a good dad, but I could be better. Is Good Dads for me?”

Today, at-risk fathers are a substantial component of what the organization does, but it certainly is not all that we do. In fact, we’ve been successful in attracting men from all ages, stages, and socio-economic groups, which has helped us create a much broader focus for the work we do.

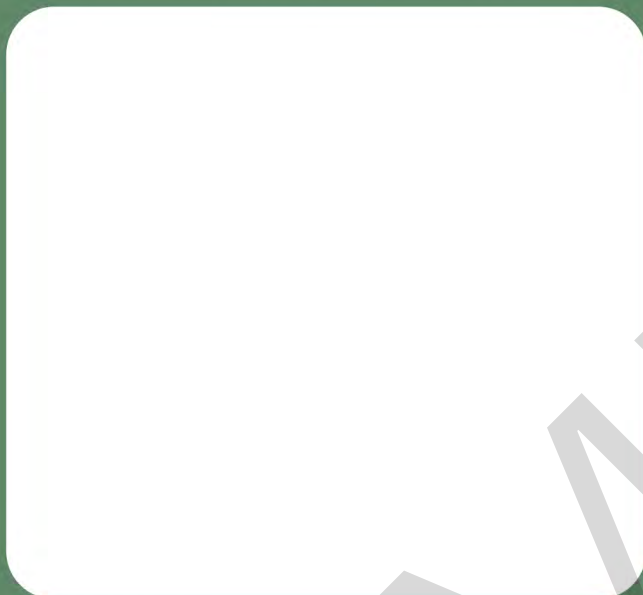
THE LURE OF GRANT-BASED FUNDING IS A POWERFUL ONE. The federal government annually announces a “Request for Proposals” to address various social ills or concerns in the country. States, too, identify needs they want to address through contracts and funding. Foundations large and small also support the development of projects to address various needs. The potential of receiving a significant amount of money to fund one’s passion is both tempting and enticing, but we would encourage the applicant for such monies to beware—or at least thoughtful.

Almost all funding available via a grant or contract comes with strings attached. The more money one receives, more accountability and reporting will likely be required. This is not a bad thing; it is just a reality and it can be a significant contributor to what is known as “mission drift.” Mission drift occurs when an organization’s energy is focused more on fulfilling the requirements of the grant or contract than on keeping with its original mission. This might be acceptable if the funding were to continue ad infinitum. This is rarely, if ever, the case. Funding periods come to an end and when they do, all the work supported by those funds, also comes to a screeching halt. Staff is dismissed and the project is over except for the final report required by the funding agency or organization.

While there is much more than can be said about this, the most important thing to remember at this juncture is that while there are a number of fatherhood efforts in the United States today, a significant majority are focused on at-risk, under-resourced fathers. Because Good Dads wants to have an emphasis on all fathers, we decided from the very beginning that a different approach was needed.

- What groups are potentially most accessible and amenable to fatherhood work in your area?
- With whom do you already have relationships that might be interested in and supportive of beginning work with fathers?
- What are the areas of greatest need?
- What are your thoughts about the identity of your fatherhood efforts, now and into the future?

DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GROUP
OR ORGANIZATION FAITH-BASED,
FAITH-FRIENDLY, OR SOMETHING ELSE?



HOW WILL YOUR IDENTITY, AS DESCRIBED ON
THE RIGHT, INFLUENCE AND POTENTIALLY IMPACT
YOUR WORK WITH FATHERS IN THE COMMUNITY?



Faith Friendly Vs. Faith Based

Good Dads is for all dads. This includes new dads, over-the-road dads, single parent dads, divorced dads, Christian dads, agnostic dads, traditional dads, unconventional dads, and every dad in between. Although many people involved with Good Dads from its inception did so out of a deep conviction directly connected to their faith and/or their spiritual beliefs, they also felt it was important that Good Dads go well beyond the confines of any faith community.

We believe fatherhood development is important for all dads, and thus needs to be open and accessible to all kinds of fathers. While faith and spirituality are important aspects of health and wellness, not every dad has the same ideas and beliefs. Good Dads utilizes faith-friendly rather than faith-based language and curricula in an effort to reach all dads. By “faith friendly”, we mean that while we recognize and acknowledge the contribution of the faith community to healthy homes and families, we do not promote a particular religious group or connection. From time to time, we do make our followers aware of a resource that may be “faith-based,” e.g. a conference or activity, but we always identify it as such.

Who & What You Are – Your Brand

A common thread in marketing and promotion is “knowing your brand.” Your brand lies in heart of the organization, its mission and values. From it springs program development and the overall success of the organization. Without the heart, a body, even with the brain, cannot function. Establishing your brand early on in the formation process will serve you well, giving a firm base and direction.

KNOW YOUR HEART/MISSION.

As a Good Dads partner, it’s important for you to know why you want to be part of the organization.

Who did you want to serve?

- Where is your heart?
- What do you see as your mission in your community?

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE/TARGET POPULATION.

- What are they like?
- Describe a typical dad you hope to reach.
- What are his greatest concerns or issues?
- How can you best address them?
- How can you best reach this group?

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

Avoid re-inventing what already exists unless what exists is being done very poorly. Do your homework. Know what already exists in your community. Gain an understanding of how you can leverage what is already there. Build bridges and foster relationships to include other like-minded people.

WORK TOGETHER TO DRAW A MODEL OR DIAGRAM THAT ILLUSTRATES THE THREE BULLET POINTS,

NAMELY, OUR HEART OR MISSION, YOUR TARGET POPULATION AND YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCES.



IT WILL LIKELY EVOLVE OVER TIME, BUT IF YOU CAN DRAW IT ON PAPER YOU WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO SHARE IT WITH OTHERS. THIS WILL BE A VERY USEFUL GUIDE MOVING FORWARD.



"Helping Kids One Dad at a Time"

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