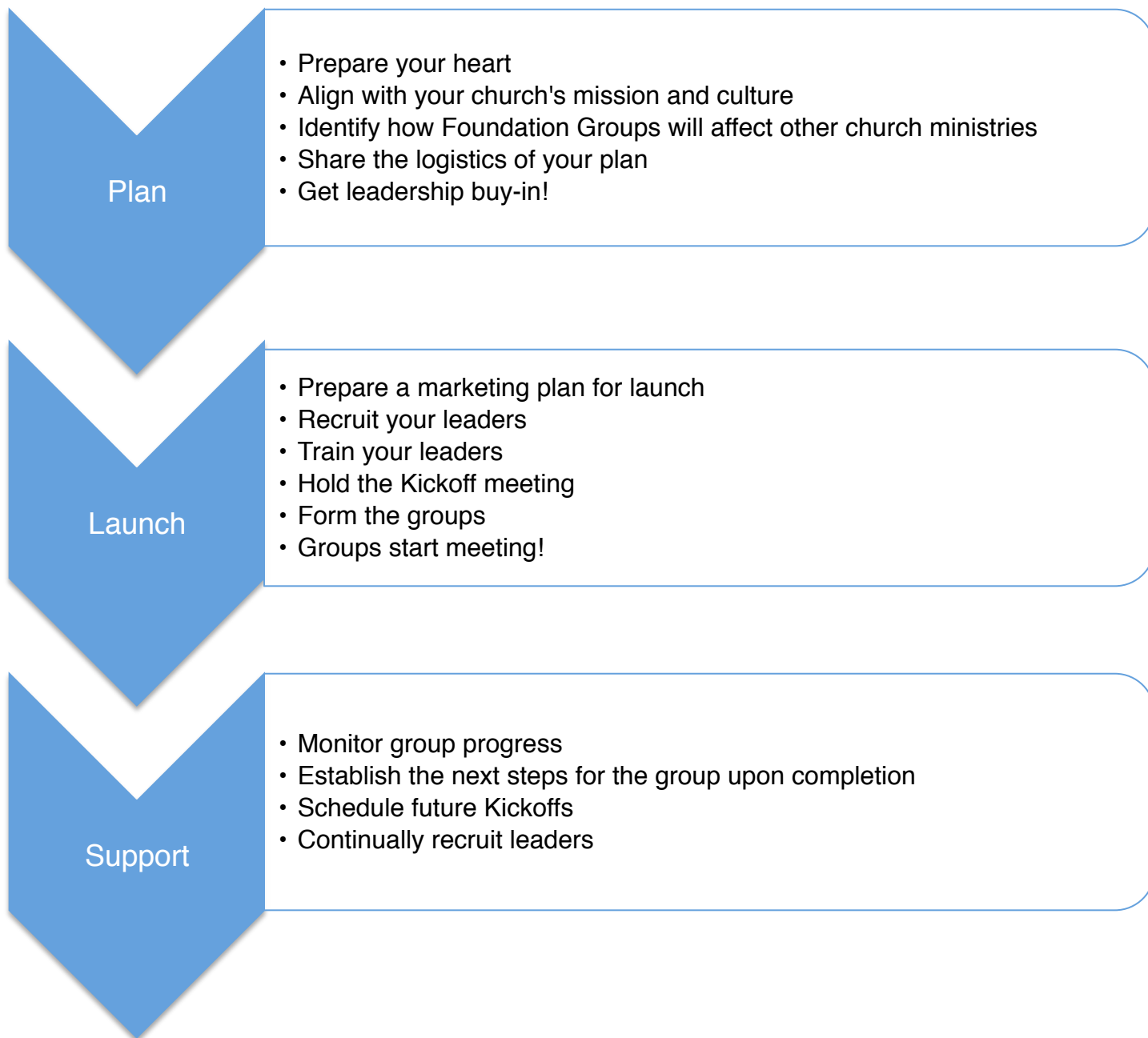




Foundation Groups Launch Guide

Purpose of this document: to provide church leaders with a framework for planning their Foundation Group implementation.

At a high level it is typically a 3-step process to launch Foundation Groups at your church:



Additional detail is provided on the pages following.



