

Office Space Guidelines

University of Michigan – Office of the Provost

Space Planning Workflow

Each department works first with their leadership and facilities office to solve internal space needs, using the ranges and considerations outlined in this document. With sustainability, stewardship, and being forward looking as guiding principles, units should always address office space needs within existing spaces before requesting additional space. Units should avoid construction and renovation wherever possible. Often, updated furniture and creative reuse of existing spaces can solve both short-term and long-term needs. Below are three steps to take to outline unit needs and assess existing space.

Step 1: Establish a baseline of your current spaces and uses

- Gather floor plans, label the spaces you oversee with the functions, room occupants/staff names, and square footages. Floor plans and space data can be requested from your facilities team.
- Gather staff list and include information like hybrid schedules.
- Use a decision tree (example template provided) to determine the most appropriate type of future work space each staff role could work in.
 - For each staff member note what type of space the role occupies today and what type of space this role could occupy in the future. Focus on the duties of the position, not on preferences or space constraints.
 - This assessment will inform space reassignment and where to re-furnish spaces to maximize occupancy and use of existing space.
- Tour newly constructed and renovated workspaces to see how your space compares and identify easy-to-solve space solutions for your existing space.
- Connect with and visit nearby departments or buildings to discover nearby spaces and services that may not be fully under your department's control but could be helpful to your unit, if shared. For example, does the building next door have a personal room and your building doesn't?
 - When thinking about the workplace as a whole ecosystem of spaces, remember that such spaces don't necessarily need to be fully administered by the same department. All units are encouraged to find ways to share their spaces with nearby units.

Step 2: Develop scenarios for rethinking how you currently use your space

- With the baselines established in Step 1, develop scenarios to test out on your floor plans. Try:
 - Moving subgroups or sub-departments within your space to improve programmatic synergies

- Test strategic adjacencies (e.g. director and assistant work near each other, bring your student-facing staff closer to your entrance, etc.)
- Strategic “doubling up” of staff to see your capacity for growth within existing spaces.
- Compare the sizes of your offices and staff assignments today to the square feet per work space recommendations in these guidelines to identify additional opportunities for moves or co-location of staff.
- Determine if changes to your hybrid or flexible work policy could identify new office sharing opportunities.
- Grander ideas if construction or renovation is feasible (e.g. remove walls to create open workstation areas)
- Review your support spaces for further space opportunities.
 - Identify spaces that could be rethought or retooled to accommodate your high priority needs like:
 - storage or file spaces; work rooms; large open areas; reception areas; small libraries or resource rooms; conference rooms; break rooms; cubicles larger than the recommended sizes
 - Identify spaces that you’d like to have but don’t. Spaces to consider adding: flex or drop-in offices or workstations; meeting rooms of other smaller or larger sizes than you have today; personal rooms, reflection rooms. If nearby spaces such as these were discovered nearby in other buildings or other departments’ spaces, begin sharing discussions with nearby units.
 - Use technology wherever possible to reduce space issues or tensions.
 - Digitize paper records to reduce the need for storage space and bulky furniture.
 - Do more on-demand procurement, purchasing or materials printing, to avoid the need to store large quantities of materials on site that don’t get used frequently.
 - Updated, smaller computers, streamlined monitor arms, and new furniture can allow for new room usage, e.g. add another workstation.
 - Sharing electronic calendars for conference rooms or other meeting spaces help maximize the use of shared space.
 - Maximize the space-saving potential of any staff working under remote or hybrid arrangements. For example, for employees who do not spend a majority of their time in the office, turn those spaces into bookable spaces that can be used by a number of other staff throughout the week.
- Think about ways that new furniture can assist in maximizing your existing space. Older furniture tends to be larger, bulkier, since they were design for a time when we had more paper materials, larger computers, desktop printers, etc. Consider a larger refresh of furniture and use this as an opportunity to reconfigure your space uses.
 - When selecting furniture, establish office-wide furniture size standards to be applied from room-to-room and space-to-space. Furniture selection should avoid being custom to a room’s dimensions or an individual’s preferences.
 - For private offices, outfit offices with furniture of the same dimensions and scale. This allows your unit to save time in re-outfitting in the future and allows for furniture to move into new spaces if you relocate.
 - For open workstations/cubes, equally-sized cubicles with common layouts, orientations, and amenities offer flexibility for all work styles.
 - A well designed cube with modern amenities can accommodate various positions and roles without much customization.

Step 3: Test out your Step 2 scenarios on your actual floor plans

Once you've identified your staff space assignment, core space constraints, future needs and goals, mark up your internal floor plan to see if you can accommodate your needs within your existing spaces.

- Consider bringing in a neutral, external party to help you in this effort. External parties can bring their ideas and solutions that you may never have thought of. You could request assistance from your facilities team or leadership. If you do not have this type of internal support, contact space.planning@umich.edu for advice on next steps.