



New Center Development FAQ

What is FOCUS North America and our mission?

As an expression of Christ's love, FOCUS serves the poor by bringing together Orthodox Christian churches and community partners to provide Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding, and Shelter and other assistance to address the needs of local communities. FOCUS North America is a ministry affiliated with the Assembly of Bishops.

At FOCUS, our name is both a mission and a message. Since 2009, The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve, as the domestic service arm of the Church, brings together Orthodox faithful across the country to live out Christ's call to serve others. But FOCUS is more than just our name—it's also a reflection of what we do, with each letter representing the core services we provide. Whether it's providing a warm meal, job training, essential clothing, compassionate support, or safe shelter, we remain focused—always—on maintaining dignity, offering hope, and building community through service that makes the Kingdom of Heaven manifest in tangible ways. Ultimately, we envision a world where everyone experiences and shares the transformative love of Christ.

FOCUS currently operates 11 FOCUS Centers across the country as well as Youth Equipped to Serve, a national youth & young adult ministry.

What is a FOCUS Center?

FOCUS fulfills its mission by serving communities through a growing network of FOCUS Centers. These efforts provide meaningful opportunities for Orthodox Christians to engage in service and offer critical resources to individuals and families facing the complex, often overwhelming realities of poverty. FOCUS Centers are dedicated, community-based locations where Pan-Orthodox faithful come together to serve their neighbors.

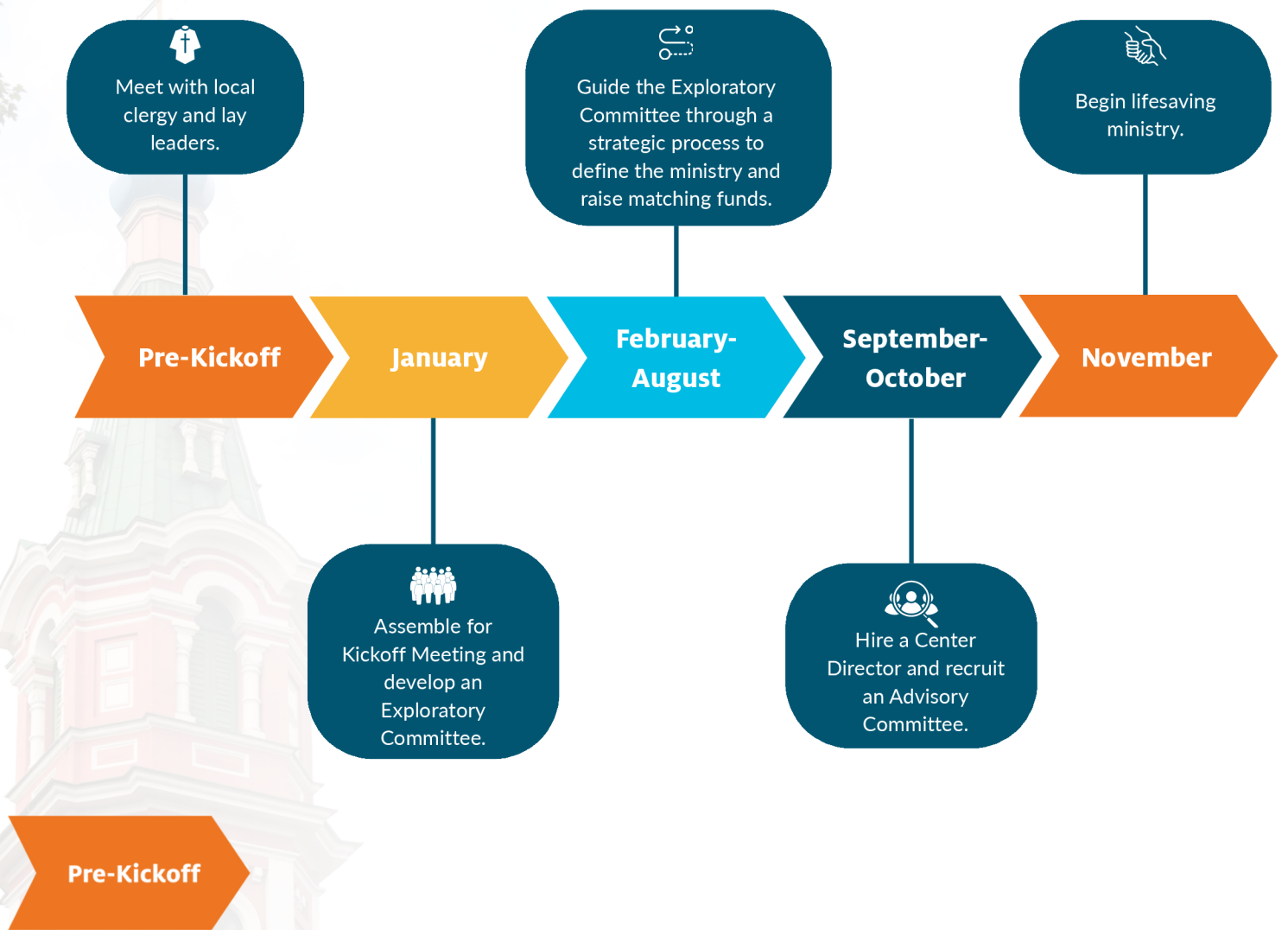
Each Center is uniquely shaped by the needs of its local community and the call of the local Church to serve in a particular, intentional way. Some Centers focus on food distribution or shelter, while others support mothers and children, offer employment assistance, or provide hygiene and healthcare resources. Though each Center is distinct, all are united by one purpose: to bring the Lord's healing and hope to those struggling with material and spiritual need.

