

7 STEPS

TO STARTING A SUCCESSFUL FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

Learn how to create a successful and sustainable fatherhood program right from the start.



**National
Fatherhood
Initiative®**

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About National Fatherhood Initiative®

Because every child deserves a 24:7 Dad.™

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) is the nation's leading non-profit organization working to increase father involvement in children's lives. Underlying many of society's most pressing challenges is a lack of father involvement.

Our Mission

NFI increases father involvement by equipping communities and human service organizations with the training, programs, and resources they need to be father inclusive.

Our Vision

NFI's vision is that all communities and human service organizations are proactively father-inclusive so that every child has an involved, responsible, and committed father in their life.

To learn more about our mission, our partners, our impact, and how we can help you engage fathers, please visit www.fatherhood.org

To learn more about our training, programs, and other resources, please visit www.fathersource.org.

Table of Contents

Step 1: Make the Case for a Fatherhood Program	3
Step 2: Assess the Father Friendliness of Your Organization	8
Step 3: Focus Your Efforts on the Type(s) of Fathers You Will Engage	11
Step 4: Select the Right NFI Resources and Programs For Serving Fathers	15
Step 5: Prepare to Sustain Your Program	20
Step 6: Fund Your Fatherhood Program	23
Step 7: Launch Your Fatherhood Program and Measure the Results	27
Conclusion	30

STEP ONE

MAKE THE CASE For a Fatherhood Program



The proof is irrefutable: father involvement matters.

Supporting fathers benefits the entire family.

“Father involvement” refers to the actions and behaviors of a father raising children and the level of engagement of a father in his children’s lives. Fathers bring unique strengths to the parenting equation.

As the infographic on the following page illustrates, children with involved fathers benefit in many ways. They face a lower risk of infant mortality, low birth weight, emotional and behavioral issues, neglect and abuse, injuries, obesity, poor academic performance, teenage pregnancy, juvenile incarceration, alcohol and substance abuse, criminal behavior, and suicide. When these children reach adulthood, they’re more likely to have high-quality romantic relationships and less likely to commit domestic violence.

Mothers with engaged fathers in their children’s lives also benefit in many ways. These mothers are more likely to receive prenatal care, less likely to smoke during pregnancy, and have healthier birth outcomes. They also face a lower risk of postpartum depression and stress, have reduced parenting stress, more leisure time, and higher-quality co-parenting relationships, and higher marital satisfaction.

And when fathers are involved in their children’s lives, those men are happier, live longer, and are more active in their communities and civic groups. They have less depression and have more confidence and self-esteem. They’re motivated to adopt a healthier model of masculinity, reduce alcohol and substance use, find stable jobs, better manage and save money, and strengthen family connections.

The **Strengths** of **Father Presence**

Children with involved fathers
have a **strong foundation**
for child well-being.



They are at **lower risk**
for a host of **poor**
childhood outcomes.



- ✓ Infant Mortality
- ✓ Low Birth Weight
- ✓ Emotional and Behavioral Problems
- ✓ Neglect and Abuse
- ✓ Injury
- ✓ Obesity
- ✓ Poor School Performance
- ✓ Teen Pregnancy
- ✓ Incarceration as Juveniles
- ✓ Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- ✓ Criminal Activity
- ✓ Suicide

**National
Fatherhood
Initiative®**

www.fatherhood.org

Source: National Fatherhood Initiative® 2024.
Father Facts: Ninth Edition. Germantown, MD:
National Fatherhood Initiative®.

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Further:



Father involvement/presence data will help you educate others on the importance of father involvement, and how a lack of father involvement is at the base of numerous societal issues that human service organizations seek to solve.



It stands to reason that building the skills of fathers—giving them the specific, targeted tools and skills they need to be involved—will lead to increased involvement in their children’s lives. As a result, their children will be more likely to have positive short-term and long-term outcomes.

