

MTNC – Is It Right For You?

When considering a MTNC for your organization, what questions should you ask? MTNC are intended to be mutually beneficial, but how do you know it is appropriate for your nonprofit at this time?

Here are some questions to ask yourself. The goal is to self-assess your organization's readiness for MTNC. MTNCs excel when participating organizations are very clear about their capacity, their needs, their wants and their deal-breakers.

Strategic Planning	Considerations
Does MTNC dovetail with your current strategic plan?	MTNCs should support your mission not undermine it. Be clear about programmatic risks and opportunities.

Timing	Considerations
When will the MTNC be operational? How long a commitment do I need to make?	Think about your needs and wants regarding timing. When is your current lease up? How long a commitment are you prepared to make? Do you have a deadline?
How much time do I need to commit to the start-up stage of the MTNC? To running the MTNC once it is operational?	MTNCs will be in different stages of development and may need your participation in the start-up stage. Others won't. Some will require involvement in ongoing operations (paying bills, tenant committees, shared decision-making). Think about how much time you can commit.

Program	Considerations
How will my clients be better served in an MTNC? Does it increase my impact?	MTNCs should create synergies and/or efficiencies that positively impact programs. Are they measurable for your organization?
How much time will MTNC save my staff? How much will this add to my staff's responsibilities?	Are there staff functions that could be eliminated in MTNC (for instance, a receptionist, office manager)? Will there be additional work added? Think about your staff structure and where you have flexibility and where you don't.

Financial Questions	Considerations
<p>How much will it cost? How does it compare to what I currently pay in occupancy costs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rent - Utilities - Phone/IT - Cleaning - Maintenance - Snow removal - Parking 	<p>Do an in-depth study of your current occupancy costs. How does it compare to MTNC? Ask lots of questions to be sure you are comparing apples to apples, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What types of occupancy costs do you pay for currently? - What amenities might be included in MTNC? What costs are included/excluded? - How will costs be shared in MTNC? Pro-rata or divided equally? - Who will be responsible for paying bills and calculating each share? - Will utilities be metered separately? - Is the space ready for occupancy or are there additional costs for finishing the space? - When are deposits due? Are they refundable? - When will adjustments be made to rental rates? Other costs? - Who absorbs the cost if a tenant withdraws or doesn't pay their share?
<p>Are your financial statements current and can you explain them?</p>	<p>MTNCs will require transparency in financial reporting to insure that each participating nonprofit can meet its obligations. Are you comfortable with this level of disclosure?</p> <p>Has your organization been generating operating surpluses or deficits over the past three years? Do you need to reduce your occupancy costs or can you afford to pay more if you get more space/amenities?</p>

Fundraising	Considerations
<p>Will MTNC affect my ability to fundraise?</p>	<p>MTNC should be neutral or positive for your fundraising if you have a solid rationale for participating in one.</p>
<p>Will I need to do any fundraising for the MTNC?</p>	<p>Be clear about your ability to participate in fundraising for the building or for ongoing operations of the MTNC building if required.</p>

Governance	Considerations
How will my Board view MTNC?	Boards need to be supportive of the MTNC concept for it to be successful. Anticipate why your Board might have concerns.
Is there anything in my by-laws or structure that would preclude my organization from participating?	How does your organization make decisions? How often does your Board meet? Are you a membership organization? Think through what hurdles you might have before proceeding with an MTNC.
How will my staff and volunteers view MTNC?	How will it help them do their jobs better? How might it create challenges?
How will conflicts be resolved in the MTNC?	Consider how you, your Board and staff will handle situations where you will not have ultimate control over facility issues.

Amenities	Considerations
What do I <u>need</u> in a MTNC? What do I <u>want</u> in a MTNC?	Think through why you might want to co-locate with other nonprofits. What in your current space would you like to replicate and what are you happy to leave behind? Are there intangibles such as synergies with specific organizations that you desire? Can you identify 2-3 main "deal-breakers" for your participation in MTNC?
What do you like about your current space? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reception space - Office size(s) & proximity - Meeting space - Bathrooms>Showers - Parking - Natural light - Energy efficiency - Kitchen - IT capacity - Storage/Security - ADA accessibility - Special equipment accommodation 	<p>Sometimes you don't appreciate what you have until it's gone. Take a hard, honest look at your current space before considering a change. Think about how many visitors you receive each day and how they use your space.</p> <p>Is there anything special or unique about how you use your space now? Is there anything special about the setting that you would like to replicate?</p> <p>Floorplans can be more/less efficient so focus on the functions you need more than the square footage.</p>

Amenities (continued)	Considerations
<p>What do you like about your current location?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to mass transit - Access to other amenities - Client access/proximity to service area - Street/free parking - Staff/Board/Volunteer access - Visibility/signage 	<p>Think about how dependent your participation in an MTNC is on a specific location. How flexible are you? What makes a specific location more desirable for your nonprofit than another?</p>

These questions are not exhaustive, but they will probably lead you to many more that are specific to your organization. Think through them all, but recognize that this will probably be an iterative process and you will need to keep assessing as you gather more information about MTNC.

Most importantly, use these topics to clarify the needs and wants of your organization in relation to a MTNC. As an executive director or decision-maker for your nonprofit, you should think through your organizational goals as they relate to MTNC, but also your limitations. What areas are barriers for your organization and how can you overcome them? Know what you want to get out of an MTNC and what you can offer in return.

Evaluating an MTNC opportunity is a multi-layered task but if you do your homework, you can determine if MTNC is right for you.