



## Starting a Men's Shed

A reference guide to starting and  
maintaining a Men's Shed



## **STARTING A MEN'S SHED**

### US Men's Shed Association History

The concept of a Men's Shed started in Australia in the 1990's, when it was recognized that men were often lonely, bored, and lacked socialization after retiring. The lack of socialization often led to health concerns and depression. It was felt that organizing a community outlet to address the issue would alleviate the problem of depression. Years of research have proven that physical and mental activity can improve our health and wellbeing. Men's Sheds are organized to provide a place of camaraderie, activities, and learning, thus providing a means to stay socially active. The idea floated to the United States around 2017, and at present, there are more than 20 Men's Sheds across the country.

The USMSA is comprised of several individuals who donate their time to grow the movement in the US and help men lead better lives. If you are interested in starting a shed or joining a shed, we are here to help you.

To that end, this booklet will provide some of the information you will need to start a shed. The guide is designed to help you understand what is typically involved in starting and running a Men's Shed. But you will find that there is no 'template' for a Men's Shed. Each shed is individually run, and activities are decided upon by the members. So, use the information you need but don't be surprised if you don't need all of it. If you need additional information, we're here to help.

We will provide support and help as you make your way to organizing and starting your shed.

We hope that once you realize the benefits of belonging to a Shed you will be excited about being a Shedder!

Director

USMSA



## **DISCLAIMER**

This document is provided by the US Men's Shed Association for general interest on the given topic. It does not claim to be a comprehensive breakdown of all things relevant to the subject matter and not all the information will be relevant to every Shed's journey. You should not, under any circumstance, regard the information as constituting legal or accounting advice and it should not be relied on as such. In relation to specific problems, users are advised to seek professional advice.

## THE WHO

### ***Develop a Steering Committee***

Starting a shed by yourself can be overwhelming. The first thing to do is to gather a Steering Committee. Since Sheds are a place where men come together, it's best to start with a few men to share the work. Spread the word and if your friends like the idea of a Men's Shed, get them involved. If you need more help, speak to community groups, clubs, and churches.

Once you have the Steering Committee on board, they can help determine the path of the Shed, and answer some of the questions about what the Shed should look like. Will it be a Sponsored shed or an Individual shed (more on that later)?

Also, the committee can help determine where, when, and how things will be put together. The USMSA can put you in touch with an experienced Shedder who has been through this start up period, if you feel that would be helpful.

### ***Visit Other Sheds***

One of the best ways to determine what your Shed should look like is to visit another Shed! If it's not possible to physically visit another Shed, contact some of the Shed leaders listed on the USMSA "Find A Shed" page of our website. They will be happy to assist and answer questions.

## THE WHAT

### ***Decide on the purpose of your Shed!***

The Shed activities are *initially* determined by the group developing it. Typically, if the Steering Committee determines the types of activities, there will be other men attracted to the group. In the US, there are Sheds that are involved in:

- Community Service
- Woodworking
- Bicycle repairs
- Education

Of course, as the Shed matures, there may be many more activities introduced to enhance the experience for the members.

Once the purpose of the Shed is determined, the Shed Committee may look to find a Sponsor for the Shed or determine if it will be an Independent Shed. There are several differences between these two types of Sheds, which will be addressed as we go along.

## THE WHERE

### *Find a 'Place'*

**Sponsored Shed:** If the decision has been made to start a Sponsored Shed, the Sponsor will typically have space for the men to meet. It may be a meeting room, garage, warehouse, etc. Determine how much space you will need for your equipment, tools, facilities, and members. Put together a wish list of things you'd like to have in your Shed, identify the 'must haves' and the 'nice to haves'. Discuss your needs with the Sponsor to find a suitable location and any constraints they may have.

**Independent Shed:** For those without a sponsor, determine how much space you will need for your equipment, tools, facilities, and members. Put together a wish list of things you'd like to have in your Shed, identify the 'must haves' and the "nice to haves." You will also need to develop a budget according to your needs and investigate sources of funding (GoFundMe, dues, donations, etc.)

Talk to the city/county/township/churches to see if they have space available for your use. If you must rent space, determine how much you can afford to pay. Also consider:

- Accessibility by public transport?
- Are there kitchen/lavatory facilities?
- Will noise be a factor for the neighbors?
- Is it safe?

The more people you talk to about the Shed, the more you will be known, and the word will get out. If you decide to rent/lease, remember the legalities and consult an attorney.