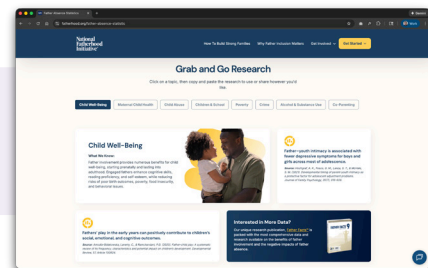


Father involvement/father presence data can help you write stronger grant proposals and bolster support for your program.



Father involvement/father presence data can also inform your mission and help establish goals that demonstrate marked improvement in your community as a result of your work.

Get more father presence statistics and data, including the infographic on the previous page, at: www.fatherhood.org/fatherhood-data-statistics



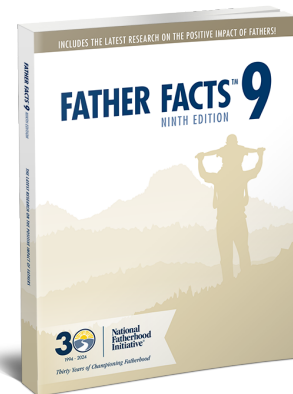
Data on Father Presence

There is a plethora of research and data on the positive effects of father involvement and the risks associated with a lack of father presence.

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) publishes the nation’s premier research publication called **Father Facts™**, now in its 9th edition. **Father Facts 9™** is the reference manual for anyone interested in promoting father involvement. It includes recent Census Bureau data and social science research, giving a clear picture of the factors that influence father involvement.

Now that you know some of the research on the impact of father involvement (and how to get more), you understand how critical it is for fathers to be involved in their children’s lives.

Depending on your organization’s size or budget (more on budget later), you may be able to do something small or big to proactively include and engage fathers. The most important thing is to start laying the foundation for a fatherhood program and build on it from there.



In human service settings, fathers are often the forgotten family member. When fathers understand their crucial role, it transforms their lives and the lives of their children and family! Encouraging father involvement is one of the best things you can do for our children's future—and OUR future—as a nation.

Food For Thought:

Do SOMETHING intentional and proactive for fathers. They play a key role in a children's overall well-being.

STEP TWO

ASSESS The Father Friendliness of Your Organization



How father friendly is your organization?

Assessing father friendliness is a vital step to starting a fatherhood program and serving fathers. Don't skip it!

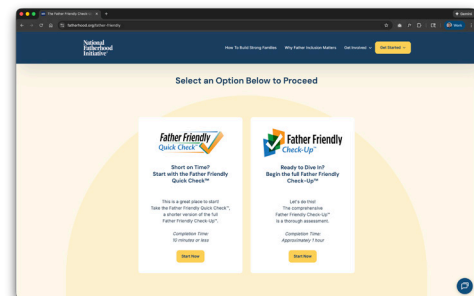
Is everyone “in the boat?”

Just because you're passionate about supporting father involvement, that doesn't mean that every other staff member is, too. Each person carries their own understanding of what it means to have or not have a father in their lives, and their own opinion about whether or not having an involved father is even important to children today. Unbeknownst to them, these opinions and attitudes can play into their everyday work with the families you serve.

Therefore, assessing the father friendliness of your organization is a vital step to serving fathers and starting a fatherhood program. In order to head in the right direction, you must know where to start.

NFI offers two FREE online, on-demand assessment tools. The [Father Friendly Quick Check™](#) is an easy way to start assessing father friendliness. It contains 40 statements about your organization. Start with this tool if you're not ready to conduct a more comprehensive assessment. NFI's [Father Friendly Check-Up™](#) (FFCU) is a more in-depth assessment. It contains 130 statements covering all aspects of your organization.

This assessment helps you analyze the commitment of your leaders to father involvement, whether policies and procedures encourage engaging fathers, how your organization's offerings are marketed to fathers, and more. Without the full “buy-in” from all of your staff members, your fatherhood program and father-involvement plans may come to a screeching halt.



