

Creating Benchmarks for a Church Plant

Benchmarks are a way to measure progress. Church planting, like most of ministry, is an endeavor that is never completed, and so benchmarks provide the planter and the partnership team with a common direction and opportunities for accomplishment along the way.

Benchmarks are also a way to note areas that need improvement. These agreed-upon goals help the partners know if the church plant is on track to achieve its desired outcome in the time frame given.

A respected CRC church planting coach noted that his ability to coach a planter is violated when benchmarks are inserted later in the process. He recommends that benchmarks are created and shared by the partnership team from the beginning.

A good benchmark is SMART:

Specific- it states exactly what you want to achieve

Measurable- it establishes clear definitions to help you measure if you're reaching your goal

Achievable- it creates the opportunity to succeed by setting goals that can actually be accomplished

Results-focused- it is described using action verbs as if the goal was already accomplished

Time-bound- it sets a clear deadline based on how much time the task will take to complete

The partnership team should agree on 5-6 benchmarks for the upcoming year of the church plant. These are the major milestones; the planter may wish to set other benchmarks along the way in order to achieve these goals.

Coaching questions the planter and partnership team may want to consider when developing these benchmarks:

- Where do you see God working and how can you join Him in that?
- Who currently comprises your leadership or core team? What are your hopes for what this team will look like a year from now?
- Who are the lost that God is calling you to reach?
- How will you know if people are growing in their relationship with God?
- How will you reach the fundraising line item in your budget?
- How will worship play a role in your church a year from now? What do you have to do to prepare for that vision?
- What is God shaping and molding in the church planter, and how can he or she grow as a leader?
- What does it look like to be connected to this church in a meaningful way? How many people are connected now, and how many do you hope will be connected a year from now?