



# MEN'S SHEDS

## Canada

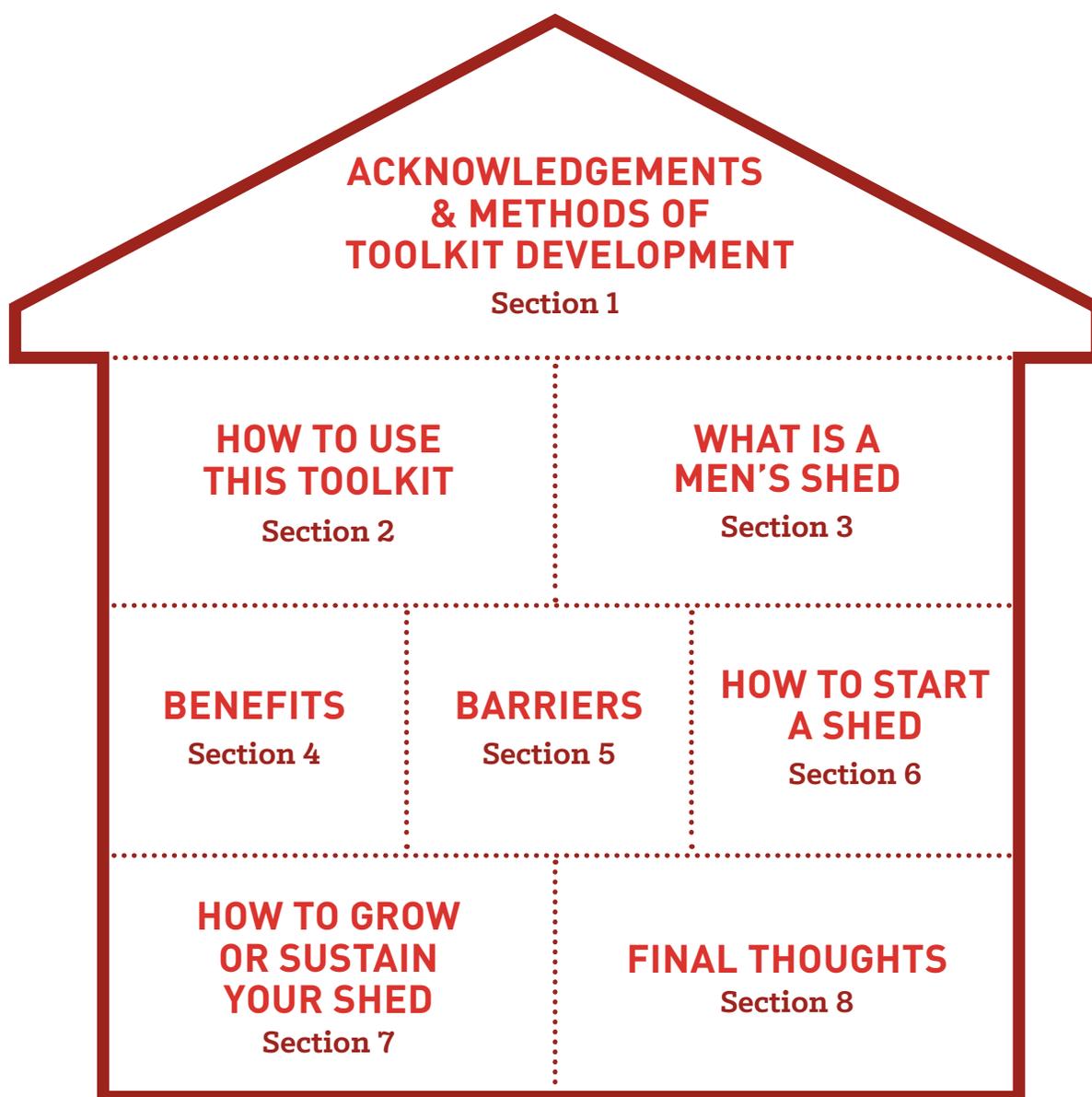


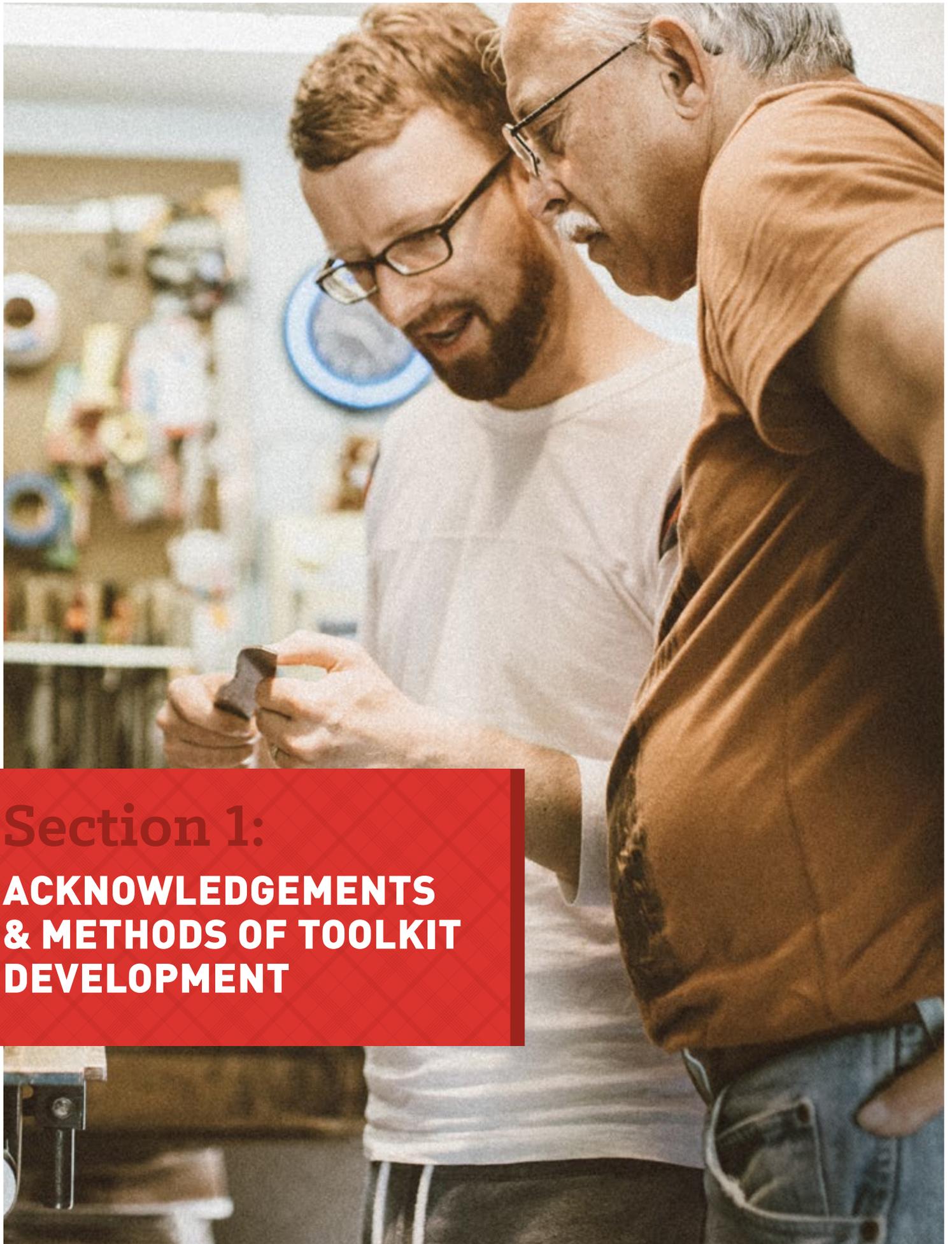
# Table of Contents

## Men's Sheds Canada

### A TOOLKIT FOR STARTING & GROWING SHEDS

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**Section 1:**  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  
& METHODS OF TOOLKIT  
DEVELOPMENT**

# Acknowledgements & Method of Toolkit Development

This toolkit was developed with funding from Movember Canada (<https://ca.movember.com/>), a foundation that supports research into men's physical and mental health. Researchers at the University of Manitoba and the University of British Columbia used this funding to develop this toolkit and the Canadian Men's Sheds website.

The goal in developing this toolkit was to use the wisdom and knowledge of men from across Canada who were involved and interested in Men's Sheds. From 2014 to 2015 more than 70 men from coast to coast provided feedback about what works (*and does not work*) to get a Men's Sheds up and running.

## HERE HOW IT WAS DONE:

- In the first year, the research team held 17 focus groups with members of Men's Sheds Manitoba (*the first Men's Shed in Canada*) and with men who had no knowledge of Men's Sheds.
- Then, a preliminary draft toolkit was developed.
- In the second year, the draft toolkit was shared with four 'pilot' groups from British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, who were in early stages of starting a Men's Shed. These pilot groups read the draft toolkit and gave feedback about changes to make the toolkit better.
- Seven additional groups provided written feedback and suggested improvements for the toolkit.

As you can see, this toolkit was developed with the help of men who are interested and passionate about Men's Sheds as well as men less familiar with men's sheds. Further, there is a downloadable pdf version of the toolkit, and an open-access version that will continue to change over time as the Men's Sheds community in Canada evolves.

The development of this toolkit would not have been possible without the help and valuable feedback from everyone who participated along the way!