Ultimately, the FFCU will help you gain perspective about the organizational changes necessary to support a successful fatherhood program. After completing the assessment, you'll receive instructions for how to interpret the results and use the results to create a customized action plan for increasing father friendliness. Without that foundation, your organization risks failure in its ability to effectively serve fathers.

Let's look at an organizational case study highlighting use of the FFCU to launch an action plan to become more father friendly.

Clinical Outcomes Group, Inc., Pottstown, PA

Clinical Outcomes Group (COGI) completed a series of meetings with internal stakeholders (e.g., with COGI's Abuse Intervention Services and Prison Re-Entry Program) to identify and pursue fatherhood opportunities and projects. After taking the Father Friendly Check-Up™, COGI implemented several new and revised father-friendly human resource policies that were approved by COGI's board of directors. Once those policies were approved, COGI offered family-friendly support to their staff that were already available to clients, such as weight management, personal finance education, stress management, CPR, and first-aid certification. The COGI staff was then trained on Abuse Intervention Services (AIS), along with two NFI programs, 24:7 Dad® and DoctorDad®. (NFI no longer offers the latter program.)

The trained COGI staff was headed in the right direction. The next step they took was to implement the programs that they are now trained on. They pursued a partnership with Schuylkill Health to provide them with resources and technical assistance to implement DoctorDad® for new fathers, they created a collaborative inter-agency model (currently five agencies participating) offering 24:7 Dad® in the community, and the agencies/departments at COGI scheduled frequent meetings with community partners to discuss father involvement.

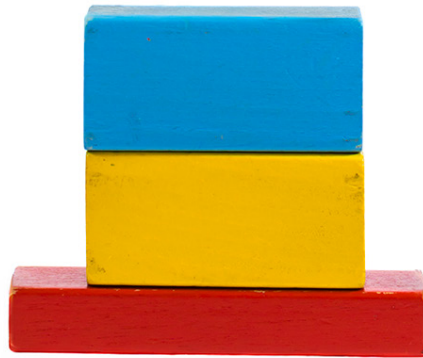
Next, it was time for COGI to engage their community. Their first step was to conduct a Father Friendly Check-Up™ with county commissioners. Once that was complete, they created the Schuylkill County Fatherhood Task Force and conducted four meetings over eight months. The initial meeting of the Fatherhood Task Force offered childcare and food that appealed to fathers. A lot of organizations use the food tactic in an effort to keep fathers coming back to sessions. It's a popular tactic that works more often than not. After the second and third meetings, the task force organized a fathering event for all human, social, faith-based, and other community organizations and provided them with NFI's Father Friendly Check-Up™. Throughout this event, COGI was able to identify and recruit 30 leaders and members to create a Fatherhood Advisory Group in Schuylkill County. The advisory group was educated on "8 Pillars of Leadership" in implementing fatherhood efforts (from NFI's Father Friendly Check-Up™).

Food For Thought:

Wouldn't it be terrible to put all this work into starting something and find out later that it didn't have "legs to stand on" for success?

STEP THREE

**FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS
on the Type(s) of Fathers
You Will Engage**



Your fatherhood program doesn't exist without fathers to serve.

What's the greatest challenge faced by most fatherhood programs?

Marketing a fatherhood program is the greatest challenge of all.

It not only involves recruitment, it also involves retention and creating a positive image of your program in the community to generate referrals. That old saying “if you build it, they will come” doesn't apply here! Just because you're passionate, your staff is ready to work with fathers, and you have a plan in mind, doesn't mean fathers will show up and keep returning.

You may have heard the saying, “Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance.” Plan ahead by strategizing how you'll draw fathers in, what other resources and assistance you'll offer as “hooks,” and clearly describe the types of fathers you'll serve. It's ideal to do this prior to choosing the curriculum for your fatherhood program.

