



YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth

STARTING A YMCA



Dear Community Leader,

Thank you for your interest in bringing the YMCA to your community. For more than 175 years, the YMCA has been a trusted partner in building healthier families, developing strong kids, and strengthening neighborhoods across America. Here in Fort Worth, we are part of that legacy and committed to expanding its reach.

We know that communities like yours are eager for a YMCA presence. Parents want safe and affordable childcare. Teens need a place to belong and grow. Families want access to health and wellness. Seniors need connection. These needs are urgent, and the YMCA is uniquely positioned to meet them.

This handbook is designed to guide you through the process of starting a YMCA. Whether through a grassroots approach — raising \$250,000 to hire a local Executive Director and launch programs — or through a long-term capital campaign to build a facility, the path always begins with leaders like you.

The YMCA does not arrive as an outside organization; it is built from the ground up, by communities, for communities. Our role as your YMCA partner is to walk with you every step of the way — from vision to planning, from fundraising to facility development, from grand opening to sustainable operations.

I invite you to dream boldly about what the YMCA could mean for your community. Together, we can create a movement of belonging, opportunity, and health that will benefit generations to come.

Thank you for considering this partnership. We look forward to working with you as we take the next step in strengthening community through the YMCA.

Table of Contents

Section 1 – The YMCA Difference

Section 2 – The Role of Local Leaders

Section 3 – Why Your Community Needs a YMCA

Section 4 – Pathways to Launching a YMCA

Section 5 – The Step-by-Step YMCA Development Process

Section 6 – Funding & Philanthropy

Section 7 – Case Studies & Examples

Section 8 – Next Steps for Your Community



Section 1

The YMCA Difference

Our Mission and Cause

The YMCA exists to put Christian principles into practice through programs, services, and relationships that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. This mission has remained unchanged for more than 175 years, and yet it is as relevant today as ever.

The YMCA is more than a gym, a childcare provider, or a swimming pool. It is a trusted movement that strengthens the foundations of community. Every YMCA operates as a locally driven, nonprofit organization that reflects the needs of the people it serves while standing on the shoulders of a national and global network.

We believe:

- Lasting change happens locally. No one knows a community's needs better than the people who live there.
- Every person has potential. Our role is to nurture that potential at every stage of life.
- Strong communities don't just happen. They are built when people come together, invest in one another, and share responsibility for the common good.

Our Values

Every YMCA is built on four core values that are embedded into every program, every decision, and every relationship:

- **Caring** – Demonstrating genuine concern and compassion for the well-being of others.
- **Honesty** – Being truthful, trustworthy, and adhering to strong moral principles.
- **Respect** – Treating others with dignity and valuing every individual's worth.
- **Responsibility** – Acting ethically, accepting accountability, and fulfilling one's commitments.

These values aren't slogans. They are the glue that unites thousands of volunteers, staff, and community members into one movement of service.

The YMCA Today

- **2,600+ YMCAs** serve more than **10,000 communities** across the United States.
- Collectively, Ys impact **20 million people annually**, from infants in early learning centers to seniors staying active and connected.
- The YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth is part of this movement, with a bold **Vision 2030**: Doubling reach. Deepening trust. Transforming communities through bold investment, strategic partnerships, and measurable impact.

More than half of YMCA facilities across the country are over 50 years old. This means new communities — like yours — have the opportunity to design facilities and programs that are **modern, inclusive, and responsive to today's needs**.

Impact Areas

Youth Development

- Early learning centers that prepare children for kindergarten success.
- Afterschool programs that keep kids safe, engaged, and learning.
- Teen leadership and mentorship that builds confidence and character.
- Summer camps that give every child a chance to grow, play, and explore.

Healthy Living

- Wellness centers that fight chronic disease and promote healthy habits.
- Aquatics programs that teach water safety, prevent drowning, and build lifelong swimmers.
- Group exercise and mental health initiatives that reduce isolation and stress.

Social Responsibility

- Feeding programs that fight food insecurity.
- Community partnerships with schools, hospitals, and city agencies.
- Financial assistance programs ensuring no one is turned away for inability to pay.