**Section 2:**  
**HOW TO USE**  
**THIS TOOLKIT**

# How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit provides practical tips and information for individuals or groups who want to start a Men's Shed. Whether you are starting a Men's Shed through an existing organization or as an individual or group of friends, this toolkit will provide some of the basic how-to as you move toward getting your shed started.

This toolkit is not necessarily intended for men who simply want to get involved in Men's Sheds. Rather, it is for men in the community or individuals working with agencies who want to take the lead in starting a Men's Shed.

There is more than one way to start a shed but this toolkit hopes to show you key points to think about along the way. Because of this flexible approach you should feel free to skip to any section at any time. Keep in mind that not all of the information will be relevant to you. Or you might find that you need different information at different times. Just use this toolkit in whatever way would be most helpful to you. Good luck!



**Section 3:**  
**WHAT IS A  
MEN'S SHED?**

# What is a Men's Shed?

Men's Sheds are welcoming, supportive places for friendship and fun. They provide opportunities for men to socialize, take part in activities, and learn something new. They are places where members can be themselves.

Men's Sheds can be located in a variety of places, they may be made up of a few men or a large group, and they may focus on one or more activities.

While locations, activities, and membership can vary from shed to shed, the core vision of the Men's Sheds movement is equality and inclusion for all members - regardless of age, cultural background, ability, sexual orientation, income, or employment status.

Men's Sheds is a grass-roots, bottom-up movement where the members decide what to do.

Some Men's Sheds also support projects aimed at giving back to their community - by participating in community events or volunteering. However, involvement in Men's Sheds is always casual and attendance is optional rather than required.

## WHY IS IT CALLED A 'MEN'S SHED'?

The name "Men's Sheds" originated in Australia and comes from the idea that a backyard shed is a space where men often go to work on projects. Continue reading the following pages to find out more about Canada's First Men's Shed, the Canadian Men's Sheds Association, and the International Men's Sheds Movement!

# Overview of Men's Sheds

## CANADA'S FIRST SHED

Canada's first Men's Shed got its start through a senior centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Eventually, dedicated volunteers, Doug Mackie and Dave Friesen, formed Men's Sheds Manitoba (<http://menshedsmanitoba.ca>) as a non profit organization in January 2011. Men's Sheds Manitoba, also known as the "Woodhaven Shed" has over 50 members from all around Winnipeg. Men's Sheds Manitoba can be best described as "A bottom up, non profit grassroots volunteer organization run by men for men. No staff in the regular sense, but leaders from within who facilitate and enable" (*Doug Mackie, Co-founder Men's Sheds Manitoba*). Activities are chosen by the members and take place on Tuesday afternoons, Wednesday mornings, and Wednesday afternoons. There is also an occasional Men's Sheds Café, craft tables, and volunteering at various community events.

## CANADIAN MEN'S SHEDS ASSOCIATION

The Canadian Men's Sheds Association ([www.menssheds.ca](http://www.menssheds.ca)) was developed to help support the growth of Men's Sheds across Canada. This website offers information about the Men's Sheds movement and about existing (*registered*) Sheds in Canada. Other resources for men can be found here as well. Visit the site to see what it is all about!

## INTERNATIONAL MEN'S SHEDS MOVEMENT

"Invented in Australia, the remarkable men's shed movement has spread from the back blocks of Australia to reach a total of more than 1,400 Men's Sheds in diverse countries on opposite sides of the world."

(*Golding, 2015: <http://barrygoanna.com/2014/05/29/new-and-forthcoming-books/>*).

Men's Sheds has become an international movement with the goal of making male-focused activities available in communities. It originated in Australia in the late 1970s and officially started in the late 1990s. It started in response to growing unemployment. Men often associate being employed with a sense of value and worth, so Men's Sheds provided a way to help men continue to be involved and productive. It also gave them a chance to share their skills or learn new ones, establish social support networks, and stay healthy. Since then, Men's Sheds has spread to many other parts of the world (*see the following page for links to international Men's Sheds associations*).

# Information & Resources

On this page you'll find links to several resources where you can learn more about existing Men's Sheds around the world, about research related to Men's Sheds, and about other male-focused health resources.

## LINKS TO THE INTERNATIONAL MEN'S SHEDS MOVEMENT

- Read about the largest Men's Sheds association in the world (*Australian Men's Sheds Association*) at <http://mensshed.org/>
- Read about the fastest growing shed association in the world (*the Irish Men's Sheds Association*) at <http://menssheds.ie/>
- Read about what's happening with Men's Sheds in New Zealand at [www.menzshed.org.nz](http://www.menzshed.org.nz)
- Read about what's happening with Men's Sheds in the UK at <http://menssheds.org.uk/>
- Barry Golding is a leading researcher and advocate for Men's Sheds. His website (<http://barrygoanna.com>) includes information about Men's Sheds and a link to his recent book: *The Men's Shed Movement: The Company of Men*.