START with these questions:

- What kind of other “wrap-around” resources and assistance do we offer that have a “draw” for potential participants? What could be the “hook?”
- What type(s) of fathers do we want to serve? Do we want to serve new fathers, teen fathers, single fathers, non-custodial fathers, etc.?
- What are those fathers' demographics (e.g., age, age of children, marital status, and child custody status)?

NEXT, answer questions like these:

- Where can we find the specific type(s) of fathers we want to serve?
- Where are the fathers we want to serve? Where do they hang out?
- Where can we post a flyer? Can we post it on a bulletin board in a community center or grocery store? Could we include a flyer on pizza boxes or packaging of other food delivery services, etc.?
- Do we already serve mothers, and can we get the message about the program to fathers through them?
- What are some other creative things we can offer to attract the fathers to our program? Can we offer food, prizes, credits, child care, etc.?

Many fathers enroll in a fatherhood program because it helps them address their immediate needs.

Regarding effective hooks, NFI's research has found that many fathers enroll in a fatherhood program because it helps them address their immediate needs (e.g., job training and placement, access and visitation with their children, getting a GED, etc.). Often, fathers only realize the benefits of learning fatherhood skills after they've been enrolled in a program for a while.

From a marketing and recruitment standpoint, it's important to stress how your program or organization can meet the fathers' immediate needs and then introduce them to the fatherhood program. Ultimately, make the fatherhood program an integral part of a larger set of programs or services fathers receive.

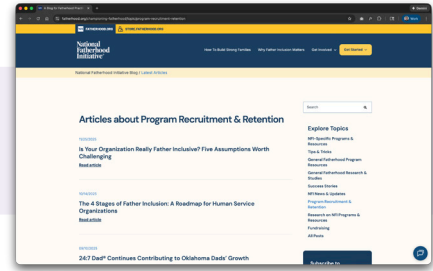
For example, NFI's evidence-based [24:7 Dad](#)[®] program is an ideal compliment to wrap-around resources and assistance because the program speaks to why men do what they do. Fatherhood can provide men with a greater purpose for life, and when you tap into that motivation, it can make your effort to strengthen families more successful than ever.

Depending on your location and types of fathers you'll serve, you may find fathers in different places.

For example:

- If your program is located in a **rural setting**, you may find potential participants in hunting lodges, fire stations, fishing equipment stores, and at sporting events.
- If your setting is **urban**, you may find potential participants at shopping malls, libraries, social service buildings, business venues, and sporting events.
- If you want to serve **justice-involved fathers**, reentry facilities, courts, city or county jails, and probation and parole offices could serve as prime locations for recruitment.

For examples of how NFI's organization partners have successfully recruited and retained fathers in their programs, read our [blog articles](#).



Interested in an online, on-demand training that will help you create a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan?

If you're interested in training on how to create a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for your program, visit the Father Engagement Academy™ at fatherhoodpractitioners.org to learn about and enroll in the [Recruitment and Retention Certificate™](#). NFI's expert staff facilitate this training, which includes exclusive access to a tool for a recruitment and retention plan.

“This course provided all the information, tools, and steps one needs to successfully plan, implement and improve on the recruitment/retention aspect of a fatherhood program. It is easy to reapply the principles to other programs as well. The course was well presented in layman's terms and a host of supporting tools were provided.”

~Terry S., Recruitment & Retention Certificate™ graduate

Food For Thought:

Successful fatherhood practitioners plan ahead by strategizing how they'll recruit and retain fathers with the right “hooks.”

STEP FOUR

SELECT THE RIGHT NFI RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS For Serving Fathers



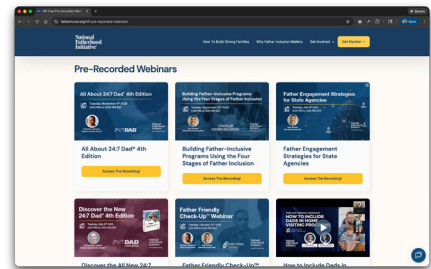
Planning to serve fathers, preparing my staff... Oh my!



