WHALEWORKS

PUBLICATION SERIES

VOLUME II

SAFE HAVEN YOUTH CENTER

Prospectus & Development Framework

PART 05

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT, SPACE PLANNING & ACCESSIBILITY

Safety - Flexibility - Inclusion - Long-Term Stewardship

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Introduction

Creating a place where mission, safety, learning, and belonging meet

A facility is never neutral.

The way a building is located, entered, organized, supervised, maintained, and experienced communicates what an organization values. A confusing entrance can create anxiety. A welcoming reception area can build confidence. A flexible classroom can encourage collaboration. A quiet room can protect dignity. A well-planned technology lab can make advanced learning feel accessible. A neglected maintenance system can undermine trust no matter how strong the program vision may be.

Parts 00 through 04 established the purpose, community need, educational framework, operational responsibilities, and partnership network of the WhaleWorks Safe Haven Youth Center. Part 05 translates those commitments into a physical environment.

The Center should not begin with a building and then search for programs to fill it. It should begin with people, activities, safety requirements, access needs, and long-term goals. Space should follow mission.

More Than Square Footage

Facility planning is often reduced to size, cost, and appearance. Those factors matter, but they are not enough.

A successful youth center must also consider how participants move through the building, where staff can supervise without creating an institutional atmosphere, how families receive information, how noise travels, where confidential conversations occur, how equipment is secured, how rooms change between programs, and how the building remains useful as community needs evolve.

Every room should have a reason to exist. Every circulation path should support safe and understandable movement. Every design decision should be evaluated according to the experience of participants, families, staff, volunteers, and partners.

A Coastal and Rural Context

WhaleWorks is developing this vision within Grays Harbor County, where distance, transportation, seasonal weather, coastal conditions, and limited access to specialized facilities can shape participation.

A site that appears affordable may create transportation barriers. A building with attractive interior space may require major investment in accessibility, structural systems, moisture control, or emergency readiness. A centrally located property may still be difficult for families to use if pickup areas, pedestrian routes, or public access are unclear.

Facility decisions must therefore consider both the building and the community system around it.

Safety Without Losing Warmth

Youth safety requires controlled access, clear supervision, emergency planning, secure storage, appropriate separation of activities, and reliable communication systems. These protections should be integrated thoughtfully rather than added as visible signs of fear.

The goal is a setting that feels welcoming and open while remaining professionally managed.

Participants should understand where they may go, who can assist them, and what expectations apply. Families should be able to identify staff and complete arrival or departure procedures without confusion. Visitors should be welcomed through a clear process. Staff should be able to observe shared spaces while protecting privacy in counseling, wellness, and family-support areas.

Good design reduces the number of safety problems that policies must solve later.

Accessibility as a Starting Point

Accessibility should not be treated as a final checklist or a special feature for a small number of users.

People experience buildings differently. Mobility, vision, hearing, sensory processing, language, learning style, age, temporary injury, family responsibilities, and transportation access all influence whether a place is genuinely usable.

Universal design asks how environments can support the widest possible range of people from the beginning. This approach benefits everyone. Clear signage helps first-time visitors. Flexible furniture supports different bodies and activities. Quiet spaces assist participants who need regulation or concentration. Accessible technology expands learning. Safe drop-off areas help families with children, elders, and mobility needs.

Inclusion becomes physical when people can enter, understand, navigate, participate, and belong.

Planning for Change

The Safe Haven Youth Center should be designed as a living institution.

Programs will grow. Technology will change. Partnerships will create new uses. Staffing will increase. Some ideas will succeed beyond expectations, while others will be redesigned or discontinued. The building must support adaptation without requiring expensive reconstruction every time the program model evolves.

Movable furniture, shared infrastructure, flexible classrooms, durable finishes, accessible power and data, and thoughtful storage can extend the useful life of the facility.

Growth should also be phased. WhaleWorks may begin in shared or leased space, move into a dedicated facility, and later expand toward a larger campus. Each phase should provide meaningful service while preparing for the next.

A Framework, Not Construction Documents

This publication provides a strategic facility framework. It is not a replacement for architectural drawings, engineering analysis, accessibility review, environmental assessment, land-use approval, building and fire code review, insurance requirements, licensing standards, cost estimating, or legal advice.

Qualified professionals must evaluate any actual site or building. The Board and executive leadership should use this framework to communicate mission, priorities, operational needs, and community expectations to those professionals.

The chapters that follow describe how WhaleWorks can create spaces that are safe, adaptable, accessible, sustainable, and worthy of the people they are intended to serve.

The guiding principle is clear:

The facility should not merely contain the mission. It should help the mission happen.

05.01 - Facility Development Philosophy

Designing from purpose rather than appearance

Facility development should begin with a shared understanding of what the Safe Haven Youth Center is intended to accomplish.

The Center is not simply a recreation building, a classroom building, a technology lab, or a community hall. It is an integrated environment where education, mentorship, creativity, workforce preparation, wellness, family engagement, and community partnership reinforce one another.

The facility must therefore support connection without creating confusion.

Mission Before Design

Early planning conversations often move quickly toward room sizes, exterior appearance, or preferred properties. WhaleWorks should first define the experiences the building must support.

What should a participant be able to do during a typical afternoon?

Where will a family ask questions?

How will staff supervise transitions?

What activities require noise control, specialized ventilation, secure storage, or technology infrastructure?

Which spaces must be available after regular program hours for partner meetings, family events, or community education?

These questions turn mission into design criteria.

Experience as a Planning Tool

Facility planning should examine the complete participant journey.

A young person may arrive by family vehicle, school transportation, public transit, bicycle, or on foot. They may check in, store belongings, receive a snack, join homework support, move to a technology workshop, meet with a mentor, participate in recreation, and wait for an authorized pickup.

Each transition creates a design requirement.

The building should make this journey understandable without relying on constant verbal direction. Entrances, reception, circulation, activity zones, restrooms, staff areas, and exits should form a clear system.

Families and visitors have their own journeys. A first-time parent should know where to enter and whom to approach. A partner delivering equipment should not move through youth areas without authorization. A volunteer should have a place to check in, store personal items, and receive instructions.

Balance Specialized and Shared Space

Specialized rooms can strengthen programming, but they also increase cost and reduce flexibility.

WhaleWorks should distinguish between activities that truly require dedicated space and those that can share well-designed multipurpose rooms.

A recording studio requires acoustic treatment and controlled equipment. A computer-build lab benefits from durable work surfaces, power, data, tool storage, and component security. A confidential family meeting requires privacy. These functions may justify dedicated areas.

Other activities, such as tutoring, financial literacy, leadership workshops, and partner presentations, may share flexible classrooms.

The goal is not to create a separate room for every idea. It is to create a facility that supports many ideas well.

Design for Dignity

Young people notice whether a building appears temporary, neglected, or designed without them in mind.

Dignity does not require luxury. It requires cleanliness, care, appropriate scale, natural light where possible, comfortable furniture, functioning equipment, and spaces that communicate respect.

Participants should not feel that they are receiving leftovers. Donated materials and reused equipment can be valuable, but they should be safe, functional, coordinated, and presented with pride.

The same principle applies to staff and volunteers. Adequate work areas, storage, rest space, and access to necessary tools support professional performance.

Build for Operational Reality

A beautiful design can fail if daily operations are difficult.

Staff should participate in planning because they understand supervision, cleanup, scheduling, storage, and transitions. Maintenance considerations should influence finishes and equipment. Technology staff should review power, network, security, and future expansion. Program leaders should test whether room layouts support actual activities.

Operational simulations can reveal problems before construction. Teams can walk through arrival, meal service, emergency evacuation, equipment checkout, family night, and closing procedures using preliminary plans.

Establish Decision Principles

Facility decisions will involve tradeoffs.

WhaleWorks should adopt clear principles to guide them:

- Protect safety and accessibility first.
- Prioritize spaces used frequently and by many participants.
- Invest in infrastructure that is expensive to change later.
- Favor flexibility where program needs may evolve.
- Avoid features that create long-term operating burdens without clear mission value.
- Evaluate total lifecycle cost, not only purchase or construction price.
- Preserve the ability to grow in phases.