## LINKS TO MEN'S SHEDS RESEARCH

A number of studies have been done to look at the impact of Men's Sheds.

Here are just a few:

- [http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/10thNRHC/10thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/papers/docs/Misan\\_Gary\\_D7.pdf](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/10thNRHC/10thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/papers/docs/Misan_Gary_D7.pdf)
- <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/lifelong-learning/research/LLAG/seminar-series/series-archive-1/6th-series-documents/B%20Golding%20Handout.pdf>
- <http://www.mengage.org.au/Communities/Mens-Sheds-Research/Review-Of-Research-On-Mens-Sheds-And-Health.aspx>

## LINKS TO MEN'S SHEDS RESEARCH

- There are excellent sites to visit for information about men's mental health:
- <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- <http://headsuptguys.ca/>



**Section 4:**  
**BENEFITS TO STARTING  
OR GETTING INVOLVED  
IN MEN'S SHEDS**

# Benefits

*“One fellow said ‘I’m having trouble with my well at the lake and there were four guys who told him how to fix it.’”*

*“I had a really hard time. This place became a cushion.”*

*“The building was just brand new and they needed some kind of activity there for the people so we volunteered to do a pancake breakfast and we gained a couple of new members from that.”*

## **MEN BENEFIT FROM MEN’S SHEDS:**

- By having fun! They enjoy activities they have always loved or discover new ones.
- By making friends.
- By getting involved in their community.
- By having a chance to share their own knowledge or skills, and learn from others.
- By being in a place where they can be themselves.
- By experiencing support that can enhance mental health.
- By reducing isolation.

## **COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM MEN’S SHEDS:**

Men’s Sheds can be a benefit to communities when members volunteer or participate in community events. Some examples include:

- Maintaining the building grounds.
- Doing repair services.
- Running a tool-lending library.
- Making and selling crafts and donating the proceeds to local charities.
- Participating in, or organizing, activism around a shared community concern.



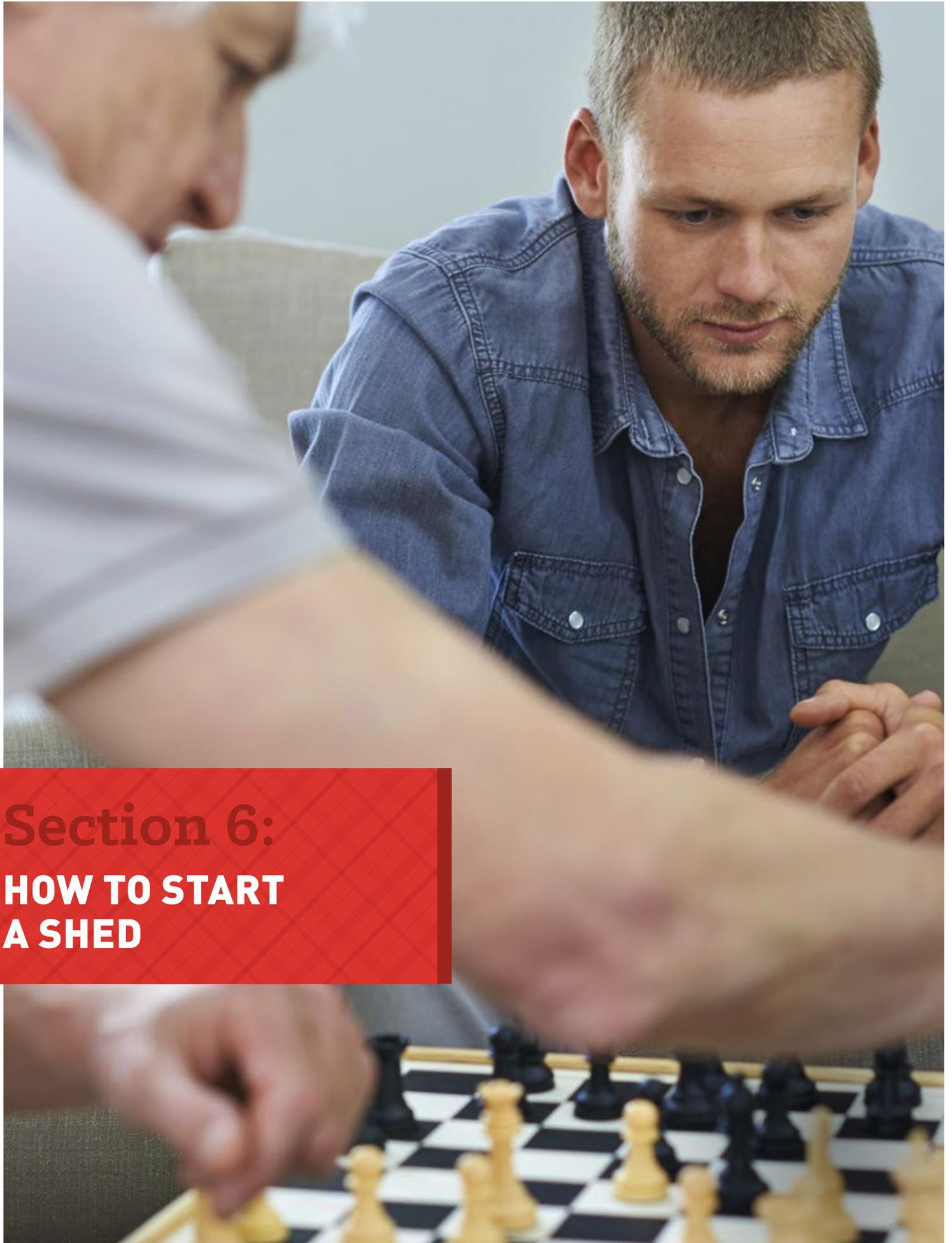
**Section 5:**  
**BARRIERS**  
**TO ATTENDING**  
**A MEN'S SHED**

