

Request for Proposals
SpaceFinder Alberta Transition Plan
Analysis and Recommendations

Issued: December 2, 2020

Responses Due: January 11, 2021 at 4:00pm MST

RFP Attachment

Criteria: Online Short-Term Space-Matching Platform

Overarching Goals

Why are we supporting this?

1. To support those working in the creative economy (creatives, entrepreneurs, artists) by increasing access to short-term rental spaces which are vital to the work done in this sector.
2. To help citizens live creative lives by connecting them with short-term rental space in their communities.
3. To help arts organizations support their sustainability by renting out their facilities short-term.
4. To help animate and create vibrancy in our communities by connecting short-term users with existing and appropriate physical assets.
5. To help policy makers make better informed decisions by collecting and analyzing data related to the short-term use of spaces.

Why?

- To give people who need to rent short-term spaces easy access to information about these existing spaces in their communities.
- To give facility owners and operators a low-cost way to connect with short-term renters.
- To help animate existing facility assets in our communities; more space is used more often.
- To give policymakers data about existing spaces (supply) and what people are looking for (demand).

Current Problem

- Finding short-term rental space is time-consuming, inefficient and inequitable.
- Finding users for short-term rental space is time-consuming, inefficient and unsustainable.
- Empty and underused spaces can detract from our communities' well-being and sustainability.
- Gathering information about existing short-term rental spaces and the demand for these—including unmet demand—is time-consuming, inefficient and usually out-of-date.

Improve the Current Process and Facilitate a New Process

- Prior to SpaceFinder, the process for finding short-term rental space included web searches or accessing secret closely-guarded lists, and then making many phone calls or sending many emails.
- The process for finding renters is often so onerous and time consuming for facility staff that short-term rental spaces go unused.
- Data collection relied on third party, anecdotal, and self-reporting information.

Vision Statement

- For SpaceFinder Alberta we used: List a Space. Find a Space. For Free.
- Short-term space solutions

Will the platform need to be started from scratch, or can you leverage existing assets?

- Consultants to do analysis and provide recommendations.
- If from scratch, use a word like creative in a new name.
- Emphasis on short-term rentals as the key product here.

What should the platform be able to do? What is the product's core functionality?

- Easily show short-term rental spaces (photos, information).
- Easily add spaces.
- Easily manage back-end.
- Easily promote.

What features will it need?

- Mapping, map zooming.
- Drill down to detailed information.
- Ability to filter, sort by different filters.
- Images and videos of spaces.

User Journeys

- Space seeker (User)
- Facility lister (Facility Admin)
- Data gatherer (Platform Admin)

What is the Monetization or Business Model?

- SpaceFinder had limited monetization through a small percentage of booking fees. Sustained through arts advocacy organizations and government.
- Consultants to do analysis and provide recommendations.
- Possibly non-profit or small-scale arts or entrepreneurs access for free while commercial or for-profit pay a percentage.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- A new on-line short-term rental space-matching tool should be:
- Free for space seekers.
- Free for non-profit charities, collectives, and individual space listers.
- Free for for-profit and businesses? Maybe this is a place for some cost recovery.
- Written in plain language.
- Easily translated by web browsers into many other languages.
- Marketed to include attracting underrepresented equity-seeking space listers and space seekers.
- Include designations such as rainbow or safe space, other languages spoken than English for each space and entry, transit options, ability to smudge, etc.
- Easy to use on a basic device, basic internet connection, includes customizable accessibility options.

Canada-Wide Considerations

- Should be available in French.

Critique of SpaceFinder Platform (2018)

This is a list of ways that the SpaceFinder platform can be improved, provided by space seekers, venue operators, and platform admin.

Ease of Finding Appropriate Space

Goals:

1. Help people come across the tool online.
2. Get people the information they need in a clear and concise way.
3. Encourage visitors to the site to return numerous times.
4. Make it mobile friendly.

Maximize search engine optimization (SEO) to help people find the tool when they search for space online

- Improve SEO by asking listers to include metadata on images (URL, title, caption, ALT text, description).
- Build tools for social media sharing (i.e. Twitter cards, Facebook scraper); facilitate listers to create social media posts of their listing through buttons
- Make it mobile friendly to optimize SEO. 70% of Calgary Arts Development website users view our website from mobile devices. 80% of top sites in Canada are mobile friendly. Our current analytics show only 27% of SFAB users visit using a mobile device; This number must be raised.
- Community pages: Add local partner to the title of the site for better SEO, e.g. Arts Habitat to the Edmonton Community page.

Searching on the site

These recommendations are the most critical from our point of view.