Why Communities Choose the Y

The YMCA is not a “nice-to-have.” In communities where Ys thrive, they are **anchors**:

- When families struggle with childcare, the Y steps in.
- When seniors need community, the Y provides it.
- When teens need safe spaces, the Y opens its doors.
- When cities look for trusted partners, the Y raises its hand.

That is why so many community leaders, parents, and local organizations advocate for a YMCA presence where none exists today. It is not just about programs. It is about building a movement of belonging, trust, and opportunity for all.



Section 2

The Role of Local Leaders

Why Leadership Matters

Every YMCA begins with a spark. A group of community leaders who see unmet needs and decide to take action. Before there is land, before there is a building, before the first child walks into a program, there are leaders who believe their community deserves a YMCA.

Starting a YMCA is not just about raising dollars — it is about raising leaders. A new YMCA takes root when respected people in business, education, government, faith, and neighborhoods come together around a shared goal: to strengthen community through the Y's mission and values.

These leaders:

- Lend **credibility** to the effort.
- Build **trust** with residents, donors, and partners.
- Provide **influence** that opens doors in business, government, and philanthropy.
- Inspire others to see that a YMCA is not just possible — it is necessary.

Who Needs to Be at the Table

Launching a YMCA is a community-wide project. The most successful efforts engage a cross-section of leadership voices:

- **Business Leaders & Employers** – to provide financial backing, connect to corporate philanthropy, and support employee wellness initiatives.
- **City & County Officials** – to offer land, explore bond opportunities, and align with public health and recreation goals.
- **School District Partners** – to expand afterschool care, youth sports, and shared facility use.
- **Faith Leaders** – to amplify the Y's Christian mission and connect families in need.
- **Philanthropists & Foundations** – to serve as anchor donors and early investors.
- **Healthcare Providers** – to collaborate on wellness, chronic disease prevention, and mental health initiatives.
- **Parents, Teachers, & Youth Voices** – to ensure the YMCA reflects the lived needs of the community it serves.

Together, this group becomes a Steering Committee, guiding the early phases of readiness, needs assessment, and fundraising.

The Role of the YMCA Board & Volunteers

The YMCA movement has always been fueled by volunteer leadership. A local YMCA board — made up of influential and committed individuals — is a critical factor in long-term success.

Board members:

- Contribute significant **personal gifts** to set the pace for philanthropy.
- Provide **access to networks** of other community leaders and donors.
- Offer **time and expertise** in governance, fundraising, and community engagement.
- Serve as **public advocates** for why the YMCA matters.

Successful YMCAs have boards that reflect the **diversity of their communities** and bring together voices from across economic, cultural, and geographic lines.

Community Partnerships as a Cornerstone

No YMCA is built alone. Partnerships make the difference between good intentions and sustainable success. Across the country, Ys have grown stronger by linking arms with schools, hospitals, cities, and nonprofits:

- In **Fort Worth**, partnerships with school districts and municipalities have provided land and shared facilities for branches.
- Nationwide, YMCAs work with **city governments** to revitalize neighborhoods, with **school systems** to expand before- and after-school programs, and with **healthcare providers** to address public health challenges.
- Partnerships multiply impact. They allow limited resources to stretch further and ensure that a YMCA is seen not as a competitor but as a collaborator — a community anchor.

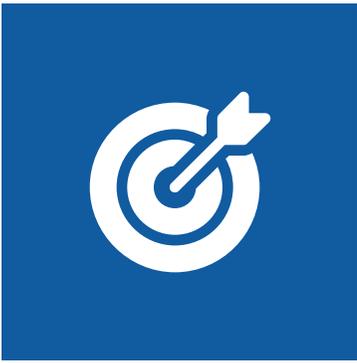
Leaders as Visionaries

Local leaders don't just solve today's needs. They ask: What does our community need ten years from now?

