



Seed Project Planning

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Seed Projects: A Simple Definition

Seed Projects are short, small, simple ministry activities. Families, small groups, or local churches do them. They use local resources, and demonstrate God's love to those outside the church. Whether in a South American shelter home, an Asian rice paddy, a densely populated slum in Africa, or an American battered women's shelter, Seed Projects are small efforts, but their combined impact has enormous potential.

Seed Project: Purposes

Through Seed Projects, the local church demonstrates God's love to its community. Seed Projects also accomplish three principle purposes within the church, itself:

- 1. Wholistic evangelism and lifestyle.* Seed Projects are natural components of evangelism and discipleship. They help churches develop a lifestyle of wholistic ministry.
- 2. Freedom from dependency.* Seed Projects demonstrate that the local church can do wholistic ministry without reliance on outside resources.
- 3. Experience and confidence for larger, ongoing ministry.* Seed Projects provide experience in project planning and implementation. They enlarge the church's confidence for ongoing wholistic ministry projects. They often lead a church to larger demonstrations of God's love.

Seed Projects Characteristics

The following characteristics are valuable guidelines for Seed Projects. They are not rigid rules, but should be followed whenever possible.

Seed Project Characteristics

1. Covered in prayer
2. Compassionate—not manipulative
3. Motivated by God’s intentions
4. Thoughtfully planned
5. Simple and short
6. Done with local resources
7. Directed toward those outside the church
8. Those who benefit participate
9. Spiritual impact where appropriate
10. Evaluated by Kingdom standards

1. Seed Projects should be covered in prayer.

- § Seed Projects are identified, led, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, through prayer. They are done in conscious response to the commands of Jesus, in the power of His Spirit. Prayer should be a significant focus before, during, and after the project.
- § Ministry projects that are not initiated and sustained by prayer are not likely to be empowered by the Holy Spirit—or have Kingdom Mathematics results.

2. Seed Projects reflect God’s heart of compassion for brokenness. They are not manipulative tools for evangelism.

- § Seed Projects give us the opportunity to obey Jesus’ command to love our neighbor, unconditionally. If salvation and church growth are the principal motives for our service, our efforts become manipulative. Jesus did not manipulate. He healed people because it reflected His Father’s heart. Some acknowledged Him as Lord, and others did not. We, too, should serve because we are obedient to love our neighbor—and for no other reason.
- § There often is a harvest after Seed Projects—but we may not see it. We need to celebrate when we see Kingdom results— and when we do not see the fruit of our faithfulness.

3. Seed Projects are motivated by God’s intentions and are carried out with God’s strength.

- § Traditional projects are often undertaken when a need is seen, felt, or expressed by local people—or when outside resources are available. But this is a trap—doing good works, carried out in human strength, motivated by human compassion. Christian ministry should be different. It should reflect God’s intentions for people, not ours.

- § Seed Projects should be chosen by first seeking God’s will, praying, reading Scripture, and becoming familiar with the community. We should ask, “Father, what do You want us to do? We should be motivated by God’s intentions, independent of the needs we see around us. It should be God who directs our service, rather than “felt need.” Felt need and God’s direction will often merge, but we need to be careful that felt need is not the primary motivation for our action.

4. Seed Projects should be thoughtfully planned.

- § When Jesus spoke of “counting the cost” for sacrificial discipleship, He also alluded to planning as a logical necessity for successful results. Planning includes preparation, prayer, writing, implementation, and evaluation. Included is a tool to plan a Seed Project, covering these steps:
- ü State the problem or need
 - ü State God’s intentions concerning that need
 - ü Describe a ministry activity expressing God’s intentions
 - ü State the area of need that will be met by the project
 - ü List project steps, people to consult, resources needed, persons responsible, and completion date for each step
 - ü Check the plan to see where various areas of need are addressed
 - ü Check the plan to see where each Seed Project Characteristic is reflected—and have a reason for any not reflected
- § Planning does not eliminate the leadership of the Holy Spirit, as some fear. Some pastors hesitate to plan their sermons, wanting not to squelch the Spirit’s inspiration as they preach. In the same way, some local churches feel led to respond to a community need, but do not make plans. Yet, Scripture reminds us that we have to count the cost to build a tower, that generals count the size of the enemy army before engaging in battle, that the ant prepares for the winter by gathering food, and that the walls in Jerusalem were rebuilt by careful plans. Planning is important—and good planning requires the Spirit’s guidance. We can help the beaten man on the Jericho road without stopping to plan, but we need to plan whenever we can!