These principles create consistency when budget pressure requires difficult choices.

Framework Objectives

- Begin facility planning with participant experiences, program requirements, and operational needs.
- Translate mission into clear design criteria before selecting finishes or architectural features.
- Map the complete journeys of youth, families, staff, volunteers, partners, and visitors.
- Balance specialized rooms with flexible shared spaces.
- Design environments that communicate dignity, care, and belonging.
- Include operational, maintenance, technology, and program staff in planning.
- Use simulations to test daily activities and emergency procedures.
- Apply consistent decision principles when budget, space, and schedule require tradeoffs.

05.02 - Site Selection & Community Context

Choosing a location that strengthens access, safety, and long-term viability

A strong program can be weakened by the wrong location.

Site selection affects transportation, visibility, safety, cost, partnerships, future expansion, and the daily experience of participants. The least expensive property may create the greatest long-term burden. The most visible location may lack adequate space or safe access. A large site may appear ideal but require infrastructure improvements beyond the organization's capacity.

WhaleWorks should evaluate sites through a disciplined process rather than through enthusiasm alone.

Define the Service Area

The Center should first identify who it intends to serve during each phase of growth.

A pilot program may primarily serve Westport and nearby communities. A permanent regional facility may seek participation from across Grays Harbor County. These different service areas create different transportation and location requirements.

Planning should consider school locations, family travel patterns, population distribution, employment centers, partner organizations, and the distance participants can reasonably travel after school or during evenings.

A map of intended users is as important as a map of available properties.

Access and Transportation

A site should be evaluated for more than vehicle access.

Questions include:

How will young people arrive from school?

Can families reach the site without excessive travel?

Are pedestrian routes safe and understandable?

Is bicycle access realistic?

Can vans or buses enter, turn, load, and exit safely?

Is there sufficient space for authorized pickup without creating congestion?

Could future public or partner transportation serve the location?

Transportation barriers can reduce participation even when programs are free.

Visibility and Community Connection

A visible site can strengthen awareness and public trust, but visibility must be balanced with safety and privacy.

The Center should feel connected to the community rather than hidden or isolated. Nearby schools, libraries, parks, businesses, public services, and partner organizations may create opportunities for shared programming and easier referrals.

At the same time, participants should not feel constantly displayed. Outdoor recreation, counseling areas, and arrival procedures may require screening or controlled sightlines.

Property and Building Conditions

Existing buildings should be evaluated by qualified professionals before commitments are made.

A property may require major work involving structure, roof, electrical service, plumbing, heating and cooling, fire protection, accessibility, moisture control, hazardous materials, parking, or site drainage. Cosmetic appearance is not a reliable measure of readiness.

WhaleWorks should request realistic estimates that include design, permits, professional services, contingency, equipment, furnishings, technology, and operating costs during renovation.

A low purchase price can become expensive when hidden conditions are discovered.

Coastal and Environmental Considerations

Facilities in coastal Washington should be evaluated for site-specific environmental and resilience concerns.

Potential considerations may include wind, heavy rain, salt exposure, flooding, groundwater, drainage, seismic risk, power interruption, and emergency access. These conditions vary by property and require professional assessment.

WhaleWorks should also consider how severe weather affects transportation and whether the site can support safe sheltering, communication, and continuity of operations.

Land Use and Neighborhood Fit

The proposed use must be compatible with local land-use requirements and the surrounding neighborhood.

Youth programs may involve evening activity, deliveries, outdoor recreation, events, lighting, traffic, and occasional large gatherings. Early communication can identify concerns before plans become difficult to change.

Neighborhood engagement should be respectful and honest. WhaleWorks should explain expected uses, hours, supervision, and community benefits while listening carefully to practical concerns.

Expansion Potential

A first facility should not be selected only for present needs.

WhaleWorks should evaluate whether the site can support additional classrooms, outdoor space, parking, transportation, or related campus functions in the future. Expansion may occur through adjacent property, phased construction, interior reconfiguration, or partnerships with nearby facilities.

Not every site must support unlimited growth. It must, however, fit the organization's realistic development path.

A Comparative Evaluation Process

Potential sites should be compared using a documented scorecard.

Criteria may include access, acquisition or lease cost, renovation cost, operating cost, building condition, safety, accessibility, parking, transportation, visibility, neighborhood compatibility, expansion potential, environmental risk, timeline, and mission fit.

The scorecard does not replace judgment. It makes judgment more transparent.

Framework Objectives

- Define the intended service area and participant travel patterns before choosing a location.
- Evaluate vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, van, bus, and authorized-pickup access.
- Balance public visibility with participant privacy and controlled access.
- Require professional review of existing building and site conditions.
- Account for coastal weather, resilience, drainage, utilities, and emergency access.
- Confirm land-use compatibility and engage neighboring stakeholders early.
- Consider future expansion and the organization's phased development path.
- Use a documented site-comparison process that includes total cost and mission fit.

05.03 - Programming the Space

Turning activities, schedules, and relationships into a functional plan

Space programming is the process of defining what the facility must contain and how those elements should relate to one another.

It occurs before detailed architectural design. A space program identifies users, activities, capacity, equipment, environmental needs, storage, supervision, scheduling, and relationships among rooms.

Without this step, facilities often become collections of rooms rather than coordinated systems.

Begin With Activities

WhaleWorks should list the activities expected during a typical week and during special events.

Examples may include homework support, tutoring, computer building, robotics, media production, entrepreneurship workshops, workforce training, mentoring, family meetings, recreation, volunteer orientation, staff planning, meals or snacks, public presentations, and community partner services.

Each activity should be described in practical terms.

How many people participate?

How long does it last?

What furniture and equipment are required?

Is noise generated?

Does the activity require privacy, ventilation, water, secure storage, specialized power, internet capacity, or controlled lighting?

What setup and cleanup time is needed?

These answers determine space more accurately than program titles alone.

Use a Time-Based Model

A room that appears essential may be used only a few hours each week. Another may support several programs every day.

WhaleWorks should examine schedules as well as room lists.

A flexible classroom might support tutoring after school, financial-literacy workshops in the evening, staff training on Fridays, and family events on weekends. A media studio may require more dedicated use because setup and acoustic conditions make constant conversion impractical.

Time-based planning helps the organization invest in spaces according to actual use.

Identify Adjacencies

Some functions should be near one another. Others should be separated.

Reception should connect to the main entrance and provide controlled access to youth areas. Staff work areas should support supervision and rapid response. Noisy recreation should be separated from tutoring, counseling, and recording. Restrooms should be accessible without requiring participants to pass through unrelated program rooms. Storage should be near the activities it supports.

An adjacency diagram can show these relationships before floor plans are created.

Plan for Supervision

Supervision should be considered at the programming stage.

Open sightlines can support safety, but complete transparency may undermine privacy or concentration. Interior windows, controlled openings, staff positioning, and thoughtful circulation can create observation without making participants feel constantly watched.

Rooms should avoid hidden corners and confusing dead ends. Staff should be able to respond to emergencies without crossing long distances or moving through secured areas.

Calculate Capacity Responsibly

Capacity should not be defined only by the number of people who can physically fit in a room.

Effective capacity depends on activity type, furniture, equipment, accessibility, supervision, noise, and safe movement. A classroom used for discussion may serve more participants than the same room used for computer repair or art projects.

WhaleWorks should distinguish among building capacity, program capacity, and staffing capacity. The lowest of these often determines safe participation.

Include Support Spaces

Support spaces are easy to underestimate because they are less visible than classrooms.

The Center will need storage, staff work areas, technology support, custodial space, receiving, secure records, volunteer check-in, food or snack support, mechanical rooms, restrooms, circulation, and possibly laundry or equipment-maintenance areas.

When these functions are omitted, they migrate into program rooms and reduce quality.

Test Multiple Scenarios

The space program should be tested against ordinary and peak conditions.

What happens during a normal school afternoon?

How does the building function during a family night, summer program, community meeting, or emergency shelter-in-place event?

Can one area remain open while another is secured?