When leaders come together around a YMCA project, they are choosing to invest in:

- A place where children will learn to swim and stay safe.
- A hub where seniors will find friendship and health.
- A resource for families who need affordable childcare.
- A movement that will outlast their own leadership and benefit generations to come.

It is the leaders — not the building — who first establish the YMCA's presence. The building only comes later, as a tool to expand that mission.



Section 3

Why Your Community Needs a YMCA

Listening First: The Community Needs Assessment

Before a YMCA is built, the most important step is to listen to the community. Every YMCA begins by asking, What are the greatest needs here, and how can the Y help?

A Community Needs Assessment is the tool used to uncover those answers. It includes:

- Surveys of parents, teachers, businesses, and residents.
- Focus groups and discussion forums with youth, seniors, families, and civic leaders.
- Stakeholder interviews with school districts, hospitals, government officials, and local nonprofits.

The goal is to cast a wide net, reaching hundreds of voices to confirm the top priorities. A YMCA only succeeds if it responds directly to the needs of its community.

Common Needs Across Communities

While every city and town is unique, across the country YMCAs most often respond to five critical issues:

1. Affordable Childcare and Early Learning

Working parents need safe, reliable, and affordable childcare. In many communities, childcare costs outpace housing costs. The Y steps in with:

- Licensed early learning centers.
- Preschool readiness programs.
- Affordable childcare for working families.

2. Safe Spaces for Teens

Today's teens face more pressures than ever — mental health, social media, academic stress, and safety concerns. Communities consistently ask for:

- After-school teen programs.
- Leadership development and mentoring.
- Spaces that are safe, supervised, and welcoming.

3. Water Safety and Drowning Prevention

Drowning remains the second-leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 1–14 in the U.S. (CDC). Many families have no access to safe swim lessons. The Y has been America's leading swim instructor for over 100 years, ensuring every child learns how to be safe around water.

4. Health and Wellness for All

Chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity strain families and healthcare systems. Many communities lack accessible wellness programs. The YMCA provides:

- Affordable fitness and health coaching.
- Evidence-based chronic disease prevention programs.
- Group exercise, aquatics, and mental wellness initiatives.

5. Food Insecurity and Social Support

Millions of children and families struggle with hunger. Ys respond with:

- Free summer meals and after-school snacks.
- Food pantries and distribution partnerships.
- Family events that reduce isolation and build community connections.

Making the Case for a YMCA

A YMCA is not built because a community “wants a gym.” It is built because:

- **Children need care and opportunities.**
- **Families need support.**
- **Teens need safe places.**
- **Seniors need connection.**
- **Everyone needs a place where they belong.**

The YMCA's unique strength is its comprehensive model — it is not a single-issue nonprofit. The Y addresses multiple community needs under one roof, weaving youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility into a single mission-driven movement.

Evidence of Community Impact

Ys across the nation demonstrate measurable results:

- In **Northwest Fort Worth**, a new YMCA project is projected to serve more than **27,000 people**, including **10,500 children and teens**, through education, mentoring, food security, and water safety programs.
- In **Eastside Fort Worth**, revitalization plans focused on meeting deficits in child care, afterschool, and teen programming, showing how Ys adapt facilities to directly meet needs.
- These examples prove that when a YMCA enters a community, it doesn't just fill gaps — **it transforms lives.**

The Risk of Not Acting

Communities without a YMCA often face:

- Higher rates of child drownings.
- Longer childcare waitlists and unaffordable costs.
- More disconnected teens without structured mentorship.
- Rising health disparities and chronic illness.
- Greater social isolation for seniors and families.

In short: the cost of inaction is too high. A YMCA is not an expense — it is an **investment in healthier families, stronger kids, and a more connected community.**



Section 4

Pathways to Launching a YMCA

Not every community begins its YMCA journey the same way. Some start small, with a local leader and a few programs. Others launch big, backed by land donations or major capital gifts. Both paths are valid — and both can lead to a thriving YMCA.

The important thing is to choose a pathway that matches your community’s readiness, resources, and urgency.

Option A – Grassroots Launch (Seed Fund: \$250,000)

This is the **entry-level pathway** for communities ready to start building a YMCA presence today.