5. Seed Projects must be simple and short, small and uncomplicated.

- § Seed Projects should be simple and short. The projects themselves should take no more than one or two days, though planning and preparation take longer.
- § There are great benefits to small ministry projects. God honors and brings great results to faithful, small works. He increases by *multiplication*, not addition. People grow in faith and ability as they attempt and complete small projects. Small projects allow people to fail without major consequences. If large projects fail, people are discouraged and unwilling to try again, but small project failures can teach helpful lessons. Small projects prepare people to carry out larger projects. Together, several small projects can make a large impact on communities. The impact of small projects increases as people develop a lifestyle of ministry and service.

6. *Seed Projects are to be done with local resources.*

- § Outside resources can be helpful, but *when* and *how* they are introduced is very important. The local church must be sacrificially investing its own resources in ministry *before* receiving outside resources. If outside resources come first, powerlessness and dependency are reinforced. Local initiative is stifled. People learn to look to man—not God—to meet their needs.
- § Outside resources are best used when: (a) people have already demonstrated a willingness to sacrificially use their own resources; (b) outside resources are not substitutes for local resources; (c) outside resources produce a multiplication of local resources; and (d) people understand that God ultimately provides all resources.
- § Seed Projects use local resources that already exist in the community. They do not come from the outside, from the church's denominational headquarters or a resource agency like World Vision or the United Nations. The local resources do not always come only from the local church, however. The church is also a member of the community. If the church builds a bridge or culvert over a swampy community road, the whole community can and probably should provide labor or be involved in raising funds to buy cement.

7. *Seed Projects are directed toward those outside the church.*

- § We should not express God's love only to other Christians. We serve community members because we are obedient to Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Ministering to the needs of those inside the church is good and necessary, but Seed Projects are designed to help churches demonstrate God's love *outside* the church.

8. *Those who benefit from the Seed Projects should also participate in them, as possible.*

- § When those who are being helped are involved in the process of planning and helping, they have the dignity of participating in their healing. Doing things for people who are capable of participating—but not involving them—is paternalism. In fact, we are foolish if we do not utilize their first-hand knowledge. People who benefit and participate in a ministry project also have a greater sense of ownership. They are likely to maintain it, improve it, make it useful, and develop further projects.
- § Finally, to not involve those being helped robs them of the dignity God has given them. Perhaps a church has decided to repair a widow's home. She's not strong, she doesn't know carpentry, and she's poor. The church might think, "She can't do anything—we need to do this for her." But we need to ask ourselves, "How can she be involved?" Maybe the church could provide food for workers, and she could prepare it. Or, she could bring out the water, tea, or coffee. We need to look creatively for ways that those being helped can participate. God created her in His image—with dignity and significance. We rob her of that when we exclude her. We need to be a part of her life and not leave her as a powerless observer—even if she can only heat the water or help us plan. This may complicate the work, but *not* including her is a loss to both the helpers and the helped. When we do "*pure and faultless*" religion, we must not omit this element.