# Barriers

Men's Sheds provide a much-needed place for men to get together. But it's not always easy to get guys involved. The men who helped develop this toolkit discussed several potential barriers to getting new guys involved in a shed. You might think about these barriers when you're starting a new shed and also think about possible solutions to them.

- **Communication** – it is often easier for men to socialize around an activity. So rather than discussing your shed as a place for men to get together, you might promote it as a place where men carve wood, fix bicycles, or build model airplanes. Also, when communicating with members or potential members use a number of methods (*email, phone, posters*) and consider whether a lot of men in your community speak languages other than English.
- **Promoting or advertising your shed** – how will you discuss and display what your shed is all about? If you develop a logo for your shed that includes tools men might feel they need carpentry or woodworking skills to join.
- **Feeling welcome** – if men are unsure they'll feel welcome at a new group they may not attend. Consider ideas for making new members feel welcome. Is there a "buddy" they could come with? A friendly round of introductions when new members arrive can be helpful.
- **Depression and isolation** – men in the community who are feeling isolated or sad can benefit greatly from Men's Sheds, but may find it overwhelming to attend, especially at first. If you know someone in this situation try to make it easy for them – for example, by offering to pick them up at their home and going with them to the shed.

Some of these points can feel challenging to address – just remember to do only what you can – even small things, like a smile and a friendly hello, can go a long way to reducing barriers.



**Section 6:**  
**HOW TO START**  
**A SHED**

# How to Start a Shed:

There isn't one right way to start a Men's Shed. You do not need to follow the steps described in this section in a certain order. Instead, this toolkit suggests six things that folks who have been involved in starting Men's Sheds have talked about as being important in getting a shed up and running.

This section describes those eight things to consider using the shed symbol below. This symbol is abstract, emphasizing that there isn't one clear place to start; or a particular order you need to follow.



*How to Start a Shed continued on next page >*

<a href="#">Acknowledgements &amp; Methods of Toolkit Development</a>	<a href="#">How to Use this Toolkit</a>	<a href="#">What is a Men's Shed</a>	<a href="#">Benefits</a>	<a href="#">Barriers</a>	<b><a href="#">How to Start a Shed</a></b>	<a href="#">How to Grow or Sustain your Shed</a>	<a href="#">Final Thoughts</a>
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# How to Start a Shed:

- 2 Ways to get Started
- Visit a Shed
- Find Others
- Start Up Costs
- Hold a Meeting
- Find a Space
- Convenience & Accessibility
- Decide What to Do



# 2 Ways to get Started

There are two ways that Men's Sheds have started with in Canada: (1) independently, by men in the community, and (2) through existing community organizations. While there are benefits and challenges to each model, both work. Most importantly, both fulfil the underlying goal of getting men involved.

## 1. INDEPENDENT MODEL

- Some Men's Sheds are started by men (or small groups of men) who have the time and energy to get a shed running. They may know a lot of people in the community and/or have a space of their own to use as a 'Shed'.
- Some men have professional backgrounds related to community development, leadership, or entrepreneurship. These backgrounds help them in starting up a new shed.
- Or maybe an individual or group have none of these things but are simply passionate and determined to start a shed - that's probably the most important key to success.

## 2. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION MODEL

- Some Men's Sheds are started by staff/volunteers working in community organizations (e.g., senior's organizations). This model benefits from having an experienced co-ordinator take the lead.
- Staff may already know potential men to invite to the shed.
- An additional benefit of this model is that sheds may be able to use the organization's space.
- Staff may also have experience with grant-writing and may be able to apply for funds to help get started.

There are challenges and benefits with each of these models. It's important to remember that the model used initially can change down the road as membership changes. If a Men's Shed starts off under the umbrella of another community organization, that does not mean that it cannot become a stand-alone organization in the future - and vice-versa.

