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Capital Projects: Keys to Success

Capital project improvements in athletics have accelerated in the last few years even as the construction industry has adapted due to COVID-induced challenges, such as labor and material shortages, an uptick in overall construction demand, and inflation. Each of these factors have impacted the purchasing power of universities and athletics departments. But delaying projects in hopes of hedging future volatility in costs, procurement delays, and labor concerns shouldn't be the answer. Instead, conducting efficient feasibility studies, setting expectations, and effectively managing the project budget should be the approaches that help the athletics finance and facilities community in reaching the strategic goals for their athletics departments.

Feasibility studies, master plans, and strategic visions are critical in any capital project endeavor. More than ever, the need for long-term planning

and the perceived need for a facility should be scrutinized. The financial means to construct a facility and its impact on the individuals, sport, department, or institution should be heavily considered and appropriately estimated. And a favorable feasibility study doesn't always mean construction must be completed but instead provides the framework to make informed decisions on what is necessary versus desired.

Keys to Success: Research similar recently constructed facilities and regional costs; Ask for help from campus, partner architects, contractors, or CABMA/CEFMA colleagues; Prepare for the unexpected, including price inflation and project changes, by budgeting an appropriate construction contingency, design contingency, and escalation contingency.

Setting expectations for the project early on is important, whether during the feasibility study or as the project progresses into the approval and funding process. The programming and design phases of a project can grow a project scope quickly if all constituents aren't on the same page. Create clear goals for schedule, cost limitations, and needs vs. wants.

Keys to Success: Contract with an architect for conceptual designs to assist with the fundraising process; Conduct multiple value engineering

exercises to cut excessive costs and construct more efficiently; Involve as many people as possible in the process so critical infrastructure or uses don't fall through the cracks.

Managing the project budget at every step is likely the most important requirement for any facility or business manager. Early estimates from third-party estimators or partner contractors will set the project in the right direction, but additional estimates throughout the design process from both the general contractor and architect/third-party estimator are important to maintain a firm grip on the budget. Tracking expenditures, contractual obligations, and weekly/monthly updates should be required.

Keys to Success: Furniture, fixtures, and equipment can range from 5-15 percent of the total project budget - plan early for those with end users; Contractors typically carry 3-5 percent of contingency of the total construction cost and the project budget should carry an additional 3-5 percent of the total project budget, but don't forget to carry design contingency for changes made throughout the design process.

Sports Architecture, Planning + Design

designing **unforgettable experiences** for fans & student-athletes.

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