HOW IT WORKS

- Raise **\$250,000** in seed funding to cover two years of operations.
- Hire a **local Executive Director**, a trusted face who represents the YMCA in the community.
- Begin **small-scale programming** to meet immediate needs:
 - Youth sports leagues.
 - Afterschool programs.
 - Day camps and family events.
 - Wellness classes in schools, churches, or city facilities.

PURPOSE

- Establish a **YMCA presence and credibility** in the community.
- Build relationships with families, schools, city officials, and businesses.
- Demonstrate the **impact of YMCA programs** before investing in a permanent facility.

TIMELINE

- **Months 1–6:** Hire Executive Director, launch first programs.
- **Year 1:** Build partnerships, gather data, and increase visibility.
- **Year 2:** Prepare for facility planning and potential capital campaign.

Option B – Capital Development (Facility Approach)

For communities with immediate momentum, access to land, or strong donor interest, a **facility-first approach** may be possible.

HOW IT WORKS

- Identify a site (donated land, city property, school partnership).
- Conduct feasibility and scope definition studies.
- Develop a **capital campaign** to raise funds for land, construction, and program sustainability.
- Design and build a YMCA branch, typically **\$10M–\$30M+** depending on scope.

PURPOSE

- Deliver a **permanent, full-service YMCA facility** quickly.
- Anchor the community with wellness, aquatics, childcare, and multi-generational spaces.
- Demonstrate large-scale commitment and long-term sustainability.

TIMELINE

- **Year 1:** Feasibility, scope definition, donor cultivation.
- **Years 2–3:** Capital campaign fundraising (3–5 years typical for full campaign).
- **Years 3–5:** Facility construction and start-up.

Option C – Hybrid Pathway

This approach combines the **speed of grassroots** with the **stability of capital development**.

HOW IT WORKS

- Begin with a **\$250,000 grassroots presence** to fund a local Executive Director and programs.
- Use grassroots work to **prove demand, collect stories, and build relationships**.
- As trust grows, launch a **capital campaign** to secure land, facilities, and long-term sustainability.

PURPOSE

- Reduces risk by testing program models before investing in facilities.
- Builds donor and community confidence through visible impact.
- Provides a smoother transition from “We want a Y” to “We are building a Y.”

TIMELINE

- **Year 1–2:** Grassroots programming and relationship building.
- **Year 2–3:** Launch feasibility and capital campaign planning.
- **Years 3–5:** Begin facility construction while sustaining grassroots programs.

Examples of Pathways in Action

- **Northwest Fort Worth YMCA (Capital Development):** A \$30M project built in partnership with Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD, with both public bond support and philanthropy. The project will serve **27,525 members**, including **10,500 children and teens**.
- **Eastside YMCA Revitalization (Hybrid):** Facing deficits, leaders developed multiple options: sell property, revitalize facility, or partner with a local school. Community engagement and partnerships drove decisions.
- **National Grassroots Examples:** Many YMCAs began with a single staff member, borrowed church basements or school gyms, and small programs — eventually growing into multi-million-dollar branches once demand was proven and donor trust was secured.

Choosing the Right Path

Ask your community three key questions:

1. **Do we have influential leaders willing to champion this effort today?**
2. **Is land, a building, or a major gift already available to us?**
3. **How quickly do we need to see YMCA programs in place?**

The answers will determine whether your community should begin with a grassroots, capital, or hybrid approach.

No matter the path, the YMCA provides expertise, planning tools, and a proven process to ensure your community's investment is sustainable for generations to come.



Section 5

The Step-by-Step YMCA Development Process

Launching a YMCA is not a single event. It is a process. Every successful YMCA project follows a **roadmap** that moves from vision to reality in deliberate stages. This ensures that a YMCA is not only built, but built to last.

The process typically unfolds in **11 stages**, which can take anywhere from 3 to 7+ years depending on scope, resources, and community readiness.