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PLAN

The purpose of the planning step is to make sure your plans are aligned with the senior leadership of your church, and obtain their buy-in.

1. Prepare your heart

- Search your heart and your motives
 - Ensure this is the direction God intends for your church
 - Read Psalm 127:1, Proverbs 14:15
- Consider the counsel of those around you
 - Assemble a small team of advisors who are willing to review your direction and provide you honest feedback
 - Ensure the collective counsel of this team supports this direction
 - Read Proverbs 12:15
- Spend a season in prayer
 - Ask God to reveal anything about you and your own marriage that may hinder the mission
 - Read Psalm 139:23-24

2. Align with your church's mission and culture

- Share the ways in which Foundation Groups will support the mission
 - For example, if your church is focused on making disciples, highlight the discipleship aspect of Foundation Groups.
- Assess your church culture and evaluate compatibility; churches where Foundation Groups are thriving share one or more of these characteristics:
 - Developing strong marriages is a foundational belief of the church and is passionately supported by senior leadership.
 - Values like authenticity, integrity, openness, and sincerity define the culture.
 - There is a commitment to being intentionally involved with others in accountable, encouraging relationships, believing that life-change happens best in the context of biblical community.

3. Identify how Foundation Groups will affect other church ministries

- Clearly state what is the ask of staff time
- Share the likely source of Foundation Group leaders
- Think through all the other staff and ministries who could potentially be affected, and communicate, communicate, communicate the impact
- Decide who is in charge of Foundation Groups from a staff perspective. Where the ministry reports is less important than the passion of the person supporting it
- Identify someone (staff / lay) who can help with administrative aspects of the program



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- Also highlight the benefits
 - Reduces load on pastoral staff and counseling teams because mentors are shepherding couples in their first 15-18 months of marriage.
 - Foundation Groups are likely to produce leaders in other ministries (e.g. premarital).
 - Foundation Groups help young couples get plugged in and stick around.

4. Share the logistics of your plan

- Format
 - What night of the week will groups meet? Are there nights when other small groups already meet? A best practice is to allow groups to pick their meeting night.
 - Will groups meet at the church or in the home? The best practice is to meet in the mentor's home for group meetings, and other places for gender-specific meetings.
 - How long will the groups meet? See Appendix 1 for the recommended timeline.
 - How large is a group? The optimal ratio is one mentor couple leading four or five participant couples.
- Forming groups
 - **Seasonal:** The often most used approach is to have regular events (called "Kickoffs") 2-3 times a year where couples can sign up to be in a Foundation Group then groups are formed afterwards.
 - **Year-round:** Another possible approach to forming groups is to have a continual on-ramp where groups are formed when there are enough newly married couples interested to form a group. If you take this approach, keep in mind recruiting leaders is an ongoing process
 - **Note: In either approach it is not recommended to add couples to a group that has already started.**
- Group member requirements
 - Establish the minimum requirements for a couple to be in a Foundation Group, e.g. must they be believers? Attend your church? Be members of your church?
 - A best practice is to require all group members to be church members. This allows any issues that arise in the group to be handled using the normal practices of your church. Otherwise, couples can refuse biblical wisdom and you have no real authority over them. This also prevents couples from becoming consumers in the church.

5. Get leadership buy-in!

- Formally request leadership's blessing
- Submit documentation to become a Foundation Group host church
 - Sign and return the Host Church And Trademark And Copyright License Agreement (**Note:** churches unable to sign due to doctrinal differences will not be able to move forward)
 - Texas churches must provide a copy of their Sales Tax Exemption form