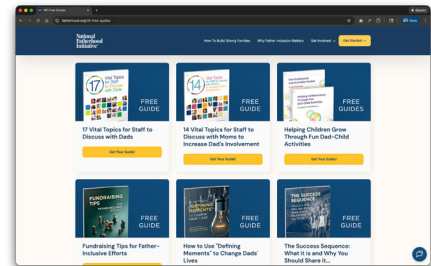
NFI's FREE resources can help. Visit www.fatherhood.org/free-resources

At fatherhood.org you'll find many free resources for your fatherhood efforts.

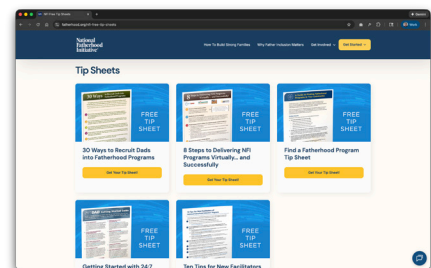
Free on-demand webinars: NFI offers [free webinars](#) throughout the year that can help you successfully serve fathers. Topics include using the Four Stages of Father Inclusion™, fundraising, and running fatherhood programs in specific settings.



Guides (like the one you're reading now!) to help you work with fathers: [Our guides](#) include: 17 Vital Topics to Discuss with Dads, Creating an Alumni Program for Graduates of a Fatherhood Program, and more.



Tip sheets: Shorter than our guides, these [handy references](#) address recruitment, virtual delivery of NFI programs, and more.



I'm ready to serve dads... but with what resources?

Use NFI resources to customize a program that's unique to your organization and setting.

After you determine which type of father(s) you'll serve, select the fatherhood skill-building resources that best fit your needs. To start, NFI uses "intensity levels" to help you understand the amount of staff involvement and monetary investment needed to offer our programs and other resources. Choose the level that's the best fit for your fatherhood program. You can start at the low intensity level, for example, and increase in intensity over time. You can also start at any level and include resources and programs from any level. It's all up to you! Don't hesitate to contact us to help you customize a program.



Low Intensity Resources: NFI fatherhood [skill-building resources](#) that require minimal staff time and monetary investment, and are easily incorporated into your other organizational offerings for fathers, such as brochures, tip cards, and posters.



Medium Intensity Resources: Fatherhood skill-building resources that require moderate staff involvement and monetary investment, such as the [ProFathering15™](#), [24:7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop](#), and [Booster Sessions for Non-Custodial Dads](#).



High Intensity Resources: Fatherhood programs that require the highest level of staff time and monetary investment, and that can last for several months such as [24:7 Dad® A.M. and P.M.](#), [InsideOut Dad®](#), and [Understanding Dad™](#).

Low Intensity Resources

NFI offers affordable [skill-building materials](#) for fathers and mothers that you can start using in your day-to-day activities with a small budget and little to no staff time. We offer many in English and Spanish.

For example, NFI's brochures and tip cards for new and experienced fathers provide a low intensity approach to begin adding fatherhood materials to your offerings. Adding posters with



a fatherhood focus can also enhance your environment. Acquire these and other resources at www.fathersource.org.

Providing father-focused materials to the clients you serve is an easy, budget-friendly way to begin.

Medium Intensity Resources

If you're ready to invest more staff time and funds, consider NFI's medium intensity resources. They provide fathers with more in-depth learning, and their short duration makes them ideal for serving many fathers in a short time frame.

The 24:7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop is an affordable eight-hour workshop you can run for fathers that covers the importance of developing and applying the 12 key behaviors of an involved father. Fathers can complete it in a short amount of time—in a single day, in a week, or over the course of two Saturdays, for example.