Stage 1 – Readiness & Education

- **Purpose:** Ensure that community leaders and YMCA partners understand what it takes to launch a Y.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Review the **10 prerequisites** for a successful capital development project (influential board, strong CEO, committed volunteers, clear mission, financial capacity, etc.).
 - Educate leaders on the capital planning process and time frames.
 - Make an early **go/no-go decision** about readiness to proceed.
- **Lesson:** Insufficient planning leads to costly mistakes later.

Stage 2 – Capital Campaign Readiness

- **Purpose:** Build the foundation for future fundraising.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Form a **Campaign Preparation Committee** of 5–7 influential leaders.
 - Identify prospective major donors and cultivate relationships.
 - Review campaign strategy, set preliminary goals, and prepare a draft **Case for Support**.
- **Lesson:** 90–95% of campaign dollars come from 5–10% of donors. Those relationships must be cultivated early.

Stage 3 – Community Needs & Research

- **Purpose:** Confirm what the community needs and expects from the YMCA.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Conduct a **Community Needs Assessment** with surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
 - Host a **Community Leaders Forum** to build buy-in.
 - Explore **partnership opportunities** with schools, healthcare, cities, and nonprofits.
- **Lesson:** The YMCA must reflect local needs, not just national models.

Stage 4 – Project Scope Definition

- **Purpose:** Define what the YMCA will offer and what size/facility is required.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Create a Program & Services Portfolio that links community needs to YMCA program offerings.
 - Translate programs into facility requirements (aquatics, wellness, childcare, multipurpose, etc.).
 - Draft an **Initial Project Budget**.
- **Lesson:** “When you’ve seen one Y, you’ve seen one Y.” Each YMCA is unique to its community.

Stage 5 – Project Funding Readiness

- **Purpose:** Secure early donor confidence and prove financial feasibility.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Finalize a compelling **Case for Support** that paints a vision, not just a need.
 - Identify top donor prospects and develop a **gift chart** with levels of giving.
 - Develop **operating and capital pro forma budgets** to demonstrate sustainability.
 - Conduct a **Campaign Goal Feasibility and Planning Study** with community leaders.
- **Lesson:** Donors give to bold visions backed by strong financial plans.

Stage 6 – Facility Development

- **Purpose:** Turn concepts into visuals that inspire.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Commission a **Facility Committee** of 5–7 members.
 - Select potential sites, conduct due diligence, and evaluate costs.
 - Work with architects on schematic designs and renderings.
 - Create a **Revised Project Cost Estimate** based on designs.
- **Lesson:** Renderings and visuals bring the dream to life for donors.

Stage 7 – Capital Campaign Preparation

- **Purpose:** Organize leadership and prepare for major fundraising.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Hire or contract **Capital Campaign Counsel** (professional fundraising support).
 - Form a **Capital Campaign Committee** of top leaders.
 - Develop marketing strategies, case statements, pledge forms, and donor materials.
 - Create a communication plan for prospects and stakeholders.
- **Lesson:** Campaign preparation is the difference between stalled projects and funded projects.

Stage 8 – Capital Campaign & Financing

- **Purpose:** Secure the dollars to make the project happen.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Quiet phase: secure 60–70% of gifts from major donors and partners.
 - Public phase: launch once 90–95% of dollars are pledged.
 - Offer **naming rights and sponsorship opportunities**.
 - Refine pro formas as dollars are secured.
- **Lesson:** A capital campaign is a marathon Three to five years is typical.

Stage 9 – Facility Design & Construction

- **Purpose:** Build the YMCA facility.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Select architects, engineers, and construction managers.
 - Refine schematic designs into construction documents.
 - Bid packages, contracts, and groundbreaking ceremony.
 - Oversee construction and budget.
- **Lesson:** Experienced YMCA architects and contractors matter — they understand unique needs like aquatics and multipurpose spaces.

Stage 10 – Operational Start-Up

- **Purpose:** Prepare for opening day and long-term sustainability.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Form a **Transition Committee** to guide marketing, membership, and staffing.
 - Recruit and train staff 6–9 months before opening.
 - Begin charter member enrollment 6 months out.
 - Plan a **grand opening celebration**.
- **Lesson:** Success on Day 1 is the result of 12+ months of preparation.

