
(Posted May 10, 2017)

A 2015 survey conducted by the Freelancers Union, a non-profit group, concluded that roughly one-third of the labor force in the United States is comprised of independent workers, or those who participate in the “gig” economy.¹ In this economic environment, “employers increasingly are outsourcing work to contractors and self-employed or part-time workers, many working off-site,” which has led to growth in the number of shared workspaces.²

This report presents two types of shared workspaces: makerspaces and co-working spaces. It addresses the potential benefits of such spaces in the gig economy and the conditions that promote their success. The report also discusses shared-use processing facilities, versions of shared workspaces relevant to the agricultural economy.

Makerspaces are highly adaptable and therefore no singular definition exists. Broadly, “the scope of a makerspace is driven by its members and their creative needs.”³ These spaces may exist within institutions such as public libraries, museums, primary schools, colleges, or universities.⁴ Some operate independently, or are

"The Bubbler" at the Madison Public Library in Wisconsin is defined as a "hands-on programming model" and offers "maker-focused program[s] for all ages" across their nine libraries.¹⁹ The Bubbler's user-friendly [website](#) provides extensive information pertaining

conducted

resource, documented approximately 800 co-working locations across the United States.³⁸
These spaces are a resource for workers in the expanding

<i>Monthly Membership Costs</i>	
Standard Membership: \$150 Premium Membership: \$200 Lite Membership: \$50 for 5 visits/month Social Membership: \$25 for evening and event access/month	À-la-carte pricing starting at \$10.00 per hour. Corporate Memberships and Sponsorships ranging from \$2,500-\$10,000 per year.
, Essex	
Website: http://www.excelerateessex.com	
"An incubator space for start-up businesses that fosters collaboration and community engagement."	
<i>Hours of Operation</i>	
24/7 access	
<i>Monthly Membership Costs</i>	
Nomad membership: \$75 Private desk: \$150 Small team with private office: \$450	
, Barre	
Website: https://theofficeblockvt.com ; https://stonebrowningpm.com/the-office-block.html	
"A collaborative office space located on Main st. in Barre. There are no long term agreements and no utility bills, just all the amenities of an office."	
<i>Hours of Operation</i>	
Floater: M-F/9:00am-5:00pm Anchor: 24/7 access	
<i>Monthly Membership Costs</i>	
Floater membership: \$89 Anchor membership: \$189	

Co-working spaces have been shown to encourage economic growth. Santa Cruz, California has difficulty attracting business because it does not have an airport, a necessary piece of infrastructure for large companies.⁴⁰ Instead, the city established a co-working space called NextSpace, that now has over 200 members “and has also proved a boon to nearby businesses, which are serving the programmers, therapists, comedians and lawyers who utilize” it.⁴¹ The city’s mayor commented: “We realized after chasing a lot of companies that instead of attracting one 200-person business, we should attract 200 one-person businesses. The economic impact is bigger, and some of these businesses will grow.”⁴² A report detailing the effects of co-working in Sonoma County, California asserts that co-working contributes in a significant way to the local economy because 50 percent of co-workers surveyed in the area make over \$60,000 annually and another third make over \$30,000.⁴³ In Sonoma County, co-

the VFVC to help produce and market tomato sauce.⁵⁰ The project promoted immediate economic improvements in the area by hiring local workers and tradespeople during the construction phase.⁵¹ The VFVC also reports that since opening, it has attracted over 1,000 visitors to the Hardwick area and has generated 19 permanent jobs.⁵²

Other shared-use agricultural food-processing spaces exist around the state including the privately owned Mad River Food Hub in Waitsfield, Micropack in South Burlington, and an upcoming commercial kitchen space to be built by the non-profit Vermont Farmers Food Center in Rutland.⁵³⁻⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵

Shared workspaces can take on different forms such as makerspaces, co-working spaces, and shared-use facilities. This report has outlined several examples of existing shared workspaces and the factors that contribute to their success and economic development potential. Community support systems, working partnerships with local libraries, clever marketing, and the adaptation of the space to local economic sectors, help shared workspaces thrive. It is also logical to note that once established, shared workspaces must