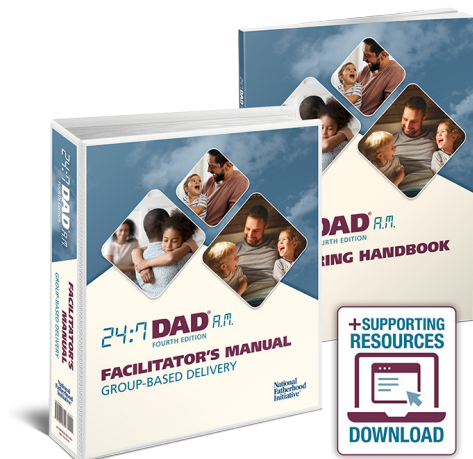
ProFathering15™ is an online, on-demand program fathers can complete on their own (self-paced) or with the guidance of staff. At only \$15/dad, it's ideal for reaching fathers who can't or won't attend an in-person program or workshop. It contains 15 topics relevant for any father. Fathers can access the program on any computer or mobile device, and it takes only 15 minutes to complete each topic.



High Intensity Resources

If you're eager to start an in-depth fatherhood program, NFI has several that allow you to start at an affordable cost with no formal facilitator training required.

This “out-of-the-box” approach means that NFI's Facilitator's Kits include everything your organization needs to start right away, including a Facilitator's Manual, facilitator web page with supporting resources (e.g., handouts), and a facilitator's copy of the Fathering Handbook. All you need to budget for after acquiring a

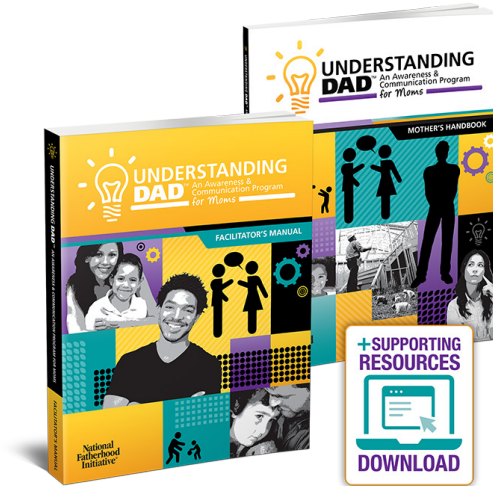


24:7 Dad® A.M. and P.M. (for all fathers)

kit(s) is the ongoing cost of purchasing copies of the Fathering Handbook for fathers (around \$9-14/handbook depending on the program). To learn more about our training options, [click here](#).



InsideOut Dad® (for incarcerated fathers)



Understanding Dad™ (for mothers)

Food For Thought:

Whichever fatherhood programming level you choose, providing father-specific, skill-building materials at some level is a step in the right direction.

STEP FIVE

Prepare to SUSTAIN YOUR PROGRAM



Keeping your fatherhood program alive and thriving for the long-term requires sustainability.

It's time to think about how you can sustain a program.

Now that you've completed the Father Friendly Check-Up™ (or Father Friendly Quick Check™) and are ready to start your fatherhood program, it's time to create a program you can sustain. Sustainability refers to the long-term ability to keep your fatherhood program alive and thriving. From the foundation of the program to ensuring long-term funding, a good place to start is with a logic model.*