9. *An observable spiritual impact is built into the Seed Project where it is appropriate.*

- § Planning for every Seed Project includes prayer, study, seeking God, and thanking Him. This is essential, but it does not make a direct spiritual impact on outsiders. A project would be classified as having a spiritual impact only if we plan to inform the beneficiaries about God's participation when the project is carried out. This could be done through a planned celebration, dedication service, plaque, sign, written note, spoken words, or public prayer.
- § There should be a planned spiritual impact whenever possible. In each Seed Project plan, it is essential to ask if there should be a spiritual impact on the *community*. If so, it should be intentionally built in the plan as an impact area. Otherwise, we can become too busy with the project, unintentionally omit the spiritual impact, and realize it too late.
- § In some cases, it may not be best to have an intentional spiritual impact for observers.

10. *A Seed Project is evaluated by Kingdom standards.*

- § Evaluation is important—by Kingdom standards. Here are some questions to ask:
 - ü Did God multiply the resources? Did Kingdom Mathematics take place?
 - ü Have people—other than those who are serving—been blessed or favorably impacted by the project?
 - ü Was God's love evident? Were His intentions demonstrated?
 - ü Did God receive honor and praise from the observers? Did He receive more credit than the people who did the project? When the project was finished, did onlookers say, "Aren't those wonderful people?" Or "What a wonderful God they have!" We must serve in such a way that people see our good works and praise our Father.
 - ü Can this be said of your service?

The service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. (2 Corinthians 9:12-13)

- § If there is not a clear "Yes!" to one or more of these questions, the Seed Project has likely fallen short of Kingdom standards, even though it was a well-intended human effort.

Preparing to Plan Seed Projects

In His teaching on the cost of discipleship, Jesus referred to planning as a normal plan of action. It is wise to make plans, implied Jesus, to complete a tower or win a war. We understand that. We also understand the wisdom of planning big projects—the construction of a building, for example. Even though a Seed Project is simple and small, its success also requires planning. Churches that carefully plan Seed Projects greatly increase their potential to do them well, honor the Lord, and grow in the ability and grace to serve.

Planning is difficult for some Christians. We use a Seed Project Planning Guide to answer their concerns.

- § Churches have appreciated this planning tool because it keeps them focused on God’s focus. God calls us into a “partnership.” He is the leader—and we seek His wisdom and focus. We make a plan and continually allow the Holy Spirit to direct and empower it.
- § Churches appreciate this tool’s simple step-by-step format, so they can plan and carry out successful projects. Some hear about a good idea and try to implement it without planning. They fail, not because the idea is bad but because logistics were not considered.
- § Churches appreciate this tool because it helps them think about details, delegate work, and check responsibilities and progress at a glance. At the close of this document are included a copy of our Seed Project Planning Guide, a checklist to use with the guide, and a suggested report form.

How to Use the Seed Project Planning Guide

The following pages show our Seed Project Planning Guide and checklists for using it. Look at the guide, become familiar with its structure, and then read the instructions that follow the guide and checklist pages.

Seed Project Planning Guide

1. Problem: _____

2. God's intention: _____ 3. Scripture: _____

4. Seed Project title: _____

5. Primary impact area: _____ 6. Secondary impact area(s): _____

Steps	Persons or institutions to consult	Resources needed	Person(s) responsible	Action date(s)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

Checklists

Check to see if your plan is complete by writing the project step numbers below

Planned Impact Areas	Seed Project Characteristics
<p>Write “Primary” or “Secondary” to the <i>right</i> of the planned impact area.</p> <p>On the <i>left</i>, list the step numbers that relate to the planned impact area.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Physical _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Social _____ </p>	<p>List the step numbers that fit each characteristic. There may be more than one number on each line.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Covered in prayer <input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate—not manipulative <input type="checkbox"/> Motivated by God’s intentions <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtfully planned <input type="checkbox"/> Simple and short <input type="checkbox"/> Done with local resources <input type="checkbox"/> Directed toward those outside the church <input type="checkbox"/> Those who benefit participate <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual impact where appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluated by Kingdom standards </p>

Planned Impact Areas List only the steps that have a planned impact on the project’s recipients.

Seed Project Characteristics Consider all the steps, whether they affect recipients, planners, the church, or others.

