

What is a Men's Shed?

“Men's Shed is an international phenomenon with thousands of clubs worldwide. We answer men's innate need for activity. Men's Shed is a club, mainly for older guys. We have tools, and materials for pursuing our interests and passions, for learning something new and sharing skills. We join to make stuff and tinker. We share a pot of coffee in a friendly atmosphere. In the end, we make friends and discuss troubling health issues.” Link:

<https://usmenssheds.org/what-is-mens-shed/>

In some of ARRCC Action Network Communities, the focus would be to create multi-generational sheds that may have a core of older men who have the experience and build relationships, but it will also be a chance for younger men to hang out to build/fix things or for dads or moms to bring a child to learn the joy of building stuff. This gives the older guys (or women) a chance to use their skills and pass on knowledge to the next generations.

Here is a 2021 video of a webinar done in Minnesota on expanding Men's Sheds in rural communities. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMmstY6XuUw>

Research on Health Benefits of Men's Sheds for Older Men

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7981817/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34392057/>

https://www.amhf.org.au/new_study_highlights_the_health_benefits_of_men_s_sheds

<https://academic.oup.com/heapro/article/29/3/483/764913>

Information on Elements of Creating a Successful Mens Shed:

Insightful documents to begin with:

<https://usmenssheds.org/start-a-shed/>

<https://mensshed.org/how-to-start-a-mens-shed-manual/>

<https://menssheds.org.uk/docs-all-uk-sheds/Starting-a-Mens-Shed.pdf>

[Five Step Guide to Starting a Men's Shed \(Ireland\)](#)

<https://www.changex.org/us/mensshedsus/guide>

1. Plan your First Meeting

- a. Use the [Shed Startup Toolkit](#) - Provided by Mens Sheds Canada
 - i. “This toolkit provides practical tips and information for individuals or groups who want to start a Men's Shed. Whether you are starting a Men's Shed through an existing organization or as an individual or group of

friends, this toolkit will provide some of the basic how-to as you move toward getting your shed started.”

- ii. <http://menssheds.ca/resources-for-starting-a-shed/>
- b. A few points to remember when holding a meeting are:
 - i. Have someone take notes of your meeting.
 - ii. Take down everyone’s contact information so you can contact them later.
 - iii. Make a plan for following up with items discussed.
 - iv. Try not to schedule a meeting at the same time as another popular event (sports, etc).
 - v. Make sure the location is easy to get to.
 - vi. People will be more likely to attend if they are offered a refreshment and a small snack.

2. Develop a Steering Group

- a. **Form a Working Group:**
 - i. “These can be friends and neighbors with a shared interest or experience organizing informal informational events. Get together to craft a vision for the shed, and then map out ways to make it happen. Local nonprofits, charities, community organizations and social service agencies can all be helpful in spreading the word to potential members as will publications and social media channels geared toward older residents.”
 - 1. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/livable-in-action/info-2019/mens-sheds-in-us.html> - Section 3: “Form a Working Group”
- b. **5 Essential Steps To Create An Effective Steering Committee**
 - i. **Pick the right people**
 - 1. There are a lot of factors that leaders need to take into account when selecting individuals for a steering committee.
 - 2. A. The first is the individual’s personality and the likelihood that they are successful working in teams.
 - 3. B. The other major factor is organizational representation. For large projects, various departments should be represented in the organization by someone with appropriate decision-making authority.
 - ii. **Inform them of the project**
 - 1. A. Regardless of the experience that everyone may have serving on steering committees, each person needs to understand the plan, description, purpose, and current scope.