Stage 11 – Project Stewardship

- **Purpose:** Sustain momentum after opening.
- **Key Actions:**
 - Steward donors with gratitude, reports, and recognition.
 - Collect pledges and ensure full campaign closure.
 - Grow the annual campaign to support scholarships and access.
 - Launch preventive maintenance and financial accountability systems.
- **Lesson:** Stewardship is not the end. It is the beginning of sustaining the YMCA for generations.

Putting It All Together

The YMCA Development Process is **intentional and proven**:

1. **Listen** to the community.
2. **Engage** leaders and partners.
3. **Plan** with vision and financial discipline.
4. **Raise** funds through relationships and philanthropy.
5. **Build** facilities that match programs.
6. **Sustain** through stewardship, annual campaigns, and partnerships.

When followed faithfully, this process turns a dream into a **movement of lasting impact**.



Section 6

Funding & Philanthropy

Launching a YMCA is as much about building a culture of generosity as it is about raising dollars. Communities that succeed do so because people believe in the cause, invest in the vision, and take ownership of their YMCA.

Philanthropy for a YMCA project is never one-dimensional. The most successful efforts are **comprehensive campaigns**, blending grassroots giving, major gifts, government investment, grants, in-kind support, and long-term endowment.

1. Seed Funding – The Grassroots Launch

The \$250,000 Startup Fund

- Covers two years of operations for a local Executive Director.
- Allows the YMCA to start programs immediately — afterschool care, youth sports, day camps, family events.
- Demonstrates visible progress while capital dollars are being raised.

Why It Matters:

Seed funds create momentum. They tell the community: “The Y is here now.” Even without a building, the Y begins to build trust and show impact.

2. Capital Campaigns – Building the Facility

Most YMCA branches cost between **\$10M–\$30M+** depending on size, amenities, and land costs.

Key Realities of YMCA Campaigns:

- **90–95% of campaign funds come from 5–10% of donors.**
- Major donors often give in proportion to the goal — bold visions attract bold gifts.
- Campaigns typically last **3–5 years** from planning to public launch.
- Most Ys wait until **90–95% of dollars are pledged** before announcing publicly.

Sample Gift Chart (for a \$10M campaign):

- 1 gift of \$2,500,000
- 2 gifts of \$1,000,000
- 4 gifts of \$500,000
- 10 gifts of \$250,000
- 20 gifts of \$100,000
- 40 gifts of \$50,000
- 200+ gifts under \$25,000

Naming Rights Opportunities:

- Facility Naming (\$5M)
- Aquatics Center (\$1M)
- Child Development Center (\$1.5M)
- Community Kitchen (\$100K)
- Locker Rooms (\$50K each)
- Bricks/Pavers (\$1,000 each)

Naming rights honor donors and create visible reminders of their investment in community well-being.

3. Comprehensive Campaigns – Beyond the Building

The strongest YMCA campaigns raise more than construction dollars. They integrate:

- **Capital Funds** – for land, facility construction, and major renovations.
- **Annual Campaign** – for scholarships and financial assistance to ensure access for all.
- **Endowment** – to sustain programs, fund future deficits, and secure the YMCA's legacy.
- **Government Funding** – city or school bonds, ARPA funds, county appropriations, or federal grants.
- **Foundations & Corporate Support** – investments tied to education, health, and equity.
- **In-Kind Gifts** – donated land, construction services, equipment, or technology.

A comprehensive approach spreads risk, maximizes impact, and ensures sustainability.

4. Creative Funding Sources

Communities have successfully leveraged:

- **School District Bonds:** Partnering with ISDs to co-build gyms, pools, or childcare centers.
- **City Bonds:** Cities often support Ys because they provide recreation, health, and social services.
- **ARPA & Federal Funds:** Pandemic relief and federal appropriations have funded dozens of Ys nationwide.
- **Land Donations:** Churches, hospitals, cities, and developers often provide land as their contribution.
- **Public/Private Partnerships:** Collaborations where costs are shared, but benefits multiply.