How does FOCUS assess ministry needs for the community?

When developing a new Center, FOCUS facilitates a needs assessment with members of a local Exploratory Committee (more below). Personal experiences, local research, and community connections are leveraged to do a deep dive on the city and cast a vision for the services that the new FOCUS Center will offer.

What role does FOCUS staff serve in the New Center Development process?

FOCUS staff identifies and cultivates cities and parishes for potential new Center growth. We lead cities through this process by facilitating Exploratory Committee meetings, connecting with local stakeholders (governments, businesses, other nonprofits, etc.), and guiding the process for the successful development of a new FOCUS Center. We work with a family foundation and other funding sources to secure matching grant support to get the initial ministry off the ground and bring structure and organization across stakeholders to determine what, when, and how a new ministry may come to fruition.



How does FOCUS decide readiness for placement of a new Center?

When assessing cities for new Center development, we look for strong local Pan-Orthodox engagement and cooperation, and a readiness to work together to serve the needs of your community.

Cities are eligible for participation in the FOCUS new Center development process based on the following considerations:

- FOCUS has seen a strong, demonstrated interest in Center development initial conversations with local clergy, lay leaders, and ecclesial authorities.
- 5+ local parishes are supportive of FOCUS efforts and are willing to contribute parishioners' time, talent, and treasure (specifically in the form of meeting a matching grant, as described above).
- Parishes pledge annual support for the Center, both during the Exploratory Phase and on an ongoing basis.
- There are one or more substantial ministry needs facing the city or region (hunger, housing, etc).
- Existing parish ministries—such as a small food pantry, meal distribution, clothing closet, etc.—can also be built upon and leveraged into a more intentional Pan-Orthodox effort.

How does FOCUS know if a Center requires a full or part-time Center Director?

FOCUS works with key local stakeholders to assess the area's capacity and financial commitment to the ministry. Based on that, FOCUS determines the scope of ministry and secures a corresponding matching grant of either \$45,000 or \$75,000. The judgment of local clergy, who have extensive experience with capital campaigns and ministry development, is an important factor in this assessment.

January

What is the Kickoff Meeting and its purpose?

FOCUS staff plans a Kickoff Meeting to assemble as many local clergy and laity as possible to discuss the new Center development process and begin to develop an Exploratory Committee. The Kickoff Meeting is held at a local parish in the city and welcomes anyone interested. We aim for a minimum of 50-75 attendees as an initial show of strong, broadbased interest.

February-
August

What is a new Center Exploratory Committee?

The Exploratory Committee is a sub-set of participants from the attendees of the Kickoff Meeting (as well as other interested people in the community) who provide guidance, strategic brainstorming, and initial on-the-ground support as a new FOCUS Center is developed. Additional members can be added to the Exploratory Committee at any time.

Ideally, the Exploratory Committee is composed of at least two dozen volunteers from local Pan-Orthodox parishes, who agree to serve with FOCUS to answer the three major questions when establishing a FOCUS Center:

1. What are we doing?
 - a. Define programs for the potential FOCUS Center (including completing a needs assessment to determine that existing services are not being duplicated).
2. Where are we doing it?
 - a. Identify a suitable location for the potential FOCUS Center (both the appropriate neighborhood and specific address; most new Centers tend to operate out of a local parish).
3. How are we going to pay for it?
 - a. Raise matching grant funds (depending on the anticipated scale of the ministry, matching grants will either be for \$45,000 or \$75,000 reflecting either an anticipated \$90,000 or \$150,000 annual budget).

Exploratory Committees meet twice per month via Zoom (ex. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month) based on a time that works for most people. The Committee is led by FOCUS Staff and works to build consensus around the three questions identified above.

- We begin by facilitating brainstorming sessions, asking key questions, and talking through the general landscape of the city and the Pan-Orthodox involvement in the community.
- As a shared vision takes shape, we develop a plan for the Center's initial service and develop actionable items for the FOCUS Staff and Exploratory Committee members to complete.
- Members are expected to actively participate in the activities of the Committee, including: actively participating in meetings and helping with any action items determined during meetings including fundraising support.

September-
October

What happens after the Exploratory Committee finishes their work?

Once the Exploratory Committee has answered the three questions and completed their tasks, we submit a proposal to the FOCUS Board of Directors to officially designate a new FOCUS Center in the city. After the Center's creation, we open the hiring process for our first Center Director, which usually takes around 4-6 weeks; Exploratory Committee members are invited to participate in the vetting of candidates. When FOCUS has hired Center Director, the Advisory Committee is officially activated. Exploratory Committee members are invited to continue their service to the center on the Advisory Committee on a more long-term basis, under the direction of the new Center Director.



What is the role of the Hiring Committee?

After the Exploratory Committee phase ends and the Center has been officially designated by the FOCUS Board of Directors, FOCUS Staff assembles a Hiring Committee to aid in the process of vetting Center Director candidates. The Hiring Committee will be included in the second round of interviews and provide their thoughts on the candidates. FOCUS Staff are ultimately responsible for the final decision.

What is the role of the Advisory Committee?

Once a Center Director is hired, members of the Exploratory Committee may choose to continue their service by joining the Center's Advisory Committee. Committee members are asked to take on a three-year commitment and serve the ministry in three basis capacities, as:

- advisor (thinking strategically, making recommendations, etc),
- advocate (helping raise awareness and funds), and
- Volunteer (directly participating in the ministry).

We look forward to working with you to serve our neighbors in need! If your community is interested in developing a FOCUS Center, reach out to info@focusna.org.