- Increase transparency of search tool. The home page prioritizes spaces according to a hidden logic and remains relatively stationary, **reducing repeat visitors**, and neglecting recently added space listings.
- Allow browsing of all listings at once, rather than 20 at a time, in order to see overview of all spaces.
- Take advantage of map function to improve visual searching by area:
- When zoomed in, all listed spaces should pop up in an area, not just the first page of listings,
- Add "Administration" as permitted use type.
- Allow ability to select multiple "use" categories on the site e.g. meeting AND special event.
- Free space needs to be easier to search:
- When searching under "rates," there is no option for searching for a free space; free space should be included in the rate schedule.
- Searching by date depends on most venues enabling the calendar sync function. If a space doesn't have a calendar to pick dates from, it will not show up in a date specific search, resulting in a search under a specific date coming up with few, if any, results.
- The Saint St St. issue—searching for specific faith-based buildings, or any building with an abbreviated name, depends on the searcher knowing precisely how to spell its name. Currently, when searching for St. Stephen's United Church, the tool has difficulty finding it, if at all.
- The apostrophe issue—people do not know to put an apostrophe in, generally. For e.g. typing in The King's University requires the apostrophe in order to yield results. The search tool should be more predictive or accommodating, because people will expect that.

Ease of Listing a Bookable Space

1. Help people come across the tool online.
 2. Facilitate quickly creating an account.
 3. Emphasize Login button on mobile device for administration of account.
 4. Reduce barriers to creating listing, especially for non-arts organizations who support creatives.
- Remove the mandatory “Discipline” at the first step in organizations listing space.
 - This change reflects the movement away from disciplinary “silos” in Canadian granting agencies. Permitted uses of the specific spaces are defined later in the sign-up process.
 - Necessitating the categorization of organizations produces confusion for operators of spaces who don’t identify with any of the options listed. e.g. Non-arts organizations offering space for creatives.
 - Add “Administration” as permitted use type.
 - Remove “Captcha” or add clear instructions to resolve glitches when they arrive e.g. clear your browser’s cache, remove autofill, and reload the page.
 - Include instructions on how to navigate multiple arts-related fields for non-arts orgs e.g. if you don’t know what the equipment or features are, then they don’t apply to your space.
 - Improve ease of getting help—hyperlink button to the knowledge base.
 - Provide a site map.
 - Include a free tier on rates. Currently the only way to advertise that a space is free is to mention it in the description or find the box to check hidden under “accessibility.”
 - Engagement with listers:
 - Reminders to take space online are good; could this be automated to extend past one email? An unsubscribe button could be included.
 - Include reminders for people to add photos and more information in order to optimize their space listing and attract renters.
 - Add pop up bubbles throughout the listing creation process explaining what features are important to renters, why it is good to sync your calendar or include your square footage, etc.
 - Cohesive design across community pages.

Overall Appearance -- User Interface

Home Page

- Refresh appearance of homepage design taking cues from competitors in online space listing (see end of document for examples).
- Refresh homepage slideshow images when they get stale.

Search Page

- Optimize viewing on both desktop and mobile using responsive design.
- Remove unused space on the right-hand side, as it looks weird on a desktop.
- Create an option to view all, or 50 at a time, etc.

Individual Listing Pages

- Display images more prominently at the top.
- High-resolution photos might be mandatory for new organizations and displayed larger at the top of the space listing.
- Featuring images above-the-fold is more visually compelling (see examples at end of document).

Community Pages

- Add maps on community pages.
- Keep banners looking fresh. e.g. Update Edmonton community banner to stay consistent with others on SpaceFinder Alberta.

Overall Appearance – Administration / Lister Interface

Create an easy way for venues to see what their listing looks like to a potential lister. e.g. Include and emphasize a graphic button that says “View my listing.”

Search Criteria Options

Time of day/night spaces are available

Teaching Space

Storage

Administrative Space:

- Dedicated office space
- Shared desk space
- Large meeting space (7-12 people)
- Small meeting space (2-6 people)

Rehearsal or Experimentation Space:

- Space dimensions
- Washrooms

- Dressing Rooms
- Showers
- Sprung Floor
- Mirrored walls
- Dance bars
- Sound and Lighting (basic)
- Sound and Lighting (advanced)
- Kitchenette
- Prop & Wardrobe Storage
- Production Office
- Parking
- Access to Transit

Presentation Space:

- Number of seats
- Washrooms
- Dressing Rooms
- Showers
- Sprung Floor
- Mirrored walls
- Dance bars
- Sound and Lighting (basic)
- Sound and Lighting (advanced)
- Kitchenette
- Prop & Wardrobe Storage
- Production Office
- Parking
- Access to Transit
- Temporary set storage
- In-house technical staff
- Ability to bring your own technical staff
- Alcohol sales
- Food sales
- Dedicated FOH space
- Stage dimensions
- Wings