2. B. Members should receive information before the initial meeting so they can craft any questions they have beforehand.
- iii. Set clear rules and goals
 1. A. Leaders need to give steering committee members the tools to perform their duties by setting standards and clear goals.
- iv. Schedule Follow up meetings (as necessary)
 1. A. Frequent meetings can decrease efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, leaders need to only schedule meetings when there is something appropriate to discuss such as a budget or scope change
- v. Make communication and debriefing a priority
 1. A. This can happen through developing a mechanism for committee members to communicate with each other and the project manager.
 - a. <https://status.net/articles/steering-committee/> - Part 3: “5 Essential Steps To Create An Effective Steering Committee”

3. Find a venue for initial gatherings to build momentum and do planning

- a. <https://mensshed.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AMSA-Resource-The-Mens-Shed-Gathering-Manual-Nov-2016.pdf> (Page 5)
 - i. Most Shed Gatherings will attract between 40-100 attendees. The venue will need to have:
 1. Enough space to accommodate the gathering with disabled access
 2. Adequate facilities and space for catering
 3. Plenty of seating
 4. Adequate parking
 - ii. Gatherings have been held in:
 1. A Conference room at a local club/hotel Showground Pavilions
 2. Function Rooms at a local Club
 3. Council or Church Halls or other Community Halls
 - iii. Catering
 1. Food helps increase participation in the Gathering and planning process.
 2. Look for initial sponsors to cover start-up costs.
- b. Accessibility and location: (“Places” section)

- i. Although it is not always possible to have a perfect venue, some points should be considered - that the venue is in a central area, that public transport is available, that the venue is accessible for those with disabilities or limited mobility, that there are toilet facilities and that the venue is safe
 1. <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Groundwork-NI-Starting-your-Shed-Guidance.pdf>
 2. <https://menssheds.ca/the-toolkit/> - “Find A Space” section

4. Apply for tax status

- a. Look into U.S. steps to become a 501(c)3 non-profit. The information below is for Australia.
 - i. Grants and Fundraising
 1. “Men’s Sheds rely on grants as well as their fundraising activities and donations from within their communities. Until now most have been precluded from accessing significant funds through corporate or philanthropic entities as they do not have DGR status.”
 - a. Men's Sheds acquiring DGR status allows broader opportunities for funding.
 - i. <https://mensshed.org/mens-shed-to-receive-tax-deductible-charity-status/>

5. Decide on initial activities

- a. <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Groundwork-NI-Starting-your-Shed-Guidance.pdf> (“Shed Activities” section)
- b. Existing Sheds in Northern Ireland offer a wide range of different activities. See the list below for some examples to inspire you:
 - i. Woodworking.
 - ii. Walking groups.
 - iii. Painting classes.
 - iv. Gardening.
 - v. Furniture upcycling.
 - vi. Bicycle repairs.
 - vii. Gardening.
 - viii. Metalworking.
 - ix. Repairs of lawnmowers, snowblowers, etc.
 - x. Model building.

- c. Map your community:
 - 1. What is on offer for men in your area? Perhaps there is something missing, like a chance to grow an allotment, or have a fix hut for bikes
- d. Find jobs in the community
 - i. “The Hopkins Men’s Shed, with 37 members, focuses more on community service, and operates out of a senior center rather than its own physical space. They keep regular communication with the city’s maintenance department, and men sign up for small jobs, like scooping ice cream at the summer festival or putting plastic bags over the fire hydrants in the city to keep them clean and workable through the winter.”
 - 1. <https://thephiladelphiacitizen.org/ideas-we-should-steal-mens-sheds>
 - 2. Community Service is a great way to build engagement with people.

6. Get Insurance

- a. Need Volunteer’s Personal Accident Insurance and Property Insurance
 - i. In Australia, “All Men’s Sheds registered with AMSA must have \$20m Public & Products Liability and Association Liability Insurance as a minimum.”
 - 1. “Men’s Shed insurance requirements vary. For example, some sheds are sponsored and insured by a larger body such as a Church organization, Local Council, Retirement Village or local Service Club.”
- b. One experienced insurance agent
 - i. Purchase liability insurance to cover your shed and activities. We recommend contacting Paul Waters for a \$1mil limited liability insurance policy – he can be reached at 760.325.7400 | paul.waters@nfp.com | nfp.com
- c. Fines/penalties are not covered in an insurance policy (in Australia)
 - i. <https://mensshed.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/Manuals/AMSA%20Resource-%20The%20Men%27s%20Shed%20Insurance%20Manual%202015.pdf>
 - 1. Section 1: Insurance and Mens Sheds
 - 2. Section 2: The AMSA Group Insurance Scheme

