

2020

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# CREATING A DIGITAL COMMUNITY CENTER

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

**PROPOSED TO:**

The Albanian Cultural Heritage Center

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WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE'S  
ALBANIAN PROJECT CENTER

# 1. Board of Directors

Administrative structure is crucial to the success of any organization. We highly recommend a board of directors consisting of:

- **Board President**
- **Vice President**
- **Treasurer**
- **Secretary**
- **Board Members**

The first task of the board would be to develop bylaws. These will outline all major elements of the organization including a mission, how the board operates, and any other major organization actions. Subcommittees may be formed to balance the workload, given the need, enough members, and participation. Some potential subcommittees recommended are:

- Fundraising
- Marketing and PR
- Programming

## 2. Apply for 501-c3

The 501-c3 is a non-profit tax designation for organizations recognized by the IRS. There are 7 major steps to create a 501-c3:

1. Recruit Incorporators and Initial Directors
2. Prepare and File Articles of Incorporation
3. File an initial report
4. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
5. Store Non-Profit Records
6. Get Mass State Tax Identification Numbers/Accounts
7. Apply for 501-c3

Once a 501-c3 has been achieved, the following steps can be taken to achieve tax exemption status, obtain proper fundraising paperwork, and other necessary permits.

1. Apply for State Tax Exemption
2. Register for Fundraising
3. File to obtain other needed Permits

All steps can be viewed in detail at Harbor Compliance's website found in this QR code. This website will provide links to all necessary documentation, but it all can also be found on Massachusetts's Secretary's website under Non-Profit Corporation Forms.

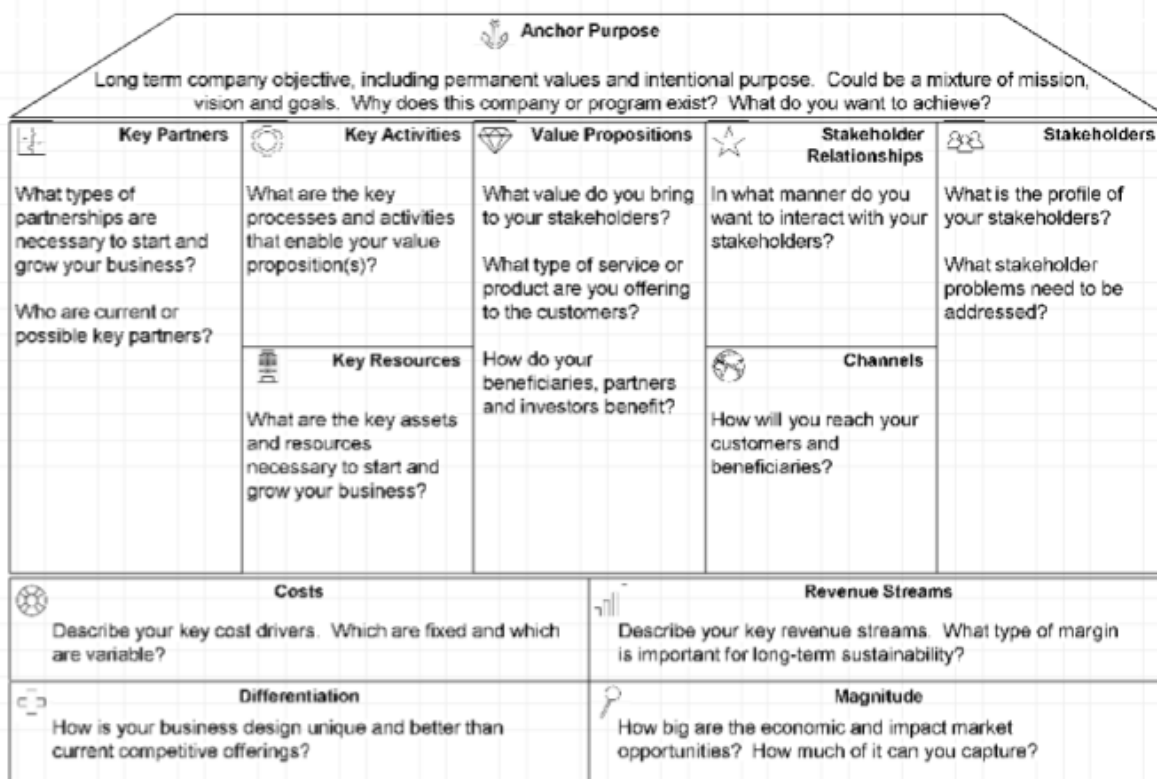


# 3. Envision a Community Center

Envisioning the center is the most critical step as following steps depend on a well thought-out and carefully planned design.

The model below is a Social Blueprint Business Design Framework which is useful in considering a community center.

