

MINISTRY BUDGETING TIPS

As a leader, budgeting for a ministry, do you find it to be an overwhelming task or an opportunity to see God at work?

I want to encourage you that God can work in and through you as you think, dream, and plan for a new year in women's ministry—and it can even be fun!

The “new year” for your women's ministry may be in January or September or another time of the year. Whenever that happens to fall on the calendar in your church or ministry setting, mark your calendar a month before to make plans for your thinking and dreaming time. Then, keep that reminder each year on your calendar.

You may want to design this “thinking and dreaming” day to be with a few women from your church who understand your mission and vision for ministry. You may want to be alone that day for focused and contemplative time with God and your thoughts. The great thing is you can create that time to look however works best for you and your personality and ministry context.

For me, I try to find a day away from the busyness of my daily routine and visit a setting that is relaxing and inspiring at the same time, like a local botanical garden, park, or my “happy place” at home which is either the porch or my home office.

During this time, here are a few questions to ask yourself as you start this process:

- What do our women need to learn and experience in the new year?
- What initiatives or programming direction will our church take in the new year, and how can our women's ministry support them?
- In what areas does our women's ministry need to grow, expand, or shift its focus toward new opportunities?
- Are there any large purchases we need to make like equipment/supplies for events (i.e. tablecloths, signage) updated technology, and so forth?
- Who do we need to appreciate through monetary means this year (contract writers, social media planners, childcare coordinators)?

Then, bring these answers down to a few tangible and measurable goals for the new year, for example:

- We want to start three new women's small groups offered during the day and evening.
- We want to start a ministry to mothers with children with special needs.
- We want to teach women how to share their faith.

It's always better to do a few things well versus doing several things poorly that have little impact or long-lasting benefit to the women in your church.

Then ask yourself these questions:

- What will it take to complete those goals? Could it be:
 - People
 - Events
 - Training
 - Serving Opportunities
 - Resources
- How much money do you need to support each of those goals, and what time of the year do you need the funds (season/month)? What are the rhythms of ministry that dictate the need for funds, like the new year and fall restart of Bible studies, summer events, or holidays?

Once you have answered these questions, think through the process for submitting your budget for consideration. Here are a few questions to ask:

- Is there a budget template or model for our budget?
- Who at the church or in my ministry leadership can guide me as I design our women's ministry budget?
- When is the submission deadline for our budget request?
- Do I know the process for requesting funds or submitting receipts against my budget each month?

If you are presenting your budget to your pastor or board for approval, it's always helpful to share a short story of the types of women (mothers, widows, single women, wives, and so forth) who will be impacted or to paint scenarios that could happen in the new year if you receive the money needed to fund the goal. **Vision is a necessity!**

Estimating which time or season of the year you might need the funds can be helpful for the church to plan their cash flow as well, especially if there is a significantly large purchase.

I encourage you to pray along the way, asking God to guide your thoughts and make His plans for your ministry preeminent rather than a "cool new thing" you'd like to try in the new year. Clearly and carefully present the budget for consideration.

I believe it's helpful if you can verbally walk your leadership team through your request, explaining new initiatives and answering any questions they may have along the way.

Then, leave the decision and results to God. I learned years ago that I cannot control someone's decisions about my ministry or me, but I can control my response to those decisions.

Advice: You will not always get everything you may ask for in a budget request. If so, that is a great time to ask, “May we revisit this request before next year’s budget?” and make a note to discuss the idea or request again at that time if it is something God makes clear to pursue. Sometimes, He will show you that it truly was not a good choice or use of money and give you an even better option for the next year!

Again, let me encourage you to see the new year’s budget planning as an opportunity to walk alongside God, lean in, and hear His direction and plan to bring it to fruition.