

# The Program Scaling Checklist

10 questions to answer before you launch a second program site

Bradley Wendling · Founder, Wendling Nonprofit Consulting · [wendlingconsulting.com](http://wendlingconsulting.com)

Scaling a successful program is one of the most exciting things a nonprofit can do — and one of the most dangerous. Most programs that fail at scale were working fine at one site. The problem wasn't the program. It was that the infrastructure didn't scale with it. Answer these 10 questions honestly before you add a site.

**READINESS ASSESSMENT** — Rate each: ✓ Ready / ■ Partial / ✗ Not Ready

#	Question	Why It Matters	Area	Ready?
1	Is your current site running without you in the room?	If the program only works when the founder or ED is present, it's not scalable yet.	Operations	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
2	Do you have a written program model someone else could follow?	A verbal understanding is not a replicable model. SOPs, training guides, and process maps are.	Documentation	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
3	Have you defined minimum site requirements?	Every site needs a baseline. Without it, quality will vary and compliance will suffer.	Standards	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
4	Do you have a staff person who can own the new site?	Scaling without a dedicated site lead creates a supervision gap that leads to program drift.	Capacity	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
5	Can your current technology handle a second site's data?	Spreadsheets that work for one site often collapse at two. Know your system's limits.	Technology	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
6	Have you mapped compliance requirements for the new location?	Licensing, zoning, funder reporting, and program requirements vary by county and funder.	Compliance	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
7	Do you have a partner or sponsor committed to the new site?	Site launches without community anchor partners have a significantly higher failure rate.	Partnerships	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
8	Is your current budget stable enough for a ramp-up period?	New sites rarely break even immediately. Can your org absorb 3–6 months of loss?	Finance	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
9	Have you set measurable outcomes for the new site?	Expansion without defined success metrics makes it impossible to evaluate or report.	Outcomes	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗
10	Do you have a board-approved expansion plan?	Scaling without board alignment creates governance risk and undermines oversight.	Governance	■ ✓ ■ ■ ■ ✗

If you have more than 2 "Not Ready" answers, your expansion will strain your organization before it strengthens it. The goal isn't to wait for perfection — it's to build the missing infrastructure in parallel with your growth plan, not after the problems show up.

**Ready to close the gaps?**

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