Can evening partners use meeting space without accessing youth records or equipment?

Scenario testing reveals conflicts that a static room list may miss.

Maintain a Living Program

The space program should be updated as WhaleWorks learns.

Pilot programs can provide actual information about attendance, equipment, storage, setup time, and participant preferences. These lessons should influence permanent facility planning.

A living space program protects the organization from building around assumptions that no longer reflect practice.

Framework Objectives

- Define space by actual activities, users, equipment, schedules, and environmental needs.
- Evaluate weekly use so specialized and flexible rooms are balanced responsibly.
- Map which functions should be adjacent, separated, or independently accessible.
- Integrate supervision and sightline needs before floor plans are finalized.
- Distinguish building, program, and staffing capacity.
- Include storage, receiving, custodial, technology, staff, food-support, and other essential functions.
- Test the space program against ordinary, peak, evening, and emergency scenarios.
- Update facility requirements using evidence from pilot programs and community feedback.

05.04 - Safe Arrival, Entry & Circulation

Creating clear movement from the first point of contact to the final departure

The participant experience begins before anyone enters the building.

Arrival, entry, movement, and departure are among the most important parts of facility design because they connect transportation, supervision, family communication, visitor management, and emergency readiness.

A well-designed circulation system feels simple. That simplicity is the result of careful planning.

A Clear Main Entrance

The primary public entrance should be easy to identify from parking, drop-off, and pedestrian routes.

Visitors should not have to test several doors or walk through staff-only areas to find assistance. Lighting, signage, weather protection, visibility, and accessibility should guide people naturally toward reception.

Other exterior doors may support emergency exit, staff access, deliveries, or controlled program functions, but the building should communicate which entrance is intended for daily public use.

Reception and Controlled Access

Reception should create welcome and control at the same time.

Staff should be able to greet participants, confirm attendance, assist families, identify visitors, and manage access to youth areas. The reception point should have visibility toward the entrance and enough space to avoid congestion during peak arrival.

Waiting areas should not block circulation or expose confidential conversations. Families completing forms may need seating, writing surfaces, translation support, and privacy from other visitors.

Controlled access does not require an intimidating environment. It requires a clear process.

Arrival and Departure Zones

Vehicle circulation should separate through traffic from loading and pickup where possible.

The site should support safe passenger transfer, including participants with mobility needs. Drivers should understand where to wait, how to move through the site, and when staff authorization is required.

Bus or van access may require turning space, curb length, and staging that differ from ordinary parking. Pedestrian routes should avoid unnecessary crossings through vehicle lanes.

Departure procedures should support authorized pickup and clear accountability. The physical environment should make it difficult for participants to leave unnoticed.

Interior Circulation

Hallways and shared paths should be understandable, accessible, and wide enough for expected use.

Circulation should not become informal storage. Doors, equipment carts, furniture, and backpacks can create hazards and reduce accessibility if the building lacks designated storage.

Routes should lead logically from reception to major program zones. Clear landmarks, color, graphics, and readable signs can help participants navigate without creating visual overload.

Managing Different User Groups

The Center may serve youth, families, volunteers, partner organizations, staff, vendors, and community-event participants at the same time.

Facility planning should determine where these groups may overlap and where separation is appropriate.

An evening partner meeting may use a multipurpose room and restroom without entering technology labs or youth records areas. Deliveries may reach receiving without passing through active programs. Staff may access offices through a secure route during public events.

Zoning can allow parts of the building to operate independently.

Sightlines and Blind Spots

Shared circulation areas should support observation.

Corners, alcoves, stairways, and transitions between zones require careful review. Mirrors or cameras may support specific areas, but physical design should reduce blind spots before technology is added.

Observation should be proportional and transparent. Participants should understand where monitoring occurs and why. Private spaces such as restrooms, changing areas, and confidential meeting rooms require different protections.

Signage and Wayfinding

Signs should use clear language, readable type, consistent symbols, and accessible placement.

Wayfinding should identify entrances, reception, restrooms, major program areas, exits, and restricted spaces. Emergency information should be visible without overwhelming everyday navigation.

Multiple languages, pictograms, tactile information, contrast, and digital supports may be appropriate depending on participant needs.

Emergency Movement

Daily circulation and emergency egress must work together.

Participants, staff, and visitors should be able to identify exits and assembly locations. The Center should consider how mobility, sensory, communication, and supervision needs affect evacuation or sheltering.

Emergency routes must remain clear during ordinary operations. A hallway that functions well only when the building is empty is not a safe circulation plan.

Framework Objectives

- Create a visible, accessible, weather-protected main entrance connected to reception.
- Balance welcome with controlled access and visitor accountability.
- Design vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, van, bus, and pickup movement for safety and clarity.
- Keep interior circulation understandable, accessible, and free from storage conflicts.
- Zone the facility so different user groups can operate without unnecessary access to youth areas.
- Reduce blind spots through physical planning before relying on monitoring technology.
- Use consistent, readable, inclusive signage and wayfinding.
- Ensure everyday movement supports emergency evacuation, sheltering, and staff response.

05.05 - Flexible Learning & Collaboration Spaces

Supporting instruction, projects, meetings, and community use across changing needs

Flexible learning spaces form the everyday backbone of the Safe Haven Youth Center.

While specialized labs and studios may receive more attention, adaptable classrooms and collaboration areas will likely serve the widest range of participants and activities. Their value depends on how easily they can change without sacrificing comfort, technology, storage, or supervision.

Design for Multiple Learning Modes

Young people learn through discussion, demonstration, independent practice, teamwork, movement, experimentation, and reflection.

A flexible room should support several of these modes.

Furniture that can be rearranged allows a room to shift from tutoring tables to a workshop circle or project teams. Wall surfaces can support writing, display, and presentation. Power and data should be available without creating unsafe cords. Lighting should support reading, screens, and hands-on activities.

Flexibility must be practical. Furniture that is too heavy, fragile, or difficult to store will remain in one arrangement regardless of design intent.

Create Different Scales of Space

Not every learning activity requires a full classroom.

Small-group rooms can support tutoring, mentoring, interviews, or project work. Open collaboration areas can encourage peer learning and informal conversation. Larger multipurpose rooms can support presentations, family workshops, training, and community events.

A range of scales allows the Center to match space with purpose and reduces competition for rooms.

Acoustic Control

Flexible spaces should not become acoustically chaotic.

Hard surfaces, open ceilings, movable partitions, and adjacent activities can allow noise to spread. Acoustic treatment, door seals, room placement, and furniture selection should support concentration and communication.

The Center should distinguish between collaborative energy and uncontrolled noise. Participants with sensory sensitivities or attention challenges may be affected long before others recognize a problem.

Technology Integration

Learning rooms should support digital and non-digital activities.

Reliable wireless coverage, display capability, charging, secure device storage, accessible controls, and appropriate audio can allow teachers, mentors, and partners to use the rooms effectively.

Technology should not dominate the room or make simple activities complicated. A visiting educator should be able to present without extensive technical assistance. Participants should also be able to work with paper, tools, discussion, and movement when screens are unnecessary.

Storage and Reset

Flexible rooms fail when every activity requires a long search for materials or when supplies remain on tables between programs.

Storage should be located close to use and organized by activity. Mobile cabinets, secure closets, labeled bins, and charging carts can help rooms reset quickly.

The reset process should be included in schedules and staff responsibilities. A room cannot serve multiple groups effectively if the transition between them is unrealistic.

Inclusive Furniture and Environment

Furniture should accommodate different body sizes, mobility devices, learning preferences, and activity types.

A mix of seating may be appropriate, but choices should remain durable and easy to maintain. Adjustable tables, clear knee space, supportive chairs, and open circulation improve usability.

Natural light can support well-being, but glare and heat must be managed. Window coverings should allow control without making rooms feel closed. Colors and graphics should create identity without overstimulation.

Community Use

Some learning spaces may support partner meetings, adult education, Board training, or public workshops outside youth program hours.

This shared use can increase community value, but it requires access control, scheduling, cleaning, technology support, and boundaries around youth materials and records.