# Visit a Shed

If you are close enough, it is a good idea to visit other sheds to see what they are like and how they run. This gives you a real-life example of a Men's Shed and it may spark ideas about the types of activities, locations, and organizational structures that might work for you. It will also give you some ideas about how your shed might be different from other sheds.

If visiting a Men's Shed in person is not possible, it is still a terrific idea to learn about other sheds. The Men's Sheds community is supportive and excited to help other groups start up a shed. Visit some of the websites listed in this toolkit in order to learn more about other Men's Sheds.

The Canadian Men's Sheds Association website ([www.menssheds.ca](http://www.menssheds.ca)) provides a resource for connecting shedders across the country, so take advantage of this resource.

# Decide what to do

*“A group in a different area may have distinctly different interests.”*

It is often the case that men socialize while doing something. Because of this, activities are important in Men’s Sheds. Shedders initially come together because of an activity or shared goal they all care about.

But Men’s Sheds are also about providing a space for men to get together without pressure to participate in an activity.

Activities and goals may change in time, along with the shed membership. And certain sheds might focus on a single activity while others might have many. Here is a list of potential activities that your shed might include

- Drop in – socialize with coffee/tea.
- Bikes and bike repair.
- Woodworking.
- Small engine repair.
- Cooking.
- Gardening.
- Mentoring and skill-sharing.
- Walking or hiking.
- Activism and community involvement.
- Volunteering.
- Music – listening and playing.
- Culture-specific events/activities.
- Workshops with invited guests.
- Watch topic-specific videos and hold a discussion.
- Book clubs.
- Computers/technology workshops.
- Home repair.
- Health-related discussions and guest speakers.



# Find others

Sheds often start with a small group of men. But you may want to attract new members. If you start through an existing organization, you may already have new members in mind. Otherwise, you may need to advertise or promote your shed in your community to get new members.

The key is to keep it local – most Men’s Sheds members are part of the local neighborhood.

Research has shown that there are some places that work well for men to find information, such as:

- Local billboards
- Union or professional email lists
- Seniors publications
- Activity-specific places (sports, arts, or theatre)
- Local Neighborhood publications
- Cultural events and publications (eg pow-wow)
- Organizations for newcomers
- Places of worship
- Other community organizations

One idea to generate interest in your shed, that you’ll read about on the following page, is to organize a meeting that is open to all who are interested.

# Hold a Meeting

Some of the groups that helped to develop this toolkit found it useful to hold an information meeting with community members. This has been helpful for sheds in Australia and Ireland. For those working through organizations, this was done by putting up a notice in an organizational newsletter and word of mouth. For those working independently, notices in the community (*posters*) and word of mouth got them started.

Meetings work best when you have a short agenda and clear purpose. For example, after providing an overview of what Men's Sheds are, a first item might be finding out how others are willing to help (*offering space for a shed or help finding one, lending supplies, or inviting others to join*). You may also discuss how your meeting attendees want the shed to look in the future – for example, do they want to be involved with other things going on in the community?

A few points to remember when holding a meeting are:

- Have someone take notes of your meeting.
- Take down everyone's contact information so you can contact them later.
- Make a plan for following up with items discussed.
- Try not to schedule a meeting at the same time as another popular event (sports, etc).
- Make sure the location is easy to get to.
- People will be more likely to attend if they are offered a refreshment and a small snack.

# Find a Space

You may be thinking about finding a space to meet. Finding a proper space for your shed can be difficult, and you might not find one right away. But as you think about space consider your interests and activities, as well as any long-term goals you may have for the shed.

Here are some initial ideas to get you started:

- Parks
- Community centres or organizations
- A member's home, garage, or yard
- Friendship centres
- Cultural centres
- Libraries
- Local coffee shops

As you'll see on the following page, it's important to make sure the space is convenient and accessible.

Most independently run sheds cannot sustain the cost of rent, at least early on. Many community centres or organizations will allow the use of their space for free or in exchange for help maintaining the building or grounds. Talk to people in your neighborhood that you or other members know who may be able to help. These may include business owners or retirement organizations. Even talking to your local MP about the potential benefits of having a community Men's Shed can be a way to start to get some publicity and community interest.

The locations don't have to be the same for each meeting and may change over time – but sheds are more likely to last and grow when they eventually find a 'home' of their own – particularly if you have supplies or equipment to store.

Your space needs will depend on the activities you plan to do. If you work with tools and equipment you may have insurance needs (*see Section 7*).

## Convenience & Accessibility

Research has shown that many men are reluctant to travel long distances to attend a social group. That is why it is important to consider the location of your shed in terms of how close it will be to potential members. Also consider how accessible it would be for those without a vehicle (*have it close to a bus stop if many men in your community do not drive*). At some Men's Sheds members with vehicles will take turns picking up members who don't drive.

