

PURPOSE BUILT

IMPACT-BASED DESIGN METHODOLOGY (IDM)

Capital projects often bring lasting benefits to nonprofit organizations and the people they serve. Each project affects an organization's ability to achieve its mission— signaling its values, shaping interaction with its constituents, influencing its work processes and culture, and creating new financial realities. While many projects succeed in fulfilling their purpose, others fall short of their potential. Through a multi-year research study capturing lessons learned from a diverse set of completed projects around the world, MASS Design Group has created the Purpose Built Series— a set of core principles and tools aimed at untangling the often complex and opaque process of building for those considering or conducting capital projects. The series is based on the findings that the best results occur when a project is built with purpose— grounded in a clear and strategic mission that informs design decisions with a scope that matches what its organization can afford to build, operate, and maintain.

This tool, the Impact-based Design Methodology (IDM), is intended to help organizations begin the process of identifying and clarifying the mission of their project. The IDM is a process that allows a broad array of stakeholders to develop a common language which can drive the success of a project. By identifying a shared mission, the project team can maintain their vision as the project becomes more complex. The IDM is a thought-exercise broken into four parts: mission, method, impact, and systemic change. While this tool is laid out with clear steps, this is in fact a non-linear process and it is okay to go back. In fact, it is designed to provoke a dialogue that results in clarity.

Learn more at:
massdesigngroup.org/purposebuilt
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STEP 1: ABOUT YOU

We will start with understanding a bit more about you, your organization, how you achieve your mission, and some of the spaces and places you currently occupy.

a. MISSION

My name and organization:

The mission of my organization is:

b. METHOD

This is how we achieve our mission:

Method 1	Method 2

These are the locations where we do it:

Location for Method 1	Location for Method 2

Method 3	Method 4

Location for Method 3	Location for Method 4

c. SPATIAL NEEDS

My users or organization:

The community or sector I serve:

To help funders and their nonprofit partners make the most of capital projects, MASS Design Group created the *Purpose Built* series in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. The series includes tools and resources and is the result of a multi-faceted, multi-year research study that found the best results occur when a project is built with purpose, balancing mission, design, and feasibility. This poster is built by MASS Design Group for the van Beuren Charitable Foundation as part of the *Purpose Built* toolkit. The IDM exercise was developed referencing language from *DIF: Designing for lasting impact that goes to scale* by the Mulago Foundation. You can find the full series at massdesigngroup.org/purposebuilt

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STEP 2: ABOUT YOUR CAPITAL PROJECT

Next, we want to focus on the potential capital project.

a. PROJECT MISSION

A project mission is a clear, transmissible idea about what you are trying to achieve. What is the big idea for the project? What is the ultimate end goal? Capture it in as few words as possible and be sure to include a verb, a specific target population or setting, and an outcome. Below are some prompts to help you work through it. Remember, the mission is about what you are going to do, not how you are going to do it.

What you're going to do, broken down:

verb

target

outcome

Now make it a sentence!

b. METHOD

If the project mission is the “what,” the project method is the “how.” This is your central, distinctive idea about how to accomplish the mission. You are encouraged to think beyond just what the capital project is—an office, a health center, a school—and articulate the specific ways the design and its implementation can achieve your stated mission.

c. IMPACT

The design of the built environment can create tangible and resonant impacts. It can transform how people live and interact, amplify the work of organizations, and strengthen an organizational culture and mission. Choose a specific outcome or metric through which to measure project success. Identify the best indicators—outcomes, not behaviors—that will let you know that you have been successful.

d. SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Investments in the built environment can also have less tangible but symbolically transformative effects: contributing to dialogues about dignity and equity, creating ripple effects in surrounding communities, and catalyzing changes in broader policies and sectors. Articulate the opportunities for your capital project to create and influence broader systems change.

Now, go back and revisit what you have completed. A few questions to consider:

Does your intended impact match the stated project mission? Will the method allow you to achieve the intended systemic change? Is there anything we should revise or adjust? What did we learn about the different perspectives and goals that each participant has for the project? Do we have consensus around the core mission of the project?