



NEXT Workbook User Guide

Your Journey to a Healthier Church

Welcome to your NEXT adventure! We're so glad you've decided to take this journey toward building a healthier, more vibrant church community. This guide is here to walk alongside you as you explore the NEXT Strategic Workbook – think of it as your friendly companion rather than a strict instruction manual.

Understanding the NEXT System

The beauty of the NEXT system lies in its name – it's all about knowing what comes **NEXT**. Just like a farmer who understands that each season has its purpose, church health follows a natural progression. A farmer doesn't expect a harvest without first tilling the soil, planting seeds, watering, and tending the crop. Each step builds on the previous one, creating anticipation for what's coming **NEXT ... The Harvest!**

The beautiful thing about this workbook? **It's completely self-paced.** There's no pressure to rush through or keep up with anyone else. Take your time, reflect deeply, and move forward when you feel ready. But do move forward – each completed section naturally leads you to discover what's **NEXT** in your church's growth story.

1. GETTING STARTED: *Understanding Where You Are*

Let's begin with a health check-up for your church

Just like visiting a doctor for an annual physical, every healthy church benefits from taking an honest look at where things stand. This isn't about judgment or criticism – it's about gaining clarity so you can celebrate your strengths and identify areas for growth.

What you'll do:

Head to the **DATA COLLECTION** section of your workbook and take your time gathering information about your church. Think of yourself as a caring detective, collecting clues about your community's health.

The information you'll explore includes:

- **PRIME Markers** – the vital signs of your church
- **GENERAL Markers** – the day-to-day rhythms and patterns

- **GENERAL INDICATOR Markers** – trends you're noticing
- **PERCEPTION Markers** – how people experience your church
- **PRODUCTION MEASUREMENT Markers** – the tangible results you're seeing

A gentle reminder:

Be honest but kind with yourself during this process. Every church has areas that could use attention – discovering these isn't a failure, it's the first step toward positive change.

What's NEXT? Once you have a clearer picture of where you are, you'll be ready to dream about where God might be calling you to go. This is the natural progression – like a farmer who assesses the soil before deciding what to plant.

2. DREAMING TOGETHER: *Discovering Your Vision and Purpose*

Time to let your imagination soar!

Now that you understand your starting point, it's time for the exciting part – envisioning the future God has in store for your church. This is where you get to dream big and ask, "What could our community look like if we were operating at our healthiest and most vibrant?"

Your creative work:

Navigate to the **TRACKING DIVISIONS** section and find the areas focused on crafting your vision, mission, and core values. Don't worry if these feel intimidating – we'll take them one at a time.

Here's what makes this so important:

Many churches (about 60%!) operate without a clear vision or mission statement. While there's nothing wrong with that, having these compass points can bring incredible clarity and energy to everything you do.

Your journey through this section:

- **Dream Your Vision:** Paint a picture of the transformed community you hope to see. What would it look like if your church was making its greatest possible impact?
- **Clarify Your Mission:** How will you work toward that vision? What's your church's unique calling and purpose?
- **Identify Your Core Values:** What principles will guide every decision you make along the way?

Use the **WORK SPACE** sections liberally – they're there for your thoughts, questions, and breakthrough moments.

What's NEXT? With your destination in mind, you'll create a roadmap for how to get there ... step by step.

3. MAPPING YOUR JOURNEY: *Creating Your Step-by-Step Path*

Let's turn those dreams into an actionable plan

You've identified where you are and where you want to go – now it's time to figure out how to bridge that gap. This is where your vision transforms from inspiration into practical, manageable steps.

Your planning work:

Continue in the **TRACKING DIVISIONS** section, focusing on defining your "Big Picture," "Path Core Purpose," and most importantly, your "Progressive Steps."

Why this matters so much:

This is the heart of moving from where you are to where you want to be. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the distance between current reality and future vision, you'll have a clear path forward.

Breaking it down:

- **Big Picture Goals:** What are the major milestones that will move you toward your vision?
- **Path Core Purpose:** What's the essential spirit or approach that will guide your journey?
- **Progressive Steps:** Here's where the magic happens – you'll break down your big goals into smaller, achievable actions. Each step builds on the previous one, creating momentum and progress you can actually feel.

Think of this like a farmer planning the growing season. You know what harvest you want, but you also need to map out the planting schedule, prepare for different weather conditions, and plan for the care your crop will need at each stage.

What's NEXT? A great plan needs great people to bring it to life – just like planted seeds need careful tending. Your next focus will be building and empowering your team.

4. BUILDING YOUR TEAM: *Developing Leaders and Volunteers*

Investing in the people who will make it all happen

Every healthy church thrives because of healthy, equipped, and empowered people. This section is all about cultivating relationships and leadership that will carry your vision forward.

Your people-focused work:

Dive into the **TEAM DEVELOPMENT** sections of your workbook with excitement – this is where you get to invest in others and watch them flourish.

Why people matter most:

Throughout history, transformation has happened through people investing in people. Think about Jesus with his disciples, Paul mentoring Timothy, or Moses preparing Joshua. Your church's health will ultimately depend on how well you develop and empower others.

What you'll find in this section:

- **Leadership Training Materials** – resources to help your leaders grow
- **Leadership Ministry Descriptions** – clarity about roles and expectations
- **Volunteer Handbook & Application** – systems to welcome and engage helpers
- **Leadership Target Reviews** – tools for ongoing development and encouragement

Your approach:

Take your time identifying people with leadership potential, create safe spaces for them to grow and make mistakes, and celebrate their development. Remember, you're not just filling positions – you're helping people discover and use their God-given gifts. Like a farmer who tends the growing plants with care, you're nurturing the growth of those around you.

What's NEXT? With a clear vision (your seeds), a practical path (your planting plan), and an empowered team (your dedicated gardeners), you're ready for the most exciting part – anticipating and preparing for the harvest of community impact.

5. LIVING YOUR MISSION: *Engaging Your Community*

Time to take your healthy church out into the world

This is where all your internal work translates into external impact. Your church's journey toward health isn't just for your own benefit – it's so you can better serve and love your community.

Your outreach exploration:

Return to the **TRACKING DIVISIONS** sections, but this time focus on principles and practices of community engagement.

The heart behind it all:

As people called by a God who actively pursues relationship with us, your church is designed to "go out rather than just reach out." Your growing health should naturally overflow into greater community connection and service.

Practical engagement ideas:

The workbook offers simple, doable suggestions that can help you start building bridges with your neighbors:

- Casual social times after services
- Family-friendly community events
- Outdoor activities that bring people together
- Any activities that create natural opportunities for conversation and connection

Your approach:

Start small, be authentic, and focus on building genuine relationships rather than just attracting people to your programs. Listen more than you talk, and approach others with curiosity and care rather than judgment.

Keeping the Journey Going

Remember, just as a farmer's work is never truly finished – there's always another season, another crop, another opportunity for growth – your church's journey toward health is ongoing. This workbook is designed to grow with you, so feel free to revisit sections as your church evolves and changes.

Each time you complete a section, ask yourself: "What's NEXT?" This simple question will keep you moving forward, building on each foundation you've laid. Some chapters might speak to you immediately, while others may become relevant later in your journey. Trust the process, trust your instincts, and most importantly, trust that God is with you every step of the way.

The NEXT system works because it mirrors the natural rhythms of growth and development. Every farmer knows that patience and persistence lead to harvest. Your commitment to asking "What's NEXT?" and taking that next step will not only transform your church community but will create ripple effects of positive change that extend far beyond your walls.

We're excited to see what God will do through your faithful steps forward – and what's NEXT in your church's growth story!