Rooms intended for after-hours use should be located where they can operate without opening the entire facility.

Measure Flexibility by Use

A flexible room is not one that can theoretically support many activities. It is one that staff can convert safely, quickly, and consistently.

WhaleWorks should test layouts with real furniture, equipment, and schedules. Participant and instructor feedback should guide adjustments after opening.

Framework Objectives

- Support discussion, independent work, demonstration, movement, and project-based learning.
- Provide rooms and collaboration areas at several scales.
- Control sound so active learning does not undermine concentration or sensory comfort.
- Integrate reliable, simple, and accessible technology without making rooms screen-dependent.
- Locate organized storage near use and establish realistic reset procedures.
- Select furniture and environmental controls that support different bodies and learning needs.
- Allow selected rooms to serve community and partner uses without opening the entire facility.
- Evaluate flexibility through real setup, transition, and participant experience.

05.06 - Technology, STEM & Computer Build Labs

Providing safe, durable, and future-ready environments for hands-on innovation

Technology and STEM programs are central to the WhaleWorks educational vision.

Computer building, robotics, coding, electronics, digital literacy, engineering, and emerging technology require more than ordinary classroom furniture. They involve tools, components, power, data, storage, troubleshooting, and safety procedures that should be reflected in the facility.

Define the Lab Functions

A single technology lab may support several activities, but the requirements should be understood separately.

Computer building involves parts, hand tools, anti-static practices, repair surfaces, and secure component storage. Robotics may require floor testing, charging, fabrication, and durable project storage. Coding requires reliable computers, network access, displays, and focused work areas. Electronics may require controlled tools, soldering or ventilation depending on program scope, and careful material management.

WhaleWorks should decide which activities are included during each phase and plan infrastructure accordingly.

Durable Work Surfaces

Hands-on technology work benefits from stable tables, appropriate height, resistant surfaces, and sufficient depth for equipment and instruction.

Workstations should allow participants and mentors to see components clearly while maintaining circulation. Small parts should not easily fall into inaccessible gaps. Chairs should support both seated work and movement between stations.

Some tables may need to support mobility devices or adjustable heights. The lab should not assume one body type or working position.

Power, Data, and Charging

Technology spaces require more power and connectivity than ordinary rooms.

Outlets should be distributed so extension cords do not cross circulation paths. Electrical capacity should account for computers, displays, tools, charging, network equipment, and future expansion. Data infrastructure should support secure wired and wireless connections where appropriate.

Charging areas should be ventilated, organized, and supervised. Devices, batteries, and power supplies should not accumulate randomly across work surfaces.

Tool and Component Security

The lab will contain valuable equipment and small components that can be lost, damaged, or misused.

Storage should distinguish among everyday supplies, participant projects, tools requiring staff control, donated equipment awaiting evaluation, sensitive data devices, and electronic waste.

Checkout systems can build responsibility while maintaining accountability. Transparent storage may help participants identify materials, but high-value or hazardous items require secure control.

Safety and Instruction

The physical environment should reinforce safe practice.

Clear work zones, tool storage, accessible protective equipment, first-aid resources, cleanup materials, and posted procedures can support instruction. Safety expectations should be taught rather than assumed.

Activities involving heat, fumes, sharp tools, heavy equipment, chemicals, or specialized fabrication require professional review and may belong in later phases or dedicated spaces.

The Center should never add equipment simply because it was donated or appears educational. Every tool creates training, maintenance, supervision, and liability responsibilities.

Project Storage and Display

Technology projects often continue across several sessions.

Participants need labeled, protected storage that allows work to remain organized without occupying tables. Larger robotics or engineering projects may require floor space or rolling storage.

Completed work should have opportunities for display and demonstration. Showcasing projects communicates that technical effort is valued and helps families and partners understand learning outcomes.

Network and Data Protection

Technology education must be supported by secure systems.

The facility should include protected network equipment, role-based access, content and device management appropriate to program needs, and procedures for participant accounts and data.

Public, participant, staff, and building-control networks may require separation. Cybersecurity should be considered during infrastructure design, not added after opening.

Plan for Change

Technology will evolve faster than the building.

Accessible pathways for power and data, modular furniture, flexible storage, and replaceable equipment can help the lab adapt. WhaleWorks should avoid designs that fit only one generation of devices or one specific curriculum.

The most future-ready feature is not a particular machine. It is infrastructure that allows responsible change.

Framework Objectives

- Define the specific technology, computer-build, robotics, coding, and engineering activities planned for each phase.
- Provide durable, accessible work surfaces and safe circulation around equipment.
- Distribute sufficient power, data, and charging infrastructure without relying on unsafe cords.
- Separate everyday materials, controlled tools, participant projects, high-value equipment, and electronic waste.
- Match every tool or machine with training, supervision, maintenance, and safety requirements.
- Provide protected storage for ongoing projects and visible space for completed work.
- Integrate network security, device management, and data protection into facility design.
- Use adaptable infrastructure that can support changing technology and curriculum.

05.07 - Creative Media, Arts & Performance Spaces

Supporting expression, production, storytelling, and public presentation

Creative programs allow young people to transform ideas and experiences into something visible, audible, and shareable.

Music production, recording, podcasting, photography, video, visual art, design, writing, and performance each require different environmental conditions. The facility should support creativity while protecting equipment, managing noise, and ensuring that specialized spaces remain accessible to beginners.

A Creative Ecosystem

WhaleWorks should think of creative space as a connected ecosystem rather than a single studio.

Participants may develop ideas in a classroom, record audio in a treated room, edit at a computer station, create graphics or video, rehearse a presentation, and share finished work in a multipurpose space.

The facility should support movement between these stages.

Recording and Audio Production

Audio work requires attention to sound isolation, room acoustics, ventilation, equipment heat, power, and visual communication between spaces.

A recording room and control area may be appropriate in a permanent facility, but early phases can begin with smaller treated spaces and portable equipment.

Sound isolation should be evaluated professionally. Acoustic foam alone does not prevent sound transfer. Doors, walls, ceilings, floors, mechanical systems, and penetrations all influence performance.

Studios should also support supervision. Interior windows or camera systems may allow appropriate observation while maintaining acoustic control and participant privacy.

Photography and Video

Photography and video programs may require adjustable lighting, backgrounds, equipment storage, charging, editing stations, and enough clear space for cameras and tripods.

A flexible media room can support interviews, product photography, green-screen work, and small video productions. The room should allow lighting control while maintaining safe circulation.

Storage and checkout procedures are especially important because cameras, lenses, microphones, and lighting equipment are portable and valuable.

Visual Arts and Making

Art spaces should match the materials being used.

Dry media, painting, printmaking, textiles, model building, and digital design create different requirements for sinks, cleanup, ventilation, storage, drying, and surface durability.

WhaleWorks should begin with activities it can support safely and add specialized processes only when staff expertise and facility systems are ready.

Display areas can extend art throughout the building. Rotating exhibitions give participants ownership and create conversation with families and visitors.

Performance and Presentation

Not every creative program needs a formal theater.

A multipurpose room with appropriate lighting, sound, seating flexibility, storage, and accessibility can support showcases, spoken word, music, demonstrations, film screenings, and community events.

Performance space should include a clear plan for audience arrival, backstage or preparation needs, equipment control, emergency exits, and sound impact on nearby activities.

Participants should be able to present without facing barriers related to mobility, hearing, vision, or stage access.

Creative Privacy and Consent

Media work often captures names, voices, images, and personal stories.

Facility planning should support consent and privacy procedures. Editing stations should not expose participant files to unrelated users. Recording indicators can show when a studio is active. Private conversations should not be unintentionally recorded from adjacent spaces.

Public display and online sharing require separate decisions from participation in the creative process.

Equipment and Technical Support

Creative equipment requires maintenance, inventory, software management, and secure storage.

The Center should plan for repair, replacement, consumable supplies, backup, and technical assistance. A studio that cannot be maintained quickly becomes unavailable.

Equipment should be selected according to educational goals rather than prestige. Reliable, understandable tools often produce better learning than advanced systems that only one person can operate.

