

Universal Symbols in Health Care



Developing a Symbols-Based Wayfinding System: Implementation Guidebook

Part 1:

Formulating a Symbols-Based Wayfinding Strategy

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PART 1: Formulating a Symbols-Based Wayfinding Strategy

Wayfinding Strategy Development

The first stage of a successful wayfinding program is the development of a wayfinding strategy to guide it. The basis for the wayfinding strategy is the strategic plan, a blueprint that defines the needs of the facility, the goals of the wayfinding program, and the management resources required.

At the four Innovator Health Care Facilities, extensive visitor experience analysis and research were conducted as the basis for identifying final wayfinding strategies specific to the needs of the facilities. The *Innovator Facility Matrix* summarizes the strategies developed for the four sites, while the *Hablamos Juntos Phase II Post Audit Report* documents the in-depth analysis undertaken by a team of professional wayfinding design consultants.

Before embarking on a symbols-based wayfinding program, health care facilities should create a wayfinding strategic plan that includes the following elements:

- **Mission Statement and Program Goals** - Every facility has unique program goals and requirements based on the needs of its patient population. The wayfinding strategy must incorporate and respond to these needs. The mission statement should include a general facility description, wayfinding goals (including incorporation of symbols), wayfinding issues, and key project goals. Defining these goals early is imperative to keeping the design process on track with core objectives.
- **Facility Review** - Every facility develops a wayfinding program under unique circumstances. Often there is an existing wayfinding system that must be removed or incorporated into a larger program. Some facilities are new buildings, but many are additions or renovations integrated into a larger building or campus. A facility review inventories physical spaces as a basis for developing a design direction.

Symbols-Based Wayfinding Strategy

Before beginning the design process, create a strategic plan for including symbols in the wayfinding system.

If the facility is serving as a model for future wayfinding programs, include system expansion in the symbols strategy.

When working with consultants, outline a scope of services and roles for stakeholders, including the facility, the design firm, and other consultants.

- **Stakeholder Engagement** - Identifying stakeholder groups and engaging them in the process of developing a wayfinding strategy is crucial. The stakeholder plan outlines a clear approach to engaging people who represent diverse groups including staff, administration, volunteers, patients, families, health literacy organizations, and community members.
- **Preliminary Destination Criteria** - Identifying and prioritizing major destinations within the health care facility is an important early step in developing a system that meets the needs of patients and visitors. An early outline of these destinations makes it easier to chart a course for including symbols in the design process.
- **Strategy for Hiring or Working with a Designer** - Health care facilities often need to work with professional designers who have expertise in the unique wayfinding needs of health care environments and the use of symbols to enhance the visitor experience. Articulating a clear approach to working with designers may include reporting responsibilities, project management, and other issues that will help expedite implementation of the wayfinding project.

The Symbols-Based Wayfinding Program Design and Implementation

Checklist (Attachment B) identifies the key health care facility needs and goals for symbols wayfinding integration.

Key Wayfinding Strategy Issues

The four Innovator Health Care Facilities developed distinct wayfinding and symbol strategies built around their population needs, resources, facility types, facility design, and ongoing development issues. Comparison and analysis of the four projects revealed some key differences in strategy direction depending on facility type, size, and complexity:

- New facilities and renovated facilities have much different signage needs. New facilities have greater flexibility in design and implementation, since

the entire system can be developed at once, while renovated facilities may require a phased strategy for system design and implementation.

- The stakeholder and management needs of small facilities are much different than large hospitals. When a management team is small, sign systems may need to be much simpler and easier to install and change.
- Complex facilities on multiple floors require a much different approach than simpler facilities. The more information is needed for wayfinding, the greater the complexity of the wayfinding system.

The Innovator site projects also revealed key issues that were similar in spite of the facilities' differences in size or complexity. Each of the four sites aimed wayfinding programs at:

- Minimizing the use of personnel to assist in wayfinding
- Integrating symbols as only one part of a comprehensive wayfinding approach
- Proactively managing the design and development of the system

The following two case studies illustrate the similar and unique issues facing health care institutions addressing wayfinding needs.