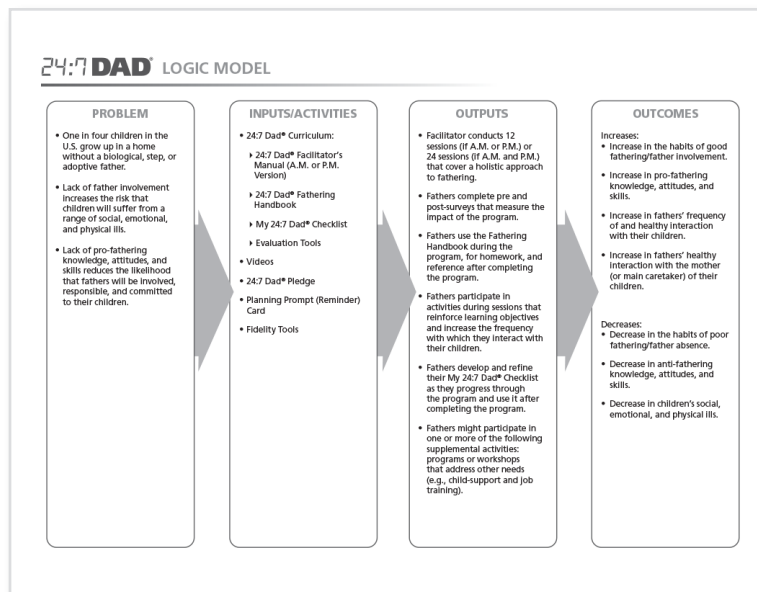
Developing a program requires planning, implementing, and measuring its success. A logic model is a picture of how your program works that leads to the outcome(s) you desire, such as more involved fathers. It keeps your goals in view and shows the processes and activities connected to achieving that goal. It's a valuable aid to show potential partners and funders that solid, systematic planning backs your program.

Remember how we spoke in Step 3 about using wrap-around services as a hook for your fatherhood program? Be sure to include these services as "inputs" in your logic model in addition to, for example, the fatherhood curriculum you'll use. See the following page for an example of a logic model from one of NFI's programs, 24:7 Dad®.

*Instead of a logic model, you could consider a theory of change model. For more on the difference between logic and theory of change models, visit <https://cere.olemiss.edu/logicmodels-vs-theories-of-change/>.

Components of a Logic Model

- **Inputs** (what we invest)
- **Outputs:**
 - ✓ Activities (the actual tasks we do)
 - ✓ Participation (who we serve; customers and stakeholders)
 - ✓ Engagement (how those we serve engage with the activities)
- **Outcomes/Impacts:**
 - ✓ Short-Term (learning: awareness, knowledge, skills, motivations)
 - ✓ Medium-Term (action: behavior, practice, decisions, policies)
 - ✓ Long-Term (consequences: social, economic, environmental, etc.)



Food For Thought:

The goal of a logic model is to help you get started on the right foot with your fatherhood program, helping everyone involved understand what's needed, and where you're headed.

STEP SIX

FUND YOUR FATHERHOOD PROGRAM



So, you have an awesome logic model for your fatherhood program. Great! Now what?

How will you fund all this much needed fatherhood work?

NFI understands that you want to do everything you can to launch a successful fatherhood program. Organizational budgets are often tight, however, and funding can be difficult to secure. The good news is that there are a variety of ways you can fund to work with fathers and take advantage of NFI's wide range of affordable skill-building resources and out-of-the box fatherhood programs.

Funding from Your Own Budget

The first and best option to consider is how you can pay for staff time and fatherhood resources within your organizational budget. Scrutinize the line items in your budget(s) for potential cost savings. Look at funding for general operations, programs, and services. Leave no stone left unturned. Invest any savings you find in staff time and resources for your fatherhood program. Of course, when you have the opportunity to plan budgets for the next fiscal year, be sure to include funds for your fatherhood program in your planning, and commit funds for fatherhood skill-building resources.

Funding from Outside Sources

Seek funding from multiple public and private sources. Public sources include local, state, and federal government agencies. Private sources include family and corporate foundations and individual donors. Don't rely on only one source of funding.

Public and private funding could be vital to starting and sustaining your fatherhood program. When you identify funding sources, include adequate time in your proposal's budget for staff to run a successful program. Don't dedicate staff time to the program and then pull staff away from it to focus on other efforts.

For more information on how to obtain funding for your fatherhood program, particularly from private sources, watch our free "[Fundraising for Fatherhood Programs](#)" on-demand webinar. We provide further guidance on fundraising in the online, on-demand [Father Engagement Certificate™](#) training.