**The Social Blueprint Business Design Framework Summary**

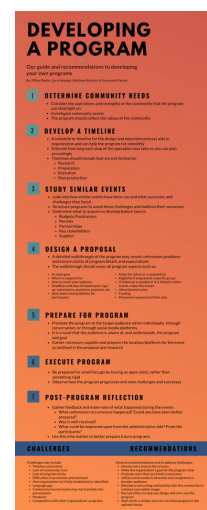


- Anchor Purpose
- Key Partners
- Key Activities
- Key Resources
- Value Proposition
- Stakeholder Relationships
- Channels
- Stakeholders
- Costs
- Revenue Streams
- Differentiation
- Magnitude

# 4. Develop your Programs

Your community center will need programs to provide activities, education, and benefits to your members. Once you have envisioned your center and understand the needs of your community, take these steps to develop a program:

1. Determine Needs for the Community
2. Develop a Timeline
3. Research How to Execute
4. Design A Proposal
5. Prepare for Event
6. Execute Program
7. Post-Production



The *Developing A Program* graphic we have guides you through these steps. The first 5 steps are dedicated to the development of your programs, and steps 6 & 7 are dedicated to the refinement process. Below, we list challenges and recommendations for developing and running programs:

## Challenges

- Time constraints
- Lack of program clarity
- Lack of promotion and outreach
- Community interest levels do not translate into participation
- Scale of project

## Recommendations:

- Set aside time
- Make the program goal and description clear
- Utilize social media to advertise to a broader audience
- Build a connection to the community
- Start small, easy to run programs are optimal

# 5. Managerial Structure

The Managerial structure must fully cover all the center events and activities as well as administrative tasks. The managerial structure is separate from the Board of Directors. The managerial structure covers the day-to-day tasks. We recommend:

- **Director of the Center**
- **Program Leaders**
- **Event Staff**

Along with these dedicated members, other individuals that will be needed for other functions are:

- Website Designer
- Graphic Designer
- Program Creators
- Moderators

Many of these positions can be on a volunteer basis. A paid director would be a dedicated individual leading the center. A website designer would keep the platform in peak condition, and be ready for rapid site repairs.

## 6. Cost Analysis

The cost analysis considers estimated expenses for a community center, the managerial salaries, and determines the start-up and upkeep costs of the center.

- Organizational expenses
- Domain and web design cost
- Day-to-day expenses
- Events/programs
- Salaries

Most costs are under \$1000. The largest cost is employment. We recommend beginning with a heavily volunteer-based structure due to its beneficial value in decreasing costs, and expanding the center's social network. Other associated costs mentioned above include:

- Zoom licensing: \$200 per year just for meeting capabilities
- Domain: \$100 initial, \$20/ year to keep
- Day-to-day expenses (far greater when physical)
- Events/programs, highly variable (can be covered by entrance fees)
- Salaries: graphic designers: \$18 per hour, program leaders: \$40- 60K/ year per person if not volunteer; can reduce if part time and minimum wage (would be less professional)
- A center's director and web designer could cost around \$150,000 total per year

# 7. Soft Launch

A soft launch consists of initial programs and fundraising. The main goals of a soft launch includes:

- **Refining a fundraising strategy**
- **Testing and refining various programs**
- **Assess whether your outreach is successfully building connections**

During a soft launch, an organization begins experimenting and running programs and working to gain feedback on your execution of the community center. Primary sources of feedback to focus on are:

- Participant feedback to the types of programs
- Marketing and PR
- Noting interests of potential sponsors and partnerships

Feedback ensures you are meeting the needs of your members with programs and events. Time can be spent to gain initial funding, and run test events and fundraisers.



## 8. Large-Scale Fundraising

This stage of fundraising is separate from the soft-launch, with the goal of funding a full-scale online community center.

Fundraising can include events within the "soft-launch". Sources for funding include:

- Developing partnerships with local businesses (donation or ad revenue)
- Seeking government funding/grants
- Individual tax-deductible donations
- Private foundation funding/grants

Consider creating a "buffer" emergency fund.

Some Worcester based organizations providing support and grants include:

- The Worcester Cultural Association
- Massachusetts Cultural Council
- Greater Worcester Community Foundation
- The Fred Harris Daniels Foundation

# 9. Develop a Website

Creating a helpful, navigable website is integral to attract visitors and welcome a broader audience to your organization. Your website structure should include the following pages:

- An explanation of your purpose and description of the organization and ways to contact you
- Activities calendar/calendar of events
- Photos, videos, or other visual aids to draw attention
- A public communication platform (e.g. forum)
- A home page for major announcements and short organization goal statement

In addition to the pages, the management and function components of the website are also critical to creating a successful platform. Here are some fundamental technical elements to include:

- An inventory management system to keep track of expenses and revenue
- A search engine optimization (SEO) enabling code that allows visitors to find the website through various public search engines

A successful website is an extension of your organization and serves to build public awareness. It also generates a mutual communication pathway where visitors can offer feedback on the services that your organization provides to benefit the visitors. Lastly, the access to visitor interaction data with your website will provide information about your visitor's involvement and participation.

# 10. Invest in your Future

A physical center could expand upon a strong online presence. You could also remain solely online and expand to a larger area within the state or a network of Albanian community centers to connect people. Consider giving back to the community through philanthropy.

Future endeavors might include:

- Creating a physical space
- Expanding the online center
- Giving back (scholarship programs)

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