A Culture of Creative Belonging

The space should welcome many genres, styles, cultures, and levels of experience.

Walls, displays, and program examples should reflect diversity without turning creativity into decoration. Participants should see that their voices are taken seriously and that technical excellence can grow from experimentation.

Framework Objectives

- Connect idea development, production, editing, rehearsal, display, and presentation spaces.
- Use professional acoustic review for recording and sound-isolation requirements.
- Provide flexible photography and video space with safe lighting, storage, and charging.
- Match art activities with appropriate sinks, ventilation, cleanup, storage, and durable surfaces.
- Support accessible showcases and performances without requiring a formal theater in early phases.
- Protect consent, privacy, participant files, and recording boundaries.
- Plan for equipment inventory, maintenance, replacement, software, and technical support.
- Create a creative environment that welcomes diverse voices, genres, cultures, and experience levels.

05.08 - Workforce, Entrepreneurship & Career Readiness Spaces

Making professional learning visible, practical, and connected to the community

Workforce and entrepreneurship programs help participants connect learning with the world beyond school.

The facility should support career exploration, job-readiness instruction, interviews, business planning, financial education, employer presentations, small-team projects, and supervised real-world practice.

These activities do not require a corporate atmosphere. They require spaces that communicate preparation, possibility, and professional respect.

Career Learning Rooms

Flexible classrooms can support resume workshops, financial literacy, communication practice, workplace expectations, and career presentations.

Rooms should include display capability, reliable internet, writing surfaces, and furniture that can shift between instruction and team projects.

Employer guests should be able to connect equipment or present without technical difficulty. Participants should also be able to practice speaking, collaboration, and problem-solving rather than only listen to presentations.

Interview and Coaching Spaces

Small private rooms can support mock interviews, career coaching, family conferences, and one-on-one planning.

These rooms should protect conversation privacy without creating isolation. Interior glazing or other supervision measures may be appropriate, depending on use and safeguarding policies.

Technology may support virtual interviews or remote mentoring, so lighting, sound, camera placement, and connectivity should be considered.

Entrepreneurship and Project Development

Entrepreneurship education benefits from spaces where participants can develop ideas, create prototypes, study costs, design branding, practice pitches, and meet community mentors.

A project room may include movable tables, presentation surfaces, storage, and access to technology or making tools. The purpose is not to imitate a formal office. It is to help young people experience the full process from idea to responsible execution.

Simulated and Real-World Practice

Some skills are learned best through practice.

WhaleWorks may create simulated customer-service, retail, hospitality, or office activities within the Center. Other experiences may occur through supervised partnerships with Whale of a Cone, local businesses, public agencies, or community organizations.

Facility planning should identify where practice can occur without disrupting other programs. Storage may be needed for uniforms, materials, point-of-sale training equipment, product samples, or event supplies.

Employer and Partner Access

Businesses and workforce partners may use the Center for career panels, hiring events, mentorship, demonstrations, and internship preparation.

Selected meeting and presentation spaces should be accessible without giving visitors unrestricted access to youth-only areas. Reception, scheduling, identification, and safeguarding procedures remain in effect during workforce activities.

The facility should make partnership convenient without reducing accountability.

Professional Identity and Belonging

Young people should be able to imagine themselves in professional settings.

Career spaces can display local industries, education pathways, participant achievements, and examples of many forms of meaningful work. Skilled trades, entrepreneurship, technology, healthcare, public service, hospitality, arts, and nonprofit leadership should all be represented.

The environment should avoid suggesting that success follows only one academic or occupational path.

Confidential Records and Technology

Career programs may involve resumes, applications, identification documents, employer information, and participant goals.

Secure storage, private computer use, controlled printing, and responsible data practices are essential. Shared workstations should be reset between users. Staff should understand which documents may be retained and which should be returned or destroyed.

Transition to External Experience

The facility is a preparation environment, not the final destination.

Spaces should support orientation before workplace visits, debriefing after internships, and coordination with employers. Participants may need a place to change into uniforms, secure personal belongings, or receive transportation information.

The Center should connect internal learning with external opportunity in a clear and supported sequence.

Framework Objectives

- Provide flexible rooms for job readiness, financial literacy, communication, and career exploration.
- Include private but appropriately supervised spaces for interviews and coaching.
- Support entrepreneurship through project development, prototyping, presentation, and mentor interaction.
- Create practical learning environments without disrupting other Center activities.
- Allow employers and partners to participate through controlled, clearly scheduled access.
- Represent many career pathways and forms of meaningful work.
- Protect resumes, applications, identification documents, and participant career information.
- Connect facility-based preparation with internships, workplace visits, and external experiences.

05.09 - Wellness, Quiet, Counseling & Family Support Spaces

Protecting privacy, regulation, dignity, and connection

Youth development requires spaces for energy and activity, but it also requires places for calm, privacy, reflection, and support.

Participants may arrive tired, overwhelmed, anxious, grieving, frustrated, or simply in need of a quieter environment. Families may need confidential conversations. Staff may need to respond to a concern without conducting the discussion in a hallway.

Wellness spaces should be integrated into the Center rather than hidden as places used only when something is wrong.

Quiet and Regulation Spaces

A quiet room can support participants who need a brief reduction in noise, movement, or social demand.

The room should not be used as punishment or isolation. It should remain visible to staff according to safeguarding procedures and should include appropriate seating, lighting control, and calming materials.

Participants should understand how the space is used, how long they may remain, and how staff provide support. The goal is regulation and return, not exclusion.

Counseling and Confidential Meetings

Private rooms may support meetings with families, counselors, case managers, educators, or qualified partner professionals.

Sound privacy is essential. A room can appear private while allowing conversations to be heard through doors, ceilings, or ventilation systems. Acoustic review and appropriate background sound may be needed.

Safety should also be considered. Room layout, visibility, communication access, and staff procedures should protect both participants and professionals.

Family Resource Area

Families may need a comfortable place to ask questions, review resources, complete forms, meet partners, or wait during a program.

A family resource area should feel connected to the Center without exposing participant records or disrupting active youth spaces. It may include printed information, digital access, referral contacts, event schedules, and private meeting options.

The area should welcome caregivers as partners rather than treating them only as visitors.

Health Support

The Center may require a designated area for first aid, temporary observation, medication procedures if adopted, or response while emergency assistance is arranged.

The scope of health support should be defined by policy, staffing qualifications, insurance, and applicable requirements. Facility design should not imply medical services the organization is not prepared to provide.

Storage for first-aid materials and any health-related records must be secure and accessible to authorized personnel.

Sensory Environment

Noise, lighting, smell, crowding, temperature, and visual complexity influence wellness.

WhaleWorks should review the entire facility for sensory conditions rather than assuming one quiet room solves every need. Mechanical noise, flickering lights, strong cleaning products, echo, and unpredictable alarms can create barriers.

Providing choices can be powerful. Some participants work well in active group settings. Others may need smaller rooms, headphones, reduced lighting, or more personal space.

Staff Wellness and Decompression

Staff and volunteers also need appropriate space to recover, prepare, and process difficult situations.

A small staff break area, secure personal storage, and access to private supervision conversations support sustainable performance. Staff should not be expected to use youth quiet rooms as their only place for rest.

A facility that ignores staff well-being eventually affects participant experience.

Privacy and Access Boundaries

Wellness spaces must be carefully managed.

Confidential rooms should not become unscheduled general meeting areas. Records and personal information should remain secure. Partner professionals should use the building through established agreements and safeguarding procedures.

Participants should know how to request support and what confidentiality means, including its limits when safety concerns arise.

A Culture of Support

The physical environment should communicate that asking for help is normal.

Wellness information, supportive language, and visible pathways to assistance can reduce stigma. At the same time, the Center should avoid turning every challenge into a clinical issue.

Belonging, mentorship, recreation, creativity, and positive relationships are also forms of support.

Framework Objectives

- Provide quiet and regulation spaces that support return to participation rather than punishment.
- Create acoustically private rooms for family, counseling, and partner conversations.
- Welcome caregivers through a family resource area connected to information and support.
- Define health-support space according to policy, qualifications, insurance, and actual service scope.
- Review noise, lighting, smell, temperature, crowding, and visual complexity throughout the facility.
- Include appropriate staff break, storage, and private supervision space.
- Protect confidential rooms, records, and partner access through clear boundaries.
- Make support visible and normal while preserving dignity and participant choice.