5. Stewardship & Trust

Fundraising is not just about dollars raised — it is about **relationships sustained**. Donors give once because they believe in the project. They give again because they trust the YMCA to deliver on its promises.

Keys to donor trust:

- Transparent financial reporting.
- Regular updates on construction and program milestones.
- Visible recognition of donor impact.
- A culture of gratitude that continues well beyond the campaign.

6. The Return on Investment

Philanthropy in a YMCA is charity, but an **investment in measurable community outcomes**:

- Every **\$1 donated** to a YMCA generates **\$3–\$5 in community benefit** through scholarships, services, and public health impact.
- Facility investments create **jobs, partnerships, and economic activity**.
- Long-term, a YMCA presence increases community health, lowers public costs, and strengthens families.

The Bottom Line

Philanthropy is the fuel, but the YMCA is the engine. When communities invest in a YMCA, they are not just building a building — they are **building hope, opportunity, and belonging** for generations.



Section 7

Case Studies & Examples

Every YMCA project looks different because every community is different. But across Fort Worth and the nation, one truth stands out: the **YMCA model works**. Communities that commit to a YMCA see transformation in youth, families, health, and overall quality of life.

Below are examples that illustrate how the different pathways — grassroots, capital, and hybrid — have been successfully implemented.

Local Examples – Fort Worth YMCA Projects

Northwest YMCA (Capital Development Pathway)

- **Project Investment:** \$30 million
- **Partnership:** Built in collaboration with Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD, blending school bond dollars, public funding, and philanthropy.
- **Impact:** Designed to serve 27,525 members with a focus on 10,500 children and teens.
- **Features:**
 - Indoor and outdoor pools.
 - A large gymnasium and indoor track.
 - Child development center, teen and senior spaces.
 - Outdoor play areas, trails, and fitness stations.
 - Leverages an existing Y structure and land.
- **Lesson Learned: A bold vision with strong school and city partnerships can accelerate a full-scale YMCA branch.**

Eastside YMCA (Hybrid Revitalization Pathway)

- **Challenge:** The Eastside branch had operated with an average deficit of \$225,000 per year.
- **Options Considered:**
 - a. Sell the property for \$1.6–\$1.8M.
 - b. Revitalize the facility with a \$2.8M renovation (new lobby, multipurpose rooms, ADA compliance, pool updates).
 - c. Partner with IDEA School and FWISD to share space and expand programs.
- **Lesson Learned:** When faced with sustainability challenges, Ys adapt by exploring partnerships, phased renovations, or reimagined program centers rather than giving up presence in a community.

National YMCA Models

Grassroots-to-Growth Example

Many small and mid-size communities begin with **seed funding** for a single staff leader. In these cases:

- The community raises **\$250,000** to hire a local Executive Director.
- Programs start in schools, churches, and borrowed spaces.
- Within 2–3 years, grassroots success demonstrates demand, building the case for a larger capital campaign.
- Result: Communities eventually fund facilities worth **\$10M–\$20M**, but only after proving trust and demand.

YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities (Minnesota)

- **Challenge:** Aging facilities with declining membership.
- **Approach:** Invested in new modernized facilities with flexible community spaces, aquatics, and youth development centers.
- **Result:** Membership surged by nearly 50% post-renovation.
- **Lesson:** Facility modernity directly correlates with engagement, revenue, and sustainability.

Whatcom Family YMCA (Bellingham, WA)

- **Approach:** Partnered with city government and school district to address youth recreation and afterschool care.
- **Result:** A new facility that doubled participation and provided shared spaces for teens, seniors, and families.
- **Lesson:** Multi-sector partnerships (school + city + nonprofit) multiply resources and reduce duplication.

YMCA of Greater Charlotte (North Carolina)

- **Approach:** Used a hybrid campaign model — starting with a modest renovation and expansion, while simultaneously building program presence in underserved neighborhoods.
- **Result:** Grew into one of the largest YMCA associations in the U.S., with facilities and outreach programs woven into the fabric of the city.
- **Lesson:** Sometimes the smartest path is “both/and”, investing in facilities while expanding outreach programs outside the walls.

