THE NONPROFITCENTERS | NETWORK

Shared Space Planning and Needs Assessment

Shared space projects are complex with many moving pieces. Some start with a building in search of a purpose; others start with a cohort of partners looking for space. Regardless of where you start, every minute of time you spend planning saves five minutes in the execution. At NCN, we also believe that planning creates opportunities that wouldn't have been there before. Use the following tool to help guide your planning process.

Who needs to be involved in this process?

SWOT Analysis: What are your project's strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats?

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**

Your Planning Process

In what order would you do the following?

_____ Potential Tenant (Demand) Survey
_____ Town Hall Meeting
_____ Focus Groups
_____ Site Identification
_____ Stakeholder Interviews
_____ Visioning Session
_____ Public Announcement
_____ Financial Modeling

Potential Tenant (Demand) Survey

Conducting a demand survey offers you the opportunity to get valuable detailed, quantitative information from a broad range of organizations. Make sure to ask questions about space needed, timing, lease rate and requirements, and other expectations. In order to get the best return, be sure to follow these tips for success.

- **Identify a current contact list of targeted organizations.** Depending on the scope and mission of your nonprofit center project, you may choose to distribute the survey to all of the nonprofit organizations in your neighborhood, city, or county. You can also choose to focus on a smaller group of organizations. If you need help in developing a list, contact your local nonprofit management support organization or resource center.
- **Offer a prize.** Most nonprofit leaders are extremely busy, and may not feel like they have even 10 minute to complete a survey. Give them an additional incentive to submit a survey by your deadline, such as a gift certificate, free resource, or event tickets or registration. You will increase your response rate dramatically!
- **Let participants know how you will use the results.** Busy leaders will also be more likely to participate if they feel that the information they are providing will be put to good use. In addition to using the information for your project, consider making the results available to funders and local government agencies to help them understand the workspace needs of the nonprofit sector in your area.

Town Hall Meeting

Town Hall Meetings are an excellent way to broaden the group of stakeholders aware of your project. This type of meeting typically lasts for ninety minutes, focusing on concept of shared spaces, the vision for the project, and what is needed to make the project successful. Some town hall meetings include a charrette-style component that asks participants to envision key components of the space, and dig into the look and feel of the shared building.

Focus Groups

Focus groups often supplement the numbers-oriented data of a survey with the anecdotal feedback of people's feelings and opinions. Conducting focus groups after your survey is a great way to better understand your survey results. By bringing together small groups of people who completed the survey, you can clarify any confusing answers and probe unexpected results. Alternatively, you can conduct focus groups in advance of a survey release to help inform the questions you ask. Focus groups can also help to identify barriers you might face with your project. You can also ask focus group participants to help you problem solve the challenges they identify.

Stakeholder Interviews
One-on-one interviews can also be used to gather information for your needs assessment. Interviews can be conducted by phone or in person to collect supplemental information to surveys and focus groups. Interviews can also be used in the research design process to better understand the real estate and nonprofit landscape. Interviews allow you to diversify your responses, get additional information about potential tenants, and include important stakeholders.

Site Identification
The building is a very important component of any shared space process. In some communities, the process begins with a mission to repurpose an important local landmark or capitalize on one nonprofit's excess office space. At the same time, falling in love with a building too early in the process has lead groups to make unwise financial decisions.

Visioning Session
A visioning session is an in-person gathering of key stakeholders to discuss the mission of a shared space and the role that this building will play in the larger community. Some projects host visioning sessions early on with a large group of community stakeholders, while others wait until a key group of anchor tenants have been identified.

Public Announcement
The timing of the public announcement of the project depends on the planning group's strategy. Public announcements can be used to build community engagement, identify new potential tenants, or launch a capital campaign. Some projects prefer to work with a close group of stakeholders and then announce the project when construction is complete.

Financial Modeling
Financial modeling or pro forma development shows an estimate of how much a project could cost. In the early stages when little is confirmed, a general model can be developed based on a representative site. As a parcel of real estate is identified, a more complete financial pro forma can be developed. The financial modeling can often be an important decision point in the process.