Describing customers' needs for federal coworking

What is the GSA priority?

The General Services Administration (GSA) launched Workplace 2030 (WP2030) to lead and support the federal government through developing the future of work. GSA develops and deploys customer-driven solutions to enable agencies to align people, processes, and tools. It is important to assess initial demand for these solutions to support strategic decision-making for future investments. Examining demand for potential WP2030 offerings also allows us to make progress in addressing GSA's Learning Agenda priority question: What technologies and solutions does the federal workforce need to additionally improve effectiveness in a more responsive remote work setting?

What did we evaluate?

Federal coworking, a WP2030 offering, aims to provide federal agencies with a shared, flexible federal work environment in multiple GSA owned locations throughout the country. Federal Coworking has three phases of implementation: pre-agile, agile, and developmental. We partnered with the Public Buildings Service (PBS) program team during the pre-agile phase to assess customers' needs related to federal coworking and refine the potential offering.

How did the evaluation work?

The sample for this descriptive, mixed-methods study was PBS "high opportunity customers" (i.e., high-level

decision makers for customer agencies). A total of 53 customers were invited to attend the WP2030 event in December 2022, 35 of whom (representing 17 agencies) attended. We administered a survey to 35 high-level customers to assess necessary features of coworking and initial demand; 30 completed at least one question of the survey. We used measures of frequency to describe how many employees selected a given survey response. We also developed a protocol to guide conversation and led qualitative data collection throughout the facilitated discussion around federal coworking. We analyzed conversation notes and open-ended survey responses to identify common themes.
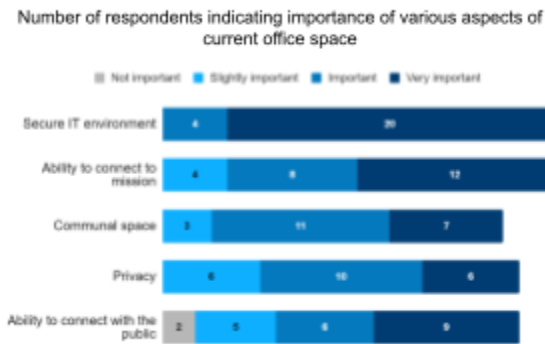
The customers who completed the survey are not representative of all PBS customers. The group does not include customers from all federal agencies and includes customers who were motivated enough to attend the event. Results should be used to provide an early signal of interest in the federal coworking offering, but more data is needed to confirm the extent to which these opinions are shared more generally.

What did we learn?

Customers reported the importance of a secure and dependable IT environment in a federal coworking solution. Figure 1 shows that all respondents rated a secure IT environment as a very important or important feature of their current office space. Similarly, during the facilitated

conversation customers noted that secure, reliable, and consistent wifi is the most important IT feature at a potential federal coworking site.

Figure 1. *Most customer respondents require a secure IT environment*

Number of respondents indicating importance of various aspects of current office space

Not important Slightly important Important Very important

Secure IT environment	4	20
Ability to connect to mission	4	8	12
Communal space	3	11	7
Privacy	6	10	6
Ability to connect with the public	2	5	6	9

Customers value the flexibility of federal coworking. Of the 30 customers, 20 responded to an open-ended survey question about the most important aspect of a potential coworking environment.[1]

> "Provide flexibility, allowing the employee the ability to choose the type of space(s) they need/desire throughout the day"

Most noted that flexibility was the most important aspect of the environment and they envisioned flexible layouts as being the most in demand layouts.
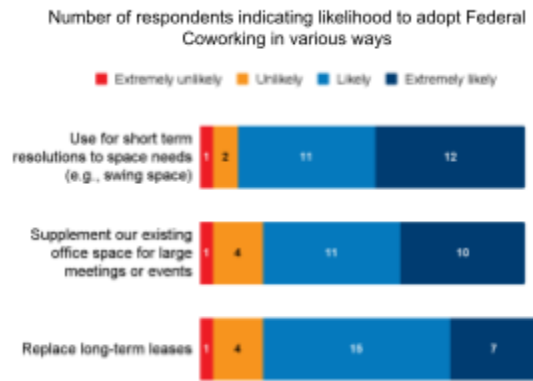
Customers reported they were highly likely to adopt federal coworking in some manner. Customers were concerned or extremely concerned with under-utilized office space (100.0%), attracting, retaining and training talent (95.5%), and an unknown future (92.0%) in relation to their agency's strategic operations and portfolio planning.

Figure 2 shows that most customers reported they were likely or extremely likely to use federal coworking as a short-term

solution to space needs (92.0%), to supplement existing office space (84.0%), and to replace long term leases (84.6%).

Figure 2. *Most customer respondents likely to adopt federal coworking in some manner*

Number of respondents indicating likelihood to adopt Federal Coworking in various ways

Extremely unlikely Unlikely Likely Extremely likely

Use for short term resolutions to space needs (e.g., swing space)	1	2	11	12
Supplement our existing office space for large meetings or events	1	4	11	10
Replace long-term leases	1	4	15	7

What do we recommend?

Although most respondents indicated they were highly likely to adopt federal coworking in some manner, we recommend expanding the sample to include decision-makers across and potential end users from all agencies to better gauge widespread demand. It is also important that the WP2030 program team and evaluation team collaborate to refine the survey instrument to better understand customers' needs related to the features and functionality of a potential federal coworking offering.

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[1] Responses were coded into six categories and were not limited to one category code.