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LAUNCH

1. Prepare a marketing plan for launch
 - Partner with church leadership to find the appropriate way to announce Foundation Groups
 - Include the Kickoff meeting logistics
 - Create assets (such as print pieces) as needed
 - Logos are available at MarriageHelp.org/FoundationGroups
2. Recruit your leaders
 - Define a leader selection process, which contains elements such as your criteria for leadership
 - Solicit a group of hand-picked couples to lead. Ideally, these are couples who have led small groups before.
 - Once you've selected your leader team, order Foundation Group workbooks and curriculum books (*Meaning of Marriage, A Lasting Promise & Sheet Music*) for the leaders at least two weeks before the training date.
3. Train your leaders
 - The leader training serves to cast vision and purpose. While some leaders may already be experienced in facilitating a small group, others may not, in which case it is recommended you provide small group facilitator training also.
 - See MarriageHelp.org/FoundationGroups for leader training audio and handout.
 - At the training, give leaders a copy of their workbook and a set of their curriculum books.
4. Hold the Kickoff meeting
 - At the Kickoff you cast vision, collect information, and set expectations for groups
 - Also have some fun!
 - Some couples may have kids so determine how childcare will be handled
 - Determine if you will offer participant guides for sale
 - Some churches buy participants guides ahead of time for sale at Kickoff
 - Others collect payment at the Kickoff then buy the guides and distribute via the mentors
 - Mentors do not typically attend the Kickoff meeting
 - Visit MarriageHelp.org/FoundationGroups for resources to help with the meeting:
 - Sample information collection card
 - Sample agenda
 - Audio from one of Watermark's Kickoffs
5. Form the groups
 - Use the information cards collected at the Kickoff to group couples and assign them to a mentor couple. Primary grouping methods: geography, available meeting nights, age
 - Forward the roster to the mentors. They should initiate communication to the couples about the location, meeting time, etc.
6. Groups start meeting!



SUPPORT

1. Monitor group progress
 - Define a method for tracking groups, including any dropouts
 - Schedule leader "huddles"
 - Pull leaders together periodically to equip them, refresh the vision and remind them that they are not alone
 - Send a survey to participant couples after four months
 - Visit each group once during the duration of the group
2. Establish the next steps for the group upon completion
 - What will be the track for the group upon completion? Is there a process for the group to continue on together as a small group? What are the next steps?
 - A transition track or next steps will need to be communicated to the group at least three months before the scheduled completion.
3. Schedule future Kickoffs
 - If you are using the Seasonal approach, schedule the next few Kickoff meetings
 - If you are using the Year-round approach, make sure the structure is in place to be alerted to interested couples
4. Continually recruit leaders
 - The long-term success of Foundation Groups rises and falls on leadership so constantly be looking for good leaders
 - If you identify a couple who you are not 100% confident is ready to lead a small group alone, consider assigning them as co-leaders with an experienced couple. If there is a group led by co-leaders, limit the group to 4 newly married couples.
 - See Foundation Groups as an opportunity to raise up future marriage ministry leaders.



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Appendix 1: Sample timeline

Foundation Group Curriculum Timeline				
months	dates	book	discussion topic	notes
0		leader playbook	dinner, expectations, overview & game	off weeks: couples establish relationships
		community	devote daily	
		community	pursue relationally	
		community	counsel biblically	
		community	live authentically	
		community	admonish faithfully	
3		community	engage missionally	discuss expectations moving forward
		the meaning of marriage	intro & ch 1 the secret of marriage	off weeks: begin accountability
		the meaning of marriage	ch 2 the power of marriage	
		the meaning of marriage	ch 3 the essence of marriage	
		the meaning of marriage	ch 4 the mission of marriage	
		the meaning of marriage	ch 5 loving the stranger	
		the meaning of marriage	ch 6 embracing the other	
		the meaning of marriage	ch 8 sex & marriage	
6			6 month assessment state of group group retreat	see appendix
		a lasting promise	chapter 1 & 2	
		a lasting promise	chapter 3 & 4	
		a lasting promise	chapter 5 & 8	
		a lasting promise	chapter 9 & 10	
		a lasting promise	chapter 11 & 13	
		a lasting promise	chapter 14 & 16	
9			state of the group	
		moneywise	god's purpose w/ money	
		moneywise	lifestyle, spending & budgeting	
		moneywise	debt & giving	
		moneywise	saving, investing & assets	
		moneywise	share details	
12			state of the group	group transition: see appendix, email watermark
		sheet music	overview, ch 1, ch 2 & ch 3 all together	
		sheet music	ch 5, 6 & 7 split guy/girl	
		sheet music	ch 8, 9, 10, & 11 split guy/girl	
		sheet music	ch 12 & 13 all together	
15			group celebration	see appendix