## THE HOW

### ***Formalize The Shed***

Decide on a name for your Shed so you can talk it up and get people interested in joining you. If under Sponsorship, discuss ways to 'advertise' the Shed with the Sponsor. They may have ideas and outlets in place that will help spread the word and gain the interest of more men. Discuss with the Sponsor the need for "formalizing" the name of your Shed. Does it need to be a registered entity, or will the Sponsor's status cover the Shed?

Independent Sheds should decide upon a name for the Shed and determine if registering the Shed is necessary. If so, contact your state's Secretary of State for more information on how to do that. If expecting to raise funds through donations investigate the requirements for obtaining non-profit status (501(c)3). (Get professional advice).

### ***Stock The Shed***

Depending upon the activities you anticipate, determine the tools you will need. Most Sheds start with members using their own tools, and as it grows, add to the collection through donations. Ensure all donated tools meet the safety standards.

Look into other means of finding tools and materials.

- Salvage – If you see something being discarded, and you can use it, ask. Also check out charity shops, thrift stores, lumber yards, big box stores. They may have damaged goods that will fit your needs.
- Donations – from individuals or companies cleaning their attics or back rooms.
- Purchase – if you must buy something specific for your project, tell the seller about the Men's Shed and the project and ask for a discount.
- Check out the on-line sellers.
- Talk to schools that might be upgrading their equipment. Perhaps they will donate the 'older' things to your Shed.

## ***Administrative Issues***

**Sponsored Shed:** The Sponsor may require certain information on a routine basis. Discuss any administrative issues with the Sponsor and decide on how you will meet those requirements. More specifically:

- If you are raising funds through donations, ask if the Sponsor is a 501(c)3 entity and if it will accept tax advantaged donations on behalf of the Shed.
- You may need a bank account. To open a bank account, you will need an EIN number which requires you to be a legal entity. Again, speak with the Sponsor about these issues and how they can help.
- Consider the need for insurance. If tools and equipment are part of your Shed, insurance may be necessary, covering both liability and equipment.

**Independent Shed:** Decide how you will raise funds to keep the Shed afloat.

- If raising money solely through dues, it may not be necessary to 'register' with the state.
- However, if you want to open a bank account, you will need to register the entity with the State and obtain an EIN Number from the IRS (<https://www.irs.gov/>)
- If raising money through donations, a 501(c)3 status may be advantageous. Often people will be more willing to donate to a nonprofit if they receive a tax deduction.
- If you receive 501(c)3 status, open a bank account and specify an account with the lowest (or no) fees.
- Make sure your account is set up so that two people are required to sign checks and approve withdrawals. This increases safety and accountability.
- Consider the need for insurance. A minimum of Liability insurance may be needed, but also consider Property Damage and Trustee indemnity. Contact an agent that is familiar with non-profit organizations.

## ***How Much Will It Cost?***

By now you may have a "ballpark" figure of what starting and maintaining a Shed will cost.

**Sponsored Shed:** Now's the time to finely tune that figure so that you can decide if you will charge dues, and if so, how much. Or if the Sponsor is willing to cover the costs, tell them how much you will need.

**Independent Shed:** Consider the source of expenses and how you will cover the costs. Consider the following:

- Rent
- Utilities
- Tools and Equipment
- Insurance
- Sundries (coffee?)
- Any other repetitive cost for running the Shed.

Note that dues can be charged annually, monthly, or even per meeting, depending on your preference and the needs of the Shed.

### ***Health and Safety***

Health and Safety should be considered foremost in any Shed. Below are several suggestions to start a Health & Safety plan for your Shed. ***This is not a comprehensive list, and there is more information on the USMSA Website.***

- Safety glasses, goggles, face shields and ear plugs appropriate to the machine/equipment being operated are required.
- Shoes must always be worn in the Shed. Footwear must cover the entire foot.
- No work may be performed using power tools unless at least two trained people are present and can see each other.
- Disconnect power supply to machines when cleaning, repairing, or oiling.
- All machines must be operated with the required shields in place.
- Think through the entire job before starting!
- Refer to the H&S manuals for every piece of equipment before using it.
- Don't rush or take chances. Obey all safety rules. \*

*\*Hawaii Men's Shed Honolulu used with permission.*





## **THE WHY**

The Men's Shed is an international phenomenon with thousands of clubs worldwide. We answer men's innate need for activity. A 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 health issues to help one another. The key to our popularity is best expressed in our motto: men don't talk face to face, we talk shoulder to shoulder.

[USMensSheds.org](http://USMensSheds.org)

Thanks to the UK Men's Shed Association for their cooperation and assistance in helping the US Men's Shed Association grow.