

How to build a partnership agreement

NAMB *strongly recommends* that Sending Churches and church plants formally document their relationship goals and expectations in a clearly written church planting agreement. Too many times, Sending Churches and church planters partner together based on assumptions about common strategies and goals. Often a simple agreement can bring alignment from the beginning. Here are several commitments you should consider building into your partnership agreement.

Here are 4 things Sending Churches should clarify for their planter:

- 1. Your commitment to support**
The Sending Church needs to clearly communicate the support they intend to provide. From monthly financial support and insurance costs to start-up expenses and non-financial support (i.e., design, volunteers), how and when will you help?
- 2. Your commitment to encourage**
Sending Churches should commit to providing intentional care and encouragement for both the planter and his family. Clarify what kind of encouragement you intend to provide and when.
- 3. Your commitment to establish**
Sending Churches should clarify their role in helping the new church establish. Clarify your plan to help the new church incorporate, create bylaws and other governing documents, develop basic operating policies and procedures, plan for insurance, etc.
- 4. Your commitment to advocate**
Sending Churches should clarify their role in helping the church planter recruit core team members and support. Specifically, will the planter be allowed to recruit team members and financial support from within the sending congregation? Will the Sending Church help the planter recruit partner churches? Who will assume that responsibility?

Here are 4 things planters should clarify for their Sending Churches:

- 1. Your commitment to faithfulness**
There's nothing more critical to the health of a new church than the personal faithfulness of the planter. Planters should make a commitment to integrity in their personal walk with Jesus and their leadership of the church.
- 2. Your commitment to openness**
Planters should commit to openness with the Sending Church in his life, ministry and leadership of the new church. This should include sharing personal struggles, discussing major church decisions and answering hard questions from Sending Church leadership.
- 3. Your commitment to communicate**
Church planters and their Sending Church should commit to regular, intentional communication, including communicating with the entire sending congregation (i.e., monthly letters, video updates, preaching).
- 4. Your commitment to cooperate**
Send Network church planters commit to planting a cooperating SBC/CNBC church, including giving to the Cooperative Program and other convention causes.

Here are 4 things that should be clear in all agreements:

- 1. How long will we partner?**
Don't assume you're on the same page here. Clarify exactly when the formal partnership will start and end.

2. **How will we handle misunderstandings?**

Disagreements are inevitable when the work is as important as church planting. Commit from the beginning to handling challenges in a humble, God-honoring way.

3. **What would end this partnership early?**

Lay your cards on the table. What would cause the Sending Church to withdraw support? Theological changes? Changes in practice? Location changes? Discuss these things and formalize the most critical.

4. **How will we be accountable?**

Clarify expectations of financial, theological and personal accountability. Who is the planter's primary point of contact? When will you talk about these things? Who will initiate the conversation? How will you share information?