

First 12 Prework

First 12 is designed for leaders and planters who are starting new faith communities, worship services, churches, fellowships, or small groups. Some leaders may already have a small team already committed to their vision of a new ministry. If so, then the team should all participate in First 12 to accelerate the ministry's growth. Some leaders will just be beginning, and will participate in First 12 on their own.

There are four sections of prework to be completed before coming to a First 12 event. We will be using information and reflections from the prework throughout the event, so please take the time to complete it thoroughly and thoughtfully. This prework is for your use and won't be turned in to your trainer or coach, so feel free to be as self-revealing as comfortable.

Some of this prework will require you to have conversations with other people involved in your new project, discover and research your community, and explore your own leadership style.

You will likely need to plan appropriate time to complete this prework, so do not leave it until the night before the event!

The four sections of prework include:

1. Spiritual Life Worksheet
2. Vision Worksheet
3. Permissions & Partners Worksheet
4. Community Research Worksheet

1. Spiritual Life Worksheet

Your relationship with God is your greatest and most attractive asset for starting something new. Most people today are not looking for another social program or fun group. For the most part, their lives are too busy to add anything else. However, many people are desperate for a deep relationship with God. A living and vital faith, lived out in public, will be the most fascinating part of your connections with new people. Additionally, this will be exhausting, frustrating, and disappointing work. You will meet hundreds of people who will say “no” to your invitation. You will need the strength that is only drawn from comfortable habits of personal spiritual practice.

Write responses to these questions:

Why are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?

What spiritual practices keep you connected to God? Which are daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly practices?

Who helps support you in your practices of following Jesus Christ? How do they balance encouragement and accountability for your spiritual practices?

What’s the best part of your personal spiritual life?

What part of faith do you most desire to share with other people in your life? Why should they care about what you have to share?

2. Vision Worksheet

Why do you want to gather people? Why should anyone care to join you in this new ministry? Before you can reasonably begin gathering, you must be able to answer these questions in a way that is inspiring and compelling to you and to others. This is a vision for ministry that is powerful enough for people to give their times and lives to see it come true. It's simple and profound, easy to remember and challenging enough to cause people to reorder their personal priorities.

Write responses to these questions:

Describe the new ministry, new faith community, or new church that you're feeling called to start.

Why would someone want to invest their evenings, weekends, and money in this new ministry or community?

Write a sentence that describes your God-given, life-changing, world-altering vision for this new ministry or community.

Write a sentence that describes the simple, organic, mission by which this vision will come to be realized.

Write 3-5 phrases from your previous four answers that you might incorporate in a brief response to a stranger asking you the question, "So, what do you do?"

3. Permissions & Partners Worksheet

Even if you are beginning this new ministry or faith community on your own, do not try to do this without support and partners. The most basic support is permission from your family, friends, connected churches, and denominational or network leaders. You should also have committed support from your family and household, as their lives will be reshaped by this work as well. Most successful new ministries and faith communities have at least three partner organizations, networks, or churches that are already investing leadership, spiritual, material, administrative, and/or financial support. This support can take a wide range from intercessory prayer for the new ministry to complete financial support for the new project.

Write responses to these questions:

Who are your personal supporters who have agreed to pray and encourage you in starting this new ministry or community? Be specific. If you don't yet have any, write a list of people to ask for this support and contact them before the First 12 event.

How have you secured necessary permissions from your partners or denomination to begin this new ministry or faith community?

Who is supporting you from your denomination, sponsoring church, or partnering organizations? How have they expressed their permission and support?

How have the people in your family, your household, or your close group of friends committed to support you? Be specific, including financial and time commitments. Contact them to request support and clarification if needed.

What additional support do you still need to seek in order to thrive? How are you praying for this support? What is your plan to develop this support?

4. Community Research Worksheet

Who are the people that you are trying to reach with this new ministry or faith community? How do they experience life, spirituality, community, and faith? Where do they go, and what do they do there? How can you join them in their places and build new relationships?

Follow these instructions to get demographic information on your mission field.

1. Contact your Conference or denomination office to find information on how to obtain demographics from MissionInsite.com. Many United Methodist Conferences already have access to this website, but you'll need to receive an authorized access code or have your Conference sent you the reports.
2. After registering, select "Tools" from the top left menu, and then select "Report Wizard" from the drop-down menu.
3. Follow the instructions for selecting a geography. For most projects, a radius around a neighborhood will be the easiest, but feel free to customize this geography if you'd prefer.
4. When prompted, select the "QuickInsite" report. You may also choose to download other reports, and the Quad report is a particularly fascinating look at the religious beliefs and habits in your area. The report will generate in a new window, and you'll want to save it as a PDF document for printing and sharing electronically.
5. On page 8 of the "QuickInsite" report review the listing of the "Mosaic Lifestyle Segmentation Types" for your geography. These are secular categories used to develop advertising and target marketing. They have colorful and evocative names.
6. From this list identify the top 2-3 segments in your geography. If your project has already identified a target demographic within your mission field that isn't represented in these top 2-3 segments, identify an additional Mosaic Segment that best represents that target demographic.
7. With this list of Mosaic segments, return to the MissionInsite.com web page and, if necessary, log back in.
8. From the tabs in upper left, select "Help" and then "Documents" from the drop-down list.
9. In the list of documents, select "Mission Impact Mosaic Application Guide by Bandy." This will open a new page with a listing of each Mosaic Segment Group.
10. By clicking on your 2-3 identified segments you will find a 7-8 page report on the faith and church-life preferences for that segment. Print out and save these 2-3 reports for later reference.
11. Read and review all of these reports.

Write responses to these questions:

How would you describe the target population for your new ministry or community? In other words, whom are you trying to reach first?

What are the major Mosaic Segments in your geographic area? How do they relate to your target population?

Community Research Worksheet (page 2)

What are the effective leadership patterns preferred by your target population? (Review the Mission Impact Application Guides you downloaded for additional information)

What are the effective outreach strategies preferred by your target population?

What are the communications strategies preferred by your target population?

How will you adjust your personal ministry style to better reach the people in your target population?

From your working knowledge of your target neighborhood, community, or region, where are the top 7 places that people already gather. Name specific places, schools, businesses, or parks. (If you don't already have a familiarity with your region, contact someone who does and have them help you complete these questions.)

How do people learn about regional, community, or neighborhood activities and share information?

Which 2-3 places seem like a good place for you to go to and meet new people?

Which 2-3 events, groups, or activities seem like a good place for you to go and meet new people?