It is best if everyone can easily get to your meeting space – whether it's at someone's apartment, a coffee shop, or a community club. If you have members with specific requirements related to hearing, vision, or mobility, consider finding a space that would be easiest for them to get to.

*“It comes in a nut shell what we're talking about really it's accessibility – accessibility, how if you go to work and work's in Headingly well okay damn it I'll get up and I'll go to work in Headingly. I'm retired, it's 9:00 o'clock in the morning, I'm not gonna drive to Headingly for a social group.”*

# Start Up Costs

Depending on your location and activities, you may incur costs for rent, insurance, or supplies. This means that you will want to think about how you will pay for both initial and ongoing costs of running your shed. Of course costs will vary from shed to shed, depending on how large it is, what its goals are, and what kinds of activities shed members are interested in.

*“Try to determine, early on, how much your shed will cost to start up and sustain”*

Some sheds are cost free (e.g., a small group of men who meet for coffee and discussion at a local coffee shop) whereas others are quite expensive to run (e.g., a large group of men who rent a space with power tools and equipment).

The following list includes some ideas for raising money to pay for shed costs that have worked for existing sheds in Canada:

- **Member donations.**
- **Initial or annual membership fees** (*if you decide to have an annual membership fee, do this from the beginning as this can be tricky to incorporate later on*).
- **Selling member-made crafts** at local farmer’s markets.
- **Hold a BBQ** at a local hardware store or other community location.
- **Become involved** in other community events or organize one.
- **Develop a tool-lending library** and charge a small fee for loans.
- **Do work in the community** for donations – this works well in smaller communities in particular.
- **Provide low-cost repair services** (e.g., *bike repair, small engine repair*).
- **Approach other organizations** who might be able to donate supplies.



**Section 7:**  
**HOW TO GROW OR  
SUSTAIN YOUR SHED**

# How to Grow or Sustain your Shed

Getting your shed started is one thing; keeping it going is another. In this section we review **4 things to consider** with respect to sustaining a shed. Whether your shed is looking to grow or not depends on your goals. Some sheds prefer to limit membership and keep it small.



*How to Grow or Sustain your Shed continued on next page >*

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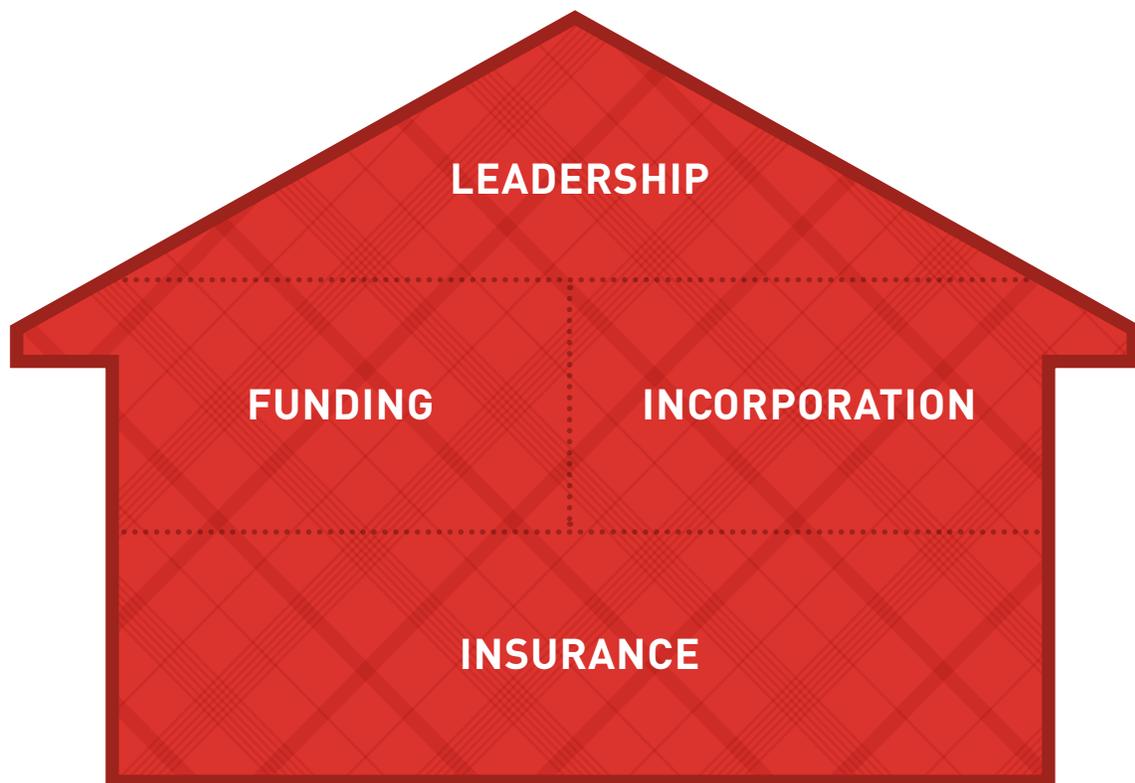
How to  
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How to Grow or  
Sustain your Shed