05.10 - Recreation, Arcade & Social Connection

Designing active spaces that build relationships, responsibility, and joy

Recreation is not separate from youth development.

Play, movement, games, and informal conversation can build teamwork, confidence, problem-solving, and relationships. For some participants, recreation is the first reason they enter the Center. Once trust is established, it can become a bridge to mentorship, education, creativity, and leadership.

The facility should treat recreation as purposeful without removing its joy.

A Social Heart

The Center may benefit from a shared social area where participants can gather before programs, during transitions, or in supervised free time.

This area should be visible to staff, comfortable, durable, and connected to other activity zones without blocking circulation. Seating can support conversation, small games, reading, or waiting.

The social heart should feel welcoming but should not become an uncontrolled space where expectations are unclear.

Arcade and Game Areas

WhaleWorks has a unique connection to arcade culture through Whale of a Cone.

An arcade area can support recreation, community identity, technology interest, game design conversations, maintenance skills, and intergenerational connection. It also creates operational requirements involving power, noise, circulation, equipment security, repair access, and supervision.

Machines should be placed so doors, exits, and accessible routes remain clear. Sound levels should be managed to protect nearby learning and wellness spaces. Electrical and equipment conditions should be inspected rather than assumed safe because a machine is familiar or donated.

Active Recreation

Indoor movement may include table games, fitness activities, dance, small-group exercise, or other age-appropriate recreation.

The facility should define which activities can be supported safely within available space. Ceiling height, floor material, impact protection, storage, and separation from fragile equipment may influence use.

Outdoor recreation may expand opportunity but requires site-specific planning for fencing, weather, visibility, lighting, drainage, equipment, and neighborhood impact.

Choice and Inclusion

Not every participant enjoys competitive sports or loud group games.

Recreation should include varied options such as board games, puzzles, creative challenges, cooperative games, reading, music, or quiet social activities. Participants with disabilities should be able to join through adapted equipment, accessible layouts, and flexible rules.

The objective is connection, not a single definition of fun.

Equipment Storage and Maintenance

Recreation areas require organized storage for games, controllers, sports equipment, replacement parts, cleaning materials, and repair tools.

Equipment should be checked regularly. Broken items should be removed until repaired. Clear checkout and return systems can help participants develop responsibility.

Maintenance can itself become a learning opportunity when appropriately supervised. Arcade repair, controller troubleshooting, and equipment care connect recreation with technical skills.

Food and Recreation Boundaries

Snacks and beverages may be part of Center life, but food can damage technology, create sanitation problems, and complicate allergy management.

The facility should identify where food is permitted, where it is restricted, and how waste and cleaning are handled. Social areas may include durable surfaces and nearby waste stations, while studios and labs may require stricter controls.

Supervision and Behavior

Recreation spaces can become crowded and emotionally intense.

Staff should be positioned to observe interactions, support fair use, and respond to conflict. Layout should prevent hidden corners and should allow participants to move without crossing active play zones.

Rules should address respect, turn-taking, equipment care, language, and inclusion. The environment should support restorative responses rather than relying only on exclusion.

Community Events

Recreation spaces may support tournaments, family game nights, intergenerational events, or fundraising activities.

These events require planning for capacity, spectators, parking, food, noise, security, and access to restrooms. Event use should not damage or disorganize regular programs.

Framework Objectives

- Create a visible, supervised social area that supports informal connection and transitions.
- Use arcade spaces as recreational, cultural, and technical-learning assets.
- Match active recreation to floor, ceiling, storage, equipment, and supervision conditions.
- Provide varied recreational choices for different interests, abilities, and sensory needs.
- Maintain organized equipment storage, inspection, repair, and checkout systems.
- Establish clear food, beverage, sanitation, and allergy-related boundaries.
- Design layouts and staffing for conflict prevention, inclusion, and fair access.
- Plan community events without compromising ordinary program safety and organization.

05.11 - Accessibility & Universal Design

Ensuring people can enter, understand, participate, and belong

Accessibility is a core expression of the WhaleWorks mission.

A youth center cannot claim to expand opportunity if people encounter preventable barriers at the entrance, in program rooms, through communication, or in the use of technology.

Universal design seeks environments that work for the widest practical range of people without requiring separate or stigmatizing solutions.

Begin With People, Not Minimums

Compliance standards are essential, but minimum compliance does not always create a welcoming experience.

WhaleWorks should consider participants, family members, staff, volunteers, and visitors with mobility, vision, hearing, cognitive, sensory, communication, and temporary-access needs.

The organization should also recognize that many disabilities are not visible and that needs may change over time.

Arrival and Entry

Accessible routes should connect parking, drop-off, sidewalks, transportation, and the main entrance.

Weather protection, surface condition, slope, door operation, lighting, and clear width all affect usability. An accessible route that requires a person to travel around the building or use a secondary entrance communicates inequality even when technically permitted.

The main experience should be shared whenever possible.

Interior Movement and Reach

Doors, corridors, turning areas, furniture, service counters, storage, controls, and equipment should be arranged for independent use.

Program rooms should include accessible work positions integrated with the group rather than isolated at the edge. Shelves, displays, outlets, and tools should include usable reach ranges.

Clear floor space must remain clear during actual operations, not only on architectural drawings.

Communication Access

People need to understand information as well as reach rooms.

Wayfinding may use text, symbols, contrast, tactile information, maps, and consistent room identification. Public presentations may require assistive listening, captioning, microphones, or visual materials. Digital registration and program information should be usable with assistive technology.

Staff should know how to request interpretation, translation, or communication support.

Sensory and Cognitive Accessibility

Predictable layouts, clear schedules, reduced clutter, quiet options, adjustable lighting, and advance information can support participants with sensory or cognitive needs.

The Center may use visual schedules, step-by-step instructions, color-coded zones, and consistent routines. These tools should simplify rather than infantilize.

Emergency communication must include people who may not hear alarms, interpret verbal directions quickly, or tolerate sudden sensory changes.

Accessible Technology and Equipment

Computers, software, media tools, recreation equipment, and learning materials should be reviewed for accessibility.

Adjustable workstations, alternative input devices, screen readers, captioning, magnification, accessible controllers, and adaptable tools may expand participation.

Staff training is as important as equipment. A feature has little value when no one knows how to use or maintain it.

Restrooms and Personal Dignity

Restrooms should be accessible, easy to locate, appropriately supervised from outside, and designed for privacy.

The Center should consider family or all-gender options, changing needs, and assistance requirements according to actual users and applicable review.

Dignity includes enough space, functioning fixtures, clear signage, and maintenance that keeps accessible features available.

Participation Beyond the Building

Accessibility includes transportation, fees, scheduling, communication, and program rules.

A fully accessible classroom does not solve participation if a family cannot reach the facility or if registration requires technology they do not have.

Facility planning should connect with operational and partnership strategies that reduce these broader barriers.

Review With Users

People with disabilities and families should be involved in planning and post-occupancy evaluation.

Professional review is necessary, but lived experience reveals practical barriers that drawings and checklists may not show.

Feedback should lead to documented improvements.

Framework Objectives

- Treat accessibility as a mission commitment and design principle, not a final checklist.
- Create shared, weather-protected arrival and entrance experiences whenever possible.
- Integrate accessible circulation, work positions, controls, storage, and equipment into ordinary use.
- Provide understandable wayfinding and communication access across print, digital, audio, and visual formats.
- Support sensory and cognitive access through predictable layouts, quiet options, and clear information.
- Include accessible technology, recreation equipment, and staff training.
- Protect restroom privacy, dignity, and reliable availability.
- Involve people with disabilities and families in planning, testing, and improvement.

05.12 - Building Systems, Safety & Emergency Readiness

Creating dependable infrastructure for ordinary operations and unexpected events

Programs depend on systems that participants may never see.

