SPACE

Goals for this section:
- Identify where in the community your SparkPoint center will be located
- Determine whether you have adequate space for a SparkPoint center
- Develop a plan for making the SparkPoint space welcoming

LOCATION

Ideally, the SparkPoint center would be in a large, centrally located office space on campus. However, due to limited space and resources on postsecondary campuses, SparkPoint centers often do not get their first choice of location and must assess and select from the options available to them. When assessing options, it is important to consider a few factors, such as size, stability, and what organizations will share the space.
- Being co-located with relevant partner organizations can help increase SparkPoint's visibility and draw in new clients. One existing SparkPoint is in a student services office, which many students frequent anyways. Another SparkPoint is located next to its partner school's financial aid office, which helped raise its campus profile.
- Size and central location are important. Some centers prefer being centrally located, even if this means having a smaller space, while other centers prefer having a larger space even if it is removed. You should consider what options are available to you on your campus and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the space available.
- Stability is important - a center that does not move around will be easier to find.

SparkPoint services have typically been offered in-person at SparkPoint centers. However, during COVID-19, SparkPoint centers pivoted to virtual programming, finding both opportunities and limitations in this approach. Centers now typically offer some form of hybrid programming, giving clients the opportunity to access services either virtually or in-person when possible. In planning the space for your SparkPoint center, creating an effective physical space is still important. However, it will be important to consider how you can create an effective virtual "space" for clients.

VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

When offering virtual services, it is important that they be accessible, secure, and as easy to use as possible. Ideally, a SparkPoint center will have access to the same virtual platforms as professors, teachers, staff, and other student services programs. This lessens the burden on clients to learn how to use a new platform and makes clear that SparkPoint is a part of the broader postsecondary institution. Likewise, SparkPoint leadership and staff should have campus email addresses so that their communica-tions will have more authority on campus and be trusted by students. The degree to which SparkPoint is a virtual or in-person program should be as consistent as possible with what other programs on campus are doing, but every center should still have access to at least some form of physical space. While virtual services offer a tremendous amount of flexibility to staff and clients, having at least some physical space is important for building awareness and legitimacy for your SparkPoint center.

SIGNAGE

Centers should additionally be easy to identify for a first-time visitor, with clear signage visible from the street or campus entrance, when possible. We are aware that in some cases, street level signage is not allowed for SparkPoint, and in those cases centers have compensated by having clear signage immediately outside of their office space and making sure that staff throughout the school know about SparkPoint and can point potential clients to its location on campus. Marketing materials should also include clear location information that would make it easy for new clients to find the center.
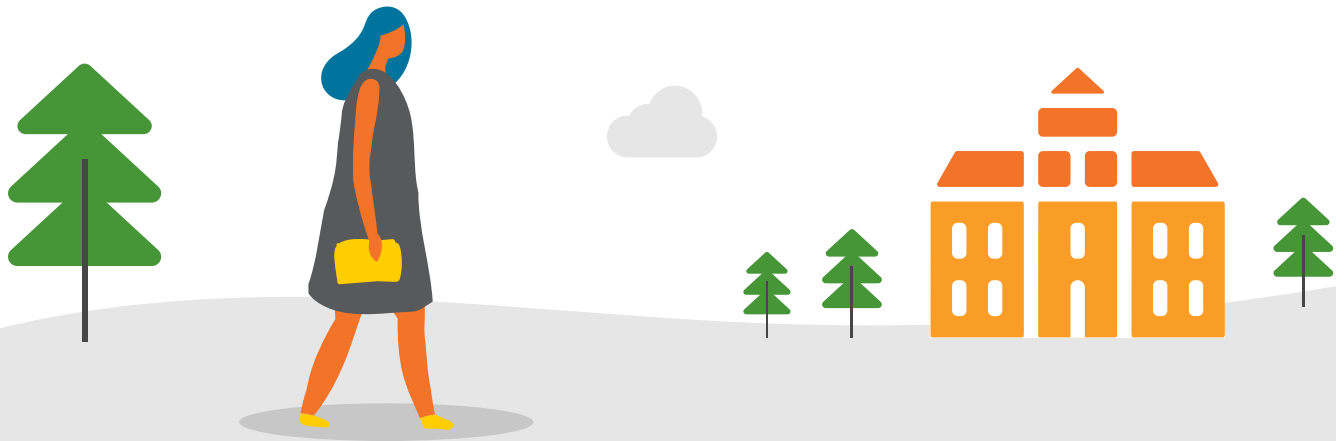
ENVIRONMENT

The environment of the actual SparkPoint should be comfortable and provide the necessary privacy for clients. Once you get to the client journey section of the toolkit, you will complete the Empathy Mapping exercise, in which you will further explore the student experience in the environment. A few key points to address:

- Create a safe environment: The space should be well lit at all times of day and have good visibility. If possible, the entry space should be an open area with seating placed against walls, so that no one can approach a client from behind.
- Provide privacy: Provide a private space for coaching sessions. This helps decrease distractions and ensures confidentiality for the client and coach. If possible, it can be beneficial for coaching rooms to have some glass for visibility in case a client or coach inside needs help. When private space is not available within the SparkPoint office space, SparkPoint Contra Costa

used cubicles and noise machines to create a sense of privacy.
- Reduce stress: Make sure that the space is easy to locate (see location section above for details). Inside, including reception and meeting rooms, should be as clean and uncluttered as possible and have pleasant and clean scents. There should be easy access to restrooms and drinking water for clients, via clear signage or the office's immediate proximity to restrooms and drinking water facilities. All SparkPoint community college sites offer snacks.
- Facilitate a comfortable environment: Creating a space that is comfortable and welcoming for clients can entail several different elements. Including toys and other materials for kids will make parents feel more comfortable. Featuring pictures of student clients on the wall can foster a sense of belonging.

TRANSPORTATION

SparkPoint centers should be easily accessible to community members. Clients, and especially clients who are parents, have tight time constraints and are more likely to access services if the process and location are convenient. This begins with transportation: SparkPoint centers should be assessable by public transit. Ideally the location of the SparkPoint can be planned around transit access, but there have been cases of public transit access being expanded to accommodate SparkPoint partners. In one case where there was a lack of direct public transportation access, Skyline College worked with community partners and local transit authorities to add direct bus service from BART to the community college. SparkPoint was able to benefit from this arrangement as well.

Guiding Questions

The following are questions that a SparkPoint center must consider before opening:

- Where could SP be and where is SP within the community? Is it a place people gather? Is it in a location or neighborhood that is easily accessible?
- Where is SP within the campus? Is it easy to find on campus? Are there signs? Is it in or near a place where people gather? How accessible is the location?
- Once you've found the place, what about the space is welcoming? Are there places to meet privately with coaches? Is it comforting?