Your organization may want to seek outside funding from:

- Individuals
- Foundations
- Corporations
- Local, State, or Federal Government
- Special Events/Fundraisers

Check out these free and fee-based resources on locating potential funders, acquiring training on fundraising, and more. (Simply enter the name of any of these resources into your favorite search engine.)

Federal Grant Resources

Grants.gov: A federal site that aggregates all federal grant opportunities. You can search for grants currently being offered and access grant writing resources.

Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grants: This is an ongoing funding stream provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families to provide grants to organizations seeking to run fatherhood and marriage/healthy relationship programs.

Foundation / Grant Funding

Candid: A subscription-based website that offers research on foundations, including family foundations and other tools for grant seekers.

FoundationSearch: A subscription-based website that helps nonprofits identify potential funding sources for grants of \$75,000 or more. They offer a free "funding assessment" that can help you determine the likelihood of securing funding.

GrantStation: Offers nonprofits, educational institutions, and government agencies the opportunity to identify potential funding sources for their programs or projects as well as resources to mentor these organizations through the grant seeking process. Free and membership-based resources are available.

The Grantsmanship Center: The center provides training and publications to help organizations plan solid programs, write logical, compelling grant proposals, and create earned income opportunities. The website contains an interactive U.S. map where you can learn more about funding opportunities in your state(s).

Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT): Provides a range of training programs and webinars to help you raise money from your community. Additionally, they offer articles and subscription-based services to aid in fundraising efforts.

Food For Thought:

Don't rely on only one source of funding for your fatherhood program. Multiple sources are vital for sustainability.

STEP SEVEN

LAUNCH YOUR FATHERHOOD PROGRAM and MEASURE THE RESULTS



Ready to Launch?

Plan to evaluate your program's success.

Now that you've laid the foundation for a successful fatherhood program by following the first six steps, you're ready for lift off!

Or are you?

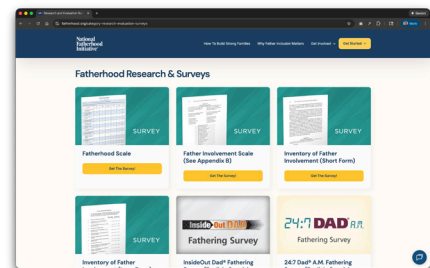
Nope. You must take one final, crucial step before launch: laying the foundation to evaluate your program.

Don't create your evaluation plan after launching your program. Avoid a situation where you've been running your fatherhood program for several weeks or months and your boss knocks on your door wanting to know how it's going, and may ask questions, such as:

- Which recruitment and retention strategies are working?
- Are the fathers enjoying the program?
- Is the program having a positive impact?

An evaluation plan is a crucial management tool that helps you course correct if something isn't working. (And you won't have that deer-in-the-headlights look when your boss asks you outcomes-related questions.) An evaluation is like a GPS. It tells you if you're headed in the right direction toward accomplishing the outcomes in your logic model.

You don't need a complicated design to effectively evaluate your program. NFI includes evaluation tools with many of our fatherhood programs that you can easily use, score, and interpret. We also include a number of [evaluation tools](#) you can download in the free resources section of our website. You can use them for any kind of fatherhood program that seeks the outcomes they measure, such as increased father involvement and better co-parenting.



Create a detailed evaluation plan before launch. Tie it to your logic model. Include the processes, staff, evaluation tools, stakeholders who'll value the results, and how and when you'll report the results.

Food For Thought:

Evaluations are critically important for program credibility, accountability, improvement, sharing of better practices, and to prove to funders that their dollars were well spent.

CONCLUSION

Starting a fatherhood program will be incredibly rewarding for staff AND the fathers you serve.

Now that you've read this guide, it's time to go back and start with Step 1. The good news is that NFI is here help you create a fatherhood program that's the best it can be!

Be sure to check out all of our free resources at www.fatherhood.org and browse all of our fatherhood skill-building programs and resources at www.fathersource.org.

Wishing you the best in your endeavors,

**National
Fatherhood
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www.fatherhood.org