Case Studies: Wayfinding Strategy

International Community Health Services (ICHS)

A small, newly built community clinic in Seattle, ICHS is part of a two-clinic system that serves a population comprising more than 50 different language groups, with Chinese language speakers the most prevalent. The clinic focuses primarily on daily health services such as dental and pharmacy, as well as medical education.

Strategic Plan Summary

Mission

- Develop a simple, easy-to-install system that can be implemented by a small staff on a small budget.
- Design for replication in other facilities as they are added to the system.
- Provide a high level of visitor support for the large number of retail-level customers.



Facility Review

New facility with nearly all public services on one floor

Stakeholders

Small staff, with one planner and one facilities manager handling all sign planning issues

Preliminary Destination Criteria

Small number of important destinations including Dental, Pharmacy, Laboratory, and Family Practice

Designer Selection

Staff worked with a design consultant from concept development through guideline development; final planning was coordinated between designer and facility staff.

Women & Infants Hospital

This neonatal and pediatric care facility in Providence, R.I., is part of a large health care campus. The facility is undergoing an extensive renovation with a large new addition expanding facilities and public space.

Strategic Plan Summary

Mission

- Improve patient safety and satisfaction with the wayfinding system.
- Expand and improve on an existing symbols-based system and be a model for future expansion into the health system.

Facility Review

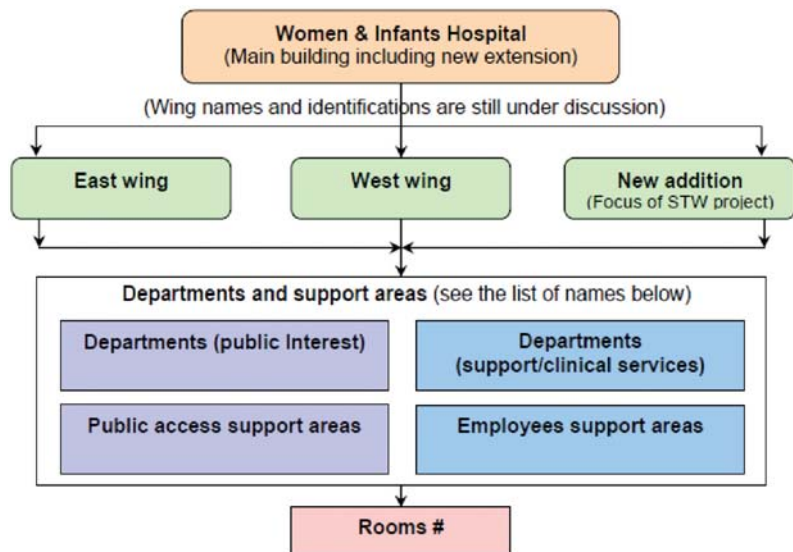
Older multi-floor facility linked to a new building by a large central public reception space

Stakeholders

Extensive team led by a wayfinding consultant working with the medical system, coordinating the work of marketing staff, the facilities department, and internal sign fabricators

Preliminary Destination Criteria

Three main wings, each with a set of key destinations and support destinations



PART 1: Additional Resources

Attachment A: Innovator Facility Matrix

This spreadsheet summarizes the Innovator facilities and the wayfinding strategies developed for each.

Attachment B: Symbols-Based Wayfinding Program Design and Implementation Checklist

This list identifies the key health care facility needs and goals for symbols wayfinding integration. It also includes sample RFPs and RFQs for symbols-based wayfinding projects.

Case Study: Concentra

The wayfinding program developed for Concentra was an early project integrating health care symbols into a larger wayfinding program.

Hablamos Juntos Phase II Post Audit Report

This report tracks the strategies developed by each of the Innovator Health Care Facilities as well as the outcomes of the strategies' implementation.