What These Case Studies Teach Us

1. **There is no one-size-fits-all model.** Each YMCA reflects its community.
2. **Partnerships are key.** The strongest Ys leverage schools, hospitals, and cities.
3. **Grassroots credibility matters.** Programs must come first, facilities second.
4. **Capital investment is transformative.** Modern facilities drive membership, revenue, and sustainability.
5. **Flexibility ensures resilience.** Communities that adapt — through hybrid approaches — sustain YMCA presence even in tough times.



Section 8

Next Steps for Your Community

Starting a YMCA is a bold step, but it is also an achievable one. Communities across the country have proven that with the right leadership, planning, and partnerships, a YMCA can move from dream to reality.

This section provides a **clear action roadmap** for leaders who are ready to take the next step.

1. Form a Steering Committee

- Gather **10–15 respected community leaders** representing schools, business, healthcare, faith, government, and philanthropy.
- Charge them with serving as the **guiding coalition** for the YMCA project.
- This group becomes the **public face** of the effort, lending credibility and influence.

Tip: Ensure diversity of voices including parents, youth, and grassroots leaders to build trust and inclusivity from the start.

2. Commit to a Community Needs Study

- Conduct a **Community Needs Assessment** through surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
- Identify the top three to five needs the YMCA could uniquely address (e.g., childcare, youth development, aquatics, health, food insecurity).
- Share findings publicly to demonstrate transparency and build momentum.

Tip: This is not just data collection, it is also **relationship-building**. Every conversation expands the circle of champions.

3. Secure Early Funding

- **Grassroots Option:** Raise \$250,000 to hire a local Executive Director and fund two years of startup operations.
- **Capital Option:** Begin identifying major donors, foundations, or city/school bond opportunities for facility investment.
- **Hybrid Option:** Do both — seed operations while laying groundwork for a capital campaign.

Tip: Early donors should be treated as founding investors, honored for believing in the YMCA before anyone else.

4. Partner with Schools, Cities, and Nonprofits

- Explore land or building donations from cities, developers, or school districts.
- Discuss shared-use agreements for gyms, pools, or classrooms.
- Seek public funding opportunities through city/county bonds or federal appropriations.

Tip: Partnerships reduce costs, increase reach, and demonstrate broad-based support.

5. Launch a Case for Support

- Develop a compelling **Case for Support** that answers:
 - Why does our community need a YMCA?
 - What programs will we offer?
 - Who will benefit?
 - How can donors and partners make a difference?
- Share stories of families, youth, and seniors who would benefit from a YMCA presence.
- Use renderings or conceptual facility designs (even simple visuals) to inspire donors.

6. Build Toward the Campaign

- Prepare for a **Capital Campaign** by engaging top donor prospects and building relationships 12–18 months before making asks.
- Set **phased goals**: seed funding > campaign readiness > capital campaign > construction > operational launch.
- Remember: capital campaigns succeed when donors see strong **leadership, transparency, and urgency**.

7. Take the Long View

- Recognize that building a YMCA is a **multi-year journey**.
- Celebrate small wins along the way: program launches, partnerships secured, land donated, or milestone gifts announced.
- Maintain a posture of **patience and persistence**. Building trust takes time, but once established, it lasts for generations.

8. Connect with the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth

Our team is here to walk with you. From grassroots efforts to full-scale branches, we provide:

- Expertise in YMCA facility planning, fundraising, and operations.
- Guidance through the **11-stage development process**.
- Connection to national resources and peer YMCA examples.

Contact:

Communications@ymcafw.org
YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth



The next step is simple but profound: bring people together. Form the committee. Start the conversation. Invite your neighbors to imagine what a YMCA could mean for your community.

Because in the end, the YMCA is not just a building. It is a promise — a promise to strengthen community, nurture children, improve health, and ensure everyone has a place to belong. And that promise starts with you.