From Friends to Family

Four sequential stages by which a center becomes part of the SageFire Family. We do not skip Joy or Attachment. We do not appoint from above. We recognize from within.

01

Friends Corridor

Joy → beginning of attachment

02

Attachment & Discernment

Deepening attachment

03

Family Invitation & Affiliation

Attachment end of the family corridor

04

Integration

Moving toward group identity

FRIENDS CORRIDOR

FAMILY CORRIDOR



The time itself is part of the kindness. Rushing the relational stages breaks something real.

01 Friends Corridor

JOY → BEGINNING OF ATTACHMENT

PURPOSE

Create presence, belonging, and delight. This is the network space where people come as they are and we begin to know one another.

WHAT HAPPENS

- Initial conversation or introduction, often through an existing relationship or "Start the Conversation" on the website.
- Invitation to observe: attend a SageFire Connect gathering, join a call, or simply spend time with current leaders.
- Low-pressure relational contact. No formal expectations yet, but plan on doing some life together: meals, coffee, Zoom calls, and ordinary time with each other when the timing is right. There is no schedule to keep, only a real friendship to build.
- Both sides watch: character, how the person handles ordinary interaction, fruit already visible in their life and work.

MARKERS OF READINESS FOR STAGE 2

Genuine relational warmth has formed on both sides.

There is mutual desire to go deeper.

Character and fruit are being noticed, not just competence or gift.

TYPICAL LENGTH

Varies widely. Some move in weeks; others take months.

SAGEFIRE POSTURE

"We want to know you, and you to know us. You observe it."

02 Attachment & Discernment

DEEPENING ATTACHMENT

PURPOSE

Move from observation into bonding and vulnerability. Begin testing whether we can do hard things together in joy. This is where the covenant bond starts to form.

WHAT HAPPENS

- More intentional conversations with SageFire leaders.
- Sharing of calling, story, current work, and hopes for partnership.
- Introduction to the Center Affiliation Agreement for review. Signing comes later.
- Discussion of practical realities and the mutual agreements that hold them: how the Center functions as a program of the Entity, and shared understanding around funds, commitments, and events, including two SageFire Connect events per year.
- Mutual discernment: prayer, counsel, and honest conversation about fit.
- Watching how the prospective Center Leader responds to feedback, complexity, or tension.

MARKERS OF READINESS FOR STAGE 3

Both sides sense the beginning of a covenant bond (*hesed*).

Clear alignment with SageFire's vision.

The prospective Center Leader understands and is willing to accept the terms of the Affiliation Agreement.

SageFire leadership is prepared to extend a Family invitation.

KEY PRINCIPLE

"We notice fruit before we notice gift. We watch how someone handles difficulty before we celebrate what they build. That takes time. The time is the kindness. The vouch is relational: 'I have walked with this person.'"

03 Family Invitation & Affiliation

ATTACHMENT END OF THE FAMILY CORRIDOR

PURPOSE

Formalize the relationship. The Center moves from friends into family, entering real partnership with shared resources and shared mission, while still retaining its distinct identity.

WHAT HAPPENS

1. Invitation into the Family corridor is clearly extended.
2. Final review of the Center Affiliation Agreement together, and signing of the Agreement.
3. Relational recognition, simple or more public.
4. Orientation: channels, shared resources, 501(c)(3) restricted funds, review rhythm.

AN IMPORTANT BOUNDARY

A center can join at the attachment end of the family corridor, where real partnership begins. Shaping the collective's identity requires deeper knowing over time. Enough alignment to work together is not the same as enough depth to shape who we are.

THE LEGAL RELATIONSHIP BEGINS

The signed Affiliation Agreement governs the formal terms: contractor status, intellectual property, funds, commitments, and termination.

Recognition, not appointment.

04 Integration

MOVING TOWARD GROUP IDENTITY

PURPOSE

Begin living as family. The new Center Leader starts carrying real weight while the relationship continues to deepen.

WHAT HAPPENS

- Onboarding into practical systems and communication rhythms.
- First participation in the life of the collective, including the two Connect events.
- Ongoing relational presence with other Center Leaders and SageFire leadership.
- The first Annual Relationship Review is scheduled within the first twelve months. It is a collaborative check-in, not a performance evaluation.

LONGER-TERM HORIZON

Over time, as trust and shared life grow, some Center Leaders will naturally move further into shaping Group Identity and participating in Healthy Coaching. This is recognized relationally, not appointed from above.

RHYTHM

Alongside, not above, even after affiliation.

Frequently asked questions

CENTER AFFILIATION

01 SageFire has a regularly scheduled advisory meeting. When I first become part of the SageFire Family as a Center Leader, can I attend?

Not automatically. Signing the Affiliation Agreement brings you into real partnership at the attachment end of the Family corridor. Shaping the collective's identity carries a different weight, and that weight is recognized relationally over time rather than granted at signing.

In your first year, your participation centers on the Connect events, ongoing relational presence with other Center Leaders, and your first Annual Relationship Review. Advisory meetings are open by invitation as trust and shared life grow; SageFire leadership will name it when the time comes, and you are always welcome to ask.

02 My spouse is not involved in the Center work I do. What are the expectations regarding my spouse and their participation in the collective?

Your spouse needs to be in agreement with the Center and show real support for it. Center work is not a separate compartment of your life, and the health of the Center is bound up with the health of your marriage and home.

We also expect to get to know your spouse relationally, and the two of you as a couple. That knowing is part of the connection process, not an extra requirement. Your spouse does not have to carry an active leadership role in the Center. What participation looks like varies from one household to another, and we will talk it through with you rather than hand anyone a role. If your spouse has reservations, name them early. That conversation belongs to the discernment.

MORE QUESTIONS

Ask them out loud, at any stage. Honest conversation is part of the discernment, not an interruption of it.

For the entire process

Sequential

We do not skip Joy or Attachment.

Character before competence

We watch how people handle difficulty and ordinary life.

Recognition, not appointment

We do not appoint from above. We recognize from within.

Hesed

Bonded, covenantal, costly love is the glue.

Alongside, not above

Even after affiliation, SageFire comes alongside the Center's distinct calling.

Time is kindness

Rushing the relational stages breaks something real.