Instructions for Using Seed Project Planning Guide

Problem: As God leads, identify a problem that the project will address. Summarize it in a few words on *Line 1* of the Seed Project Planning Guide.

God's intentions/Scripture: Discuss God's general intentions for this need, using Scripture as a guide. Choose one passage. Write these on *Lines 2 and 3* of the Planning Guide. *Example:* We should live in a clean and healthy environment. Leviticus 11:36.

Seed Project title: Decide on a small project that can be done with local resources to help meet the need you selected. Write a descriptive title on *Line 4* of the Planning Guide. *Examples:* "Roof Repair" or "Game Day for Children."

Primary/Secondary impact area(s): Use the four areas of Luke 2:52. Identify *one* primary project impact (*Line 5*) and one or more secondary impact areas (*Line 6*). List the planned impact area for the project *recipients*—not the planning committee.

Examples:

- § Seminar on God's intentions for husband-wife relationships—Wisdom (Secondary: Social)
- § Garbage cleanup—Physical
- § *Jesus* film—Spiritual
- § Day of games for community children—Social (Secondary: Physical, Spiritual)

Steps: Discuss the steps needed to complete the project. Use a separate line and number for each step of the project. Write steps in the order in which they will be done.

Persons or institutions to consult: Under this column, list people or institutions to consult for each step. Write them on the line for the appropriate step.

Resources needed: Under this heading, list resources needed for each step. Write them on the line for the appropriate step.

Person(s) responsible: List the person or persons responsible to see that each step is carried out. List their names or their positions on the line for the appropriate step.

Action date(s): Under this column, write the day of completion for each step. Use actual dates, rather than "Day 1" or "Day 2."

Instructions for Using the Checklists

Planned Impact Areas: On the right, write “Primary” or “Secondary” next to an impact area. On the left, write the step numbers from the plan that fit the chosen impact areas. List only the steps that have a planned impact on the project’s recipients.

Seed Project Characteristics: Write the step number(s) where the plan addresses each characteristic. Ideally, each characteristic should be seen in at least one step number. Consider all the steps, whether they affect recipients, planners, the church, or others.

Seed Project Planning and Implementation

Seed Projects are best planned in small groups. *Any* small group can plan and carry out a project that reflects God’s love and concern for community people. If the group is large, divide into even smaller groups of four or five people. Since the projects are simple and short, this is a good time—even now—to invite a small group to do the Seed Project planning process.

1. **Pray for guidance.** Participants ask the Spirit’s direction as they select a problem to address.
 2. **Use the Planning Guide.** Small group members actually design each step of the Seed Project as they fill out the Seed Project Planning Guide. They should not omit the Checklist—it is very helpful.
 3. **Present the plan.** The team or its leaders then meet with others for review and evaluation.
 4. **Implement.** This is the important part! Group members carry out their Seed Project plan.
 5. **Report, evaluate, and look toward the future.**
- § **Report.** Leaders select the reporting method that works best for their group. A suggested report form is provided on the following page, but a church may choose to design its own. The group completes the report together and shares it within the church, as appropriate.
- § **Evaluate and move forward.** Participants should pray, evaluate, and plan ways to continue to tangibly express God’s love.

Seed Project Report

Name of Group _____

Church _____

Address _____

Contact Information _____

Name of Pastor _____

Seed Project title: _____ Scripture: _____

Location: Country: _____ City _____ City Section _____

Dates of project: _____ Year _____

Primary impact area: _____ Secondary impact area(s): _____

(List only those areas for which there was a planned emphasis.)

Answer the following questions. Use as much space as necessary.

1. Whose idea was the project?
2. What was done? (Give a concise description of the seed project.)
3. How long did the project take? To organize: ___ days.
To do the project: ___ days.
4. Who participated?
5. How many people participated? _____
6. Who were the primary beneficiaries?
7. How did the beneficiaries participate?
8. What resources were needed? Where did you get them?
9. What resources were contributed by the people who were being helped?
10. What indication was there that God blessed the project?