Electrical service, heating and cooling, ventilation, plumbing, fire protection, communications, security, lighting, and backup planning determine whether the facility can operate safely and consistently.

These systems should be designed around actual program use, not only general occupancy assumptions.

Electrical Capacity

Technology labs, media equipment, arcade machines, kitchen or snack support, lighting, charging, and mechanical systems can create substantial electrical demand.

WhaleWorks should work with qualified professionals to estimate present and future loads. Panels, circuits, outlets, and pathways should allow safe expansion. Sensitive technology may require surge protection, power conditioning, or backup procedures.

Extension cords and power strips should not become permanent infrastructure.

Heating, Cooling, and Ventilation

Comfort affects learning, health, equipment, and attendance.

Rooms with computers, recording equipment, large groups, or active recreation may produce more heat than ordinary offices. Art, fabrication, cleaning, food, or maintenance activities may create ventilation needs.

Mechanical systems should balance fresh air, temperature, humidity, noise, energy use, and maintenance. Recording and quiet spaces require special attention because mechanical noise can interfere with use.

Plumbing and Water

Restrooms, drinking water, sinks, custodial functions, art activities, food support, and first aid may require plumbing.

Fixtures should be accessible, durable, and easy to maintain. Leak detection, shutoff access, and floor protection can reduce damage. Coastal moisture and building age may influence system condition in existing properties.

Water access should be located according to activity rather than added wherever piping is easiest.

Fire and Life Safety

Fire protection, alarms, exits, emergency lighting, separation of uses, and occupancy limits require professional review.

Program leaders should understand how room setup, temporary decorations, equipment, events, and storage can affect safety after the building opens.

Emergency systems must be maintained, tested, and incorporated into training. A compliant system that staff do not understand is not enough.

Security and Communication

Security should support controlled access, visitor management, incident response, and protection of people and equipment.

Depending on the facility, systems may include electronic access, intrusion detection, cameras in appropriate public areas, intercoms, radios, panic communication, and mass notification.

Technology should support, not replace, staffing and procedures. Monitoring must respect privacy and be governed by policy.

Emergency Scenarios

The Center should plan for fire, severe weather, earthquake, power interruption, medical emergency, missing participant, security threat, hazardous condition, and other site-specific events.

Facility design should support evacuation, sheltering, lockdown if required, reunification, communication, first aid, and access for emergency responders.

Plans should include participants and adults with mobility, sensory, communication, or medical needs.

Continuity of Operations

Some disruptions may close only part of the building. Others may affect the entire community.

WhaleWorks should identify critical functions, backup communication, data protection, alternate program locations, and procedures for safe shutdown of technology and equipment.

A generator or battery system may be appropriate for selected functions, but backup power decisions should be based on risk, cost, maintenance, and realistic operating needs.

Inspection and Maintenance

Building systems require scheduled inspection and replacement.

The organization should maintain records, service contracts where appropriate, and clear responsibility for responding to alarms or failures. Deferred maintenance can quickly become a safety, financial, and trust problem.

Facility staff should have access to manuals, shutoffs, keys, and vendor contacts. Knowledge should not exist only with one person.

Framework Objectives

- Size electrical systems for technology, media, arcade, program, and future loads.
- Balance ventilation, temperature, humidity, noise, energy use, and maintenance.
- Locate plumbing and water according to actual program, custodial, and health-support needs.
- Maintain fire protection, exits, alarms, lighting, and occupancy practices through professional review and staff training.
- Use security and communication technology within clear privacy and operational policies.
- Plan and practice responses for a range of site-specific emergencies.
- Identify continuity, backup communication, alternate-site, and safe-shutdown procedures.
- Maintain inspection, service, replacement, and system-knowledge records.

05.13 - Sustainability, Maintenance & Lifecycle Planning

Protecting the facility as a long-term community investment

A facility is not complete when construction ends.

It enters a long period of operation, cleaning, repair, replacement, adaptation, and improvement. The most responsible facility plan accounts for these obligations before commitments are made.

Sustainability includes environmental responsibility, but it also includes financial, operational, and institutional durability.

Total Cost of Ownership

Purchase or construction cost represents only part of the facility's financial impact.

WhaleWorks should estimate utilities, insurance, maintenance, custodial supplies, security, technology replacement, grounds care, inspections, repairs, staffing, and capital renewal.

A feature that appears affordable initially may create high operating costs. Another may require greater investment but reduce maintenance or energy use over time.

Decisions should compare lifecycle value, not only first cost.

Durable Materials

Youth and community facilities experience heavy use.

Floors, walls, doors, furniture, casework, hardware, and equipment should be selected for durability, cleanability, repair, and replacement. Materials should support the intended activity rather than simply match an aesthetic theme.

Durability does not mean the building must feel institutional. Color, texture, participant artwork, natural materials, and thoughtful design can create warmth while maintaining resilience.

Cleaning and Custodial Operations

Cleaning needs should be built into the plan.

Custodial rooms require secure chemical storage, utility sinks where appropriate, equipment space, ventilation, and access to all areas. Waste, recycling, food cleanup, and event turnover require realistic routes and schedules.

Program staff should understand their responsibilities for room reset and immediate cleanup. Custodial staff should not be expected to solve every operational problem after hours.

Preventive Maintenance

Preventive maintenance protects safety, appearance, and financial stability.

WhaleWorks should create schedules for mechanical systems, roofs, plumbing, electrical equipment, alarms, doors, accessibility features, technology, furniture, outdoor areas, and specialized program equipment.

Records should document service, warranties, recurring issues, and replacement dates. Digital facility-management tools may help, but the process should remain usable at the organization's current capacity.

Environmental Responsibility

Energy efficiency, water conservation, daylight, responsible materials, waste reduction, and equipment reuse can reduce cost and model stewardship.

Environmental features should be selected according to performance and maintainability. A complex system that cannot be serviced locally may create more risk than benefit.

Participants can also engage with sustainability through energy monitoring, repair programs, recycling, environmental projects, and building-performance education.

The facility itself can become a learning tool.

Moisture and Coastal Durability

Coastal environments can accelerate corrosion, moisture intrusion, and wear.

Site drainage, roofing, exterior materials, ventilation, building envelope, and maintenance access require careful review. Small leaks or persistent humidity can damage equipment and create health concerns.

WhaleWorks should establish rapid reporting and response for water-related issues. Deferred action often increases cost substantially.

Replacement Reserves

Major systems and equipment will eventually require replacement.

The organization should plan reserves for roofs, mechanical systems, vehicles, technology, furniture, and specialized equipment. Grants may fund initial construction but not later renewal.

A replacement schedule makes future needs visible and allows fundraising to become proactive rather than crisis-driven.

Stewardship Culture

Participants, staff, volunteers, and partners all influence facility condition.

Clear expectations for equipment care, cleanup, reporting damage, and respectful use can build shared ownership. Recognition should be given to those who help maintain the space.

Stewardship is not about blaming young people for normal wear. It is about teaching that community resources remain available when everyone contributes to their care.

Framework Objectives

- Evaluate acquisition and construction decisions through total cost of ownership.
- Select durable, repairable, cleanable materials that still create warmth and dignity.
- Provide secure, functional custodial space and realistic cleaning routes and schedules.
- Establish preventive-maintenance records, responsibilities, warranties, and replacement dates.
- Choose environmental strategies that are effective, maintainable, and educational.
- Address coastal moisture, corrosion, drainage, envelope, and rapid water-response needs.
- Build reserves and replacement schedules for major systems, vehicles, technology, and equipment.
- Create a shared culture of respectful use, reporting, cleanup, and stewardship.

05.14 - Phased Development, Interim Facilities & Growth

Delivering meaningful service while building toward a permanent future

WhaleWorks does not need to wait for a perfect permanent facility before beginning meaningful work.

Pilot programs, shared spaces, leased locations, mobile equipment, school partnerships, and community venues can allow the organization to learn, serve participants, and demonstrate impact while long-term development continues.

Phased growth should be intentional rather than improvised.

Phase One: Pilot and Shared Space

Early programs may operate in partner facilities, rented rooms, Whale of a Cone, libraries, schools, community buildings, or temporary locations.