7. Make Plans to Address Health & Safety Concerns

- a. Health and Safety Manual:
<https://mensshed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AMSA-Complete-Mens-Shed-Health-Safety-Manual-January-2020-complete.pdf>
- b. First Aid
 - i. “All Men’s Sheds need to have and maintain a First Aid Kit and a Register to record details about all treatments for First Aid and record information about more serious injuries that may need Doctor or Hospital care.”
- c. Incident Management
 - i. It is important for all concerned that incidents (and near misses) are treated seriously.
 - 1. Every incident or near miss signals a flaw in Men’s Shed Health & Safety practice and should be reported to the relevant Committee Member at the Men’s Shed
 - 2. Notes should be made about each incident including the cause
 - 3. Corrective action should be taken if reasonably possible to prevent an incident happening again
 - 4. If a Member feels it could have Insurance implications or the information might help other Sheds to avoid a similar incident, it should be reported to AMSA on an Incident Form.
- d. Emergency Procedures
 - i. Each Men’s Shed needs to develop its own Emergency Plans to address events
 - ii. Each Men’s Shed needs to practice its Emergency Procedures at least twice a year and to correct / adjust them where necessary.
 - iii. From Dave Helmes, Executive Officer at Australian Men’s Shed Association from January 2020
 - iv. <https://mensshed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AMSA-Complete-Mens-Shed-Health-Safety-Manual-January-2020-complete.pdf> - (Page 1-3)

8. Visit other Men’s Sheds

- a. “If you are close enough, it is a good idea to visit other sheds to see what they are like and how they run. This gives you a real-life example of a Men’s Shed and it may spark ideas about the types of activities, locations, and organizational structures that might work for you. It will also give you some ideas about how your shed might be different from other sheds.”

- b. “If visiting a Men’s Shed in person is not possible, it is still a terrific idea to learn about other sheds. The Men’s Sheds community is supportive and excited to help other groups start up a shed. Visit some of the websites listed in this toolkit in order to learn more about other Men’s Sheds.”
 - i. <https://menssheds.ca/the-toolkit/> - Section “Start a Shed”
- c. The key is to keep it local – most Men’s Sheds members are part of the local neighborhood.
 - i. Research has shown that there are some places that work well for men to find information, such as:
 1. Local billboards
 2. Union or professional email lists
 3. Seniors publications
 4. Activity-specific places (sports, arts, or theater)
 5. Local Neighborhood publications
 6. Cultural events and publications (eg pow-wow)
 7. Organizations for newcomers
 8. Places of worship

9. Register to Appropriate Men’s Shed Association

- a. In Ireland:
<https://www.mmdanmark.dk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Handbook.pdf> - Page 1-2

10. Advertising

- a. Social Media Management
 - i. Platforms like [Buffer](#) and [Sprout Social](#) allow you to view all your social media accounts together and track analytic data.
- b. Email Marketing
 - i. Can use sign up sheets to gain member emails, and design a newsletter each month depicting various information.
 1. [Constant Contact](#) and [Mailchimp](#) are great contact collectors.
- c. Search Engine Optimization
 - i. SEO is a search engine marketing strategy that ranks searches based on interactions. Being knowledgeable in this area can boost activity on your website or group newsletter.
 1. [SEO Strategies](#)
- d. Video Marketing
 - i. This is a type of content marketing that is useful when explaining what the organization is all about.

1. [Vidyard](#) or [Hippo Video For Marketing](#) are great platforms for marketing videos.
- e. Event Marketing
 - i. When scheduling events, it can get hectic keeping track of all the details. [Eventbrite](#) allows you to organize these details into concise event information.