Final  
Thoughts

# How to Grow or Sustain your Shed

- Leadership
- Funding
- Incorporation
- Insurance



# Leadership

*“It might take direct facilitation to get rolling. But quickly move to the point where the group is collective – group direction would then come from the owners.”*

All Men’s Sheds members are considered equal. However, someone will need to make programming and financial decisions. This can be one individual or a group – some Men’s Sheds form a board or management committee, for example.

Think about whether individuals who have “taken the lead” will continue, or whether ‘leadership’ will be rotated among other members. Discuss this early on and consider developing a leadership plan for your shed.

**Communication** – talk to members about the best way to get information out about activities and meeting times. Options are phone, email, or flyers left in a central location. Some Men’s Sheds develop their own social media, such as a Facebook page.

**Designate a greeter** – the men who helped develop this toolkit felt that showing up alone was hard for new members. It helps to have designated greeters to introduce new attendees, explain activities, and be available to answer any questions.

## **HOLDING REGULAR LEADERSHIP MEETINGS**

- Once your Men’s Shed is running you may want to establish a ‘code of conduct’ to state what behaviours and interactions are acceptable (*or not*).
- As your shed grows, make sure your code of conduct continues to meet the needs of all the members – remember Men’s Sheds are meant to be a place where everyone feels safe and welcome.
- You will also need to hold regular meetings to discuss financial and operational decisions.
- Your leadership committee may also develop operational policies and procedures.

# Funding

Some Men's Sheds want to grow in ways that involve the purchase of equipment, supplies, or renovations. Some Men's Sheds have costs for phone, internet, utilities, office or kitchen equipment. In addition to the ideas for raising funds in the "Start-up and Maintenance Costs" section of this toolkit, your shed might consider applying for government grants.

The availability of grants will vary from province to province. Take a look at your provincial government website to see if there are any grants you might apply for, based on the goals and focus of your Men's Shed.

In addition to provincial funding options, some Men's Sheds in Canada have had success receiving federal funding through the New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP). This grant funds programs that enable seniors to share their knowledge and skills with others in a way that helps communities address local issues.

Information on this program can be found at the following link:

<http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/seniors/funding/pancanadian/index.shtml>

**A word of caution:** Although grant funding can be helpful, these funds are usually time limited (*i.e., for one or two years*). So also consider other ways to get funding if the grant funds you've received will run out. Sheds that become reliant on external funding run the risk of failing when that money is no longer there.

# Incorporation

This section is mainly for those Men's Sheds that want to grow and raise funds for their Shed, and are comfortable having a business-type structure.

Some Men's Sheds decide to become incorporated as a non-profit organization. Being incorporated as a non-profit organization can bring benefits such as becoming eligible for additional funding, having reduced taxes, and a greater sense of financial security. Becoming a non-profit organization means that there are no group 'owners' but rather, the Men's Shed is an entity in itself.

To learn more about whether your Men's Shed might be eligible and the steps involved in becoming incorporated please visit: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs04841.html>

**A word of caution:** Becoming incorporated takes a lot of time and work – and is not for everyone. Talk to your fellow organizers about whether or not the benefits of becoming incorporated are worth the effort.

# Insurance

Depending on the activities in your shed you may require waivers, permits, and insurance. Here are some questions so you can decide if you need them:

- **Are your planned activities potentially dangerous or could someone get hurt?**  
*If an activity comes with a risk of injury you may have members sign a waiver.*
- **What are the rules and regulations for the space you are using?**  
*If you are meeting in an existing workshop there may already be insurance in place, but members may need to take a training session.*
- **Are there any city bylaws, provincial or federal laws that would affect your activity?**
- **If you will be participating in a group activity, does the organizing body require any special permits or insurance?**

If you are not sure, look it up or ask someone. Many insurance companies can provide information if you ask. Men's Sheds that are incorporated may be required to have insurance. Funding agencies may also require insurance – but this will depend on the types of activities that you do.



**Section 8:**  
**FINAL**  
**THOUGHTS**

# Final Thoughts

## **WE HOPE YOU'VE FOUND THIS TOOLKIT USEFUL!**

If you're just getting started we hope you don't find the information in this toolkit overwhelming or daunting. Perhaps the most important point we can leave you with is this:

*Despite the challenges that will arise, starting and maintaining a Men's Shed can be a fun and rewarding experience. We wish you well and hope that you and the men in your life will join the large and growing numbers of men here in Canada and around the world who are getting involved in Men's Sheds!*

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