These spaces can support targeted workshops, mentoring, technology activities, family events, and summer programs. They also reveal practical information about attendance, transportation, staffing, equipment, storage, and scheduling.

Temporary use still requires clear agreements, safety review, insurance, accessibility, supervision, setup, cleanup, and protection of equipment and records.

Phase Two: Dedicated Center

A dedicated facility allows WhaleWorks to establish consistent identity, schedules, storage, staffing, and program zones.

This phase may include flexible classrooms, technology lab, creative media space, mentoring rooms, recreation, family support, staff areas, and basic community-event capacity.

The facility should be sized according to demonstrated participation and operational readiness rather than projected enthusiasm alone.

Phase Three: Expanded Campus or Regional Hub

Long-term growth may include additional specialized labs, larger creative and performance areas, workforce training, wellness services, outdoor recreation, transportation capacity, or related WhaleWorks initiatives.

Expansion should occur when governance, staffing, funding, maintenance, and evaluation systems are strong enough to support it.

A larger building without stronger organizational capacity increases risk.

Design Interim Systems for Reuse

Equipment purchased for temporary sites should be selected with future use in mind.

Mobile storage, portable technology, modular furniture, secure cases, and reusable signage can move into a permanent facility. Curriculum and operating procedures developed during pilots also become assets.

WhaleWorks should avoid spending heavily on temporary improvements that cannot be transferred or provide sufficient short-term value.

Maintain Consistent Standards

The quality of participant experience should not depend on whether the program is temporary or permanent.

Safeguarding, accessibility, supervision, consent, equipment safety, communication, and data protection remain essential in every setting. Standards may be adapted to the facility, but they should not disappear.

Participants should recognize WhaleWorks through consistent expectations, staff preparation, materials, and culture.

Use Evidence to Guide Growth

Each phase should produce information.

WhaleWorks should document attendance, waiting lists, room utilization, program outcomes, transportation barriers, incident patterns, maintenance needs, partner feedback, family experience, and staffing demands.

This evidence can refine the space program and strengthen capital requests. It can also show when growth should pause.

Avoid Premature Scale

A major facility can create pressure to fill rooms, launch too many programs, or accept partnerships that are not ready.

WhaleWorks should protect quality by matching growth with staff capacity, financial reserves, governance, and reliable demand. Empty space is expensive, but overcrowded and poorly supervised space is dangerous.

Readiness should be defined before expansion begins.

Transition Planning

Moving from one phase to another requires careful coordination.

Programs may need temporary closure, equipment transfer, family communication, updated transportation, staff training, new emergency procedures, and revised schedules. Partners should understand how the transition affects shared work.

Opening day should not be the first time staff experience the new facility. Orientation, simulations, setup, and limited soft-opening activities can reduce problems.

Celebrate Progress Without Declaring Completion

Each phase represents meaningful achievement.

A successful pilot is not merely preparation. A dedicated center is not a lesser version of a future campus. Participants benefit from what exists now while the organization continues learning.

WhaleWorks should communicate progress honestly, distinguishing between current operations, funded development, and long-term vision.

Framework Objectives

- Use pilots, shared spaces, leased sites, and mobile equipment to begin service responsibly.
- Define a dedicated-center phase based on demonstrated use and operational readiness.
- Expand toward a regional hub only when governance, staffing, funding, and maintenance can support it.
- Purchase interim furniture, equipment, storage, and systems with future reuse in mind.
- Maintain safeguarding, accessibility, supervision, and data standards in every location.
- Use attendance, utilization, outcomes, barriers, and feedback to guide each growth decision.
- Define readiness and avoid pressure to scale faster than organizational capacity.
- Plan transitions, staff orientation, family communication, and soft opening before a new facility launches.

05.15 - Capital Planning, Community Review & Readiness

Moving from facility vision to responsible investment

A facility project becomes credible when vision is supported by evidence, professional analysis, realistic budgets, governance, and community trust.

Capital planning should not begin with a fundraising number alone. It should begin with a documented need, clear program requirements, organizational readiness, and an understanding of the full cost of ownership.

Establish the Case for Investment

The capital case should explain why a facility is needed, whom it will serve, what current limitations exist, and how the proposed environment advances the mission.

Evidence may include program demand, transportation patterns, partner commitments, facility deficiencies, waiting lists, community feedback, utilization data, and projected outcomes.

The case should distinguish between confirmed needs and long-term possibilities.

Create a Development Team

Facility projects require expertise beyond ordinary program operations.

The team may include Board leadership, executive staff, program representatives, finance, facilities, fundraising, youth and family advisors, architects, engineers, accessibility specialists, contractors, legal counsel, insurance professionals, and public-agency contacts.

Roles should be defined. Professional advice should be documented. Conflicts of interest should be disclosed and managed.

Build a Complete Budget

A responsible capital budget includes more than property and construction.

Potential categories include due diligence, surveys, environmental review, design, engineering, permits, legal services, financing, renovation or construction, contingency, utility work, furniture, fixtures, equipment, technology, security, signage, moving, startup supplies, insurance, and operating reserves.

WhaleWorks should also identify costs that grants or donors may not cover.

Contingency is not optional optimism. It is recognition that facility projects contain uncertainty.

Confirm Operating Sustainability

The organization must be able to operate the facility after it opens.

Capital fundraising should be connected to multiyear operating projections that include staffing, utilities, maintenance, insurance, technology, transportation, cleaning, security, and program delivery.

A building that cannot be operated reliably does not strengthen the mission.

Operating reserves, replacement reserves, diversified revenue, and phased staffing should be addressed before final commitments.

Community and User Review

Young people, families, staff, volunteers, partners, neighbors, and accessibility users should have opportunities to review plans at meaningful stages.

Engagement should occur early enough to influence decisions. Presentations should explain what is fixed, what remains open, and how feedback will be used.

Design teams should receive organized feedback rather than conflicting informal requests. WhaleWorks should document major themes and explain final choices.

Decision Gates

Capital projects benefit from formal decision gates.

The Board may require approval before site control, design advancement, fundraising launch, financing, construction, major change orders, and opening.

Each gate should confirm budget, risk, funding, schedule, professional review, operational readiness, and mission alignment.

A project should be able to pause when conditions are not met.

Fundraising Integrity

Capital communication must be accurate.

WhaleWorks should distinguish among concept, design, approved project, funded work, and completed construction. Donor restrictions, naming opportunities, recognition, and contingency use should be documented.

Campaign materials should not promise features that have not been approved or funded.

Transparency protects relationships when project scope or schedule changes.

Readiness to Open

Construction completion is not the same as operational readiness.

Before opening, WhaleWorks should confirm inspections, occupancy approval, insurance, furnishing, equipment testing, technology, security, emergency procedures, staff hiring, training, cleaning, transportation, registration, signage, partner coordination, and family communication.

A readiness checklist should identify who verifies each item.

Soft opening can allow limited programs to test systems before full capacity begins.

Post-Occupancy Evaluation

After opening, WhaleWorks should evaluate how the building performs.

Staff, participants, families, and partners can identify circulation problems, noise, storage shortages, accessibility barriers, technology issues, and underused spaces. Utility and maintenance data can reveal operating conditions that differ from projections.

Improvements should be prioritized according to safety, access, program impact, and cost.

The facility should continue learning with the organization.

Framework Objectives

- Build the capital case from documented need, program demand, access barriers, and expected impact.
- Create a qualified development team with defined roles and conflict-of-interest safeguards.
- Include due diligence, design, permits, contingency, equipment, startup, and reserves in the full budget.
- Connect capital investment with realistic multiyear operating sustainability.
- Invite youth, families, staff, partners, neighbors, and accessibility users to review plans before decisions are fixed.
- Use formal Board decision gates for site, design, fundraising, financing, construction, and opening.
- Communicate campaign scope, funding, restrictions, naming, schedule, and changes honestly.
- Verify operational readiness before opening and conduct post-occupancy evaluation afterward.

END OF PART 05

Facility Development, Space Planning & Accessibility

WhaleWorks Publication Series - Volume II