NANO GCC REAL ESTATE · POINT OF VIEW

Designing for 20, Planning for 100

Most nano GCCs size their first office for the budget or for the ambition. Neither works. Design the workplace for the team you have, engineer it for the team you plan, and agree in advance what will trigger each step up.

Vertara Global · Point of View · October 2026

AT A GLANCE

- A nano GCC (20 to 200 people) is funded in steps but promised in totals. Sizing the first office to the total pays for idle seats; sizing it to the first step forces an early move.
- Seat demand is set by the busiest day, not the average one: CBRE's global benchmark puts average peak use at 80% against 53% average use[1].
- Engineer the building for 100, fit out for the next 25, and tie every expansion to a trigger the board has agreed in advance.

01 The showcase-office problem

A company sets up a centre in India with 20 funded roles. The business case talks about 100 within three years, and the parent wants a site it can show visiting executives. The first proposal is a 100-seat floor, fully fitted out. It looks decisive. It also means paying rent on 80 empty seats, funding fit-out for rooms nobody will use for two years, and asking a team of 20 to work in an office that feels unfinished.

The opposite instinct is no better. A tight 20-seat suite is cheap and quick, but it has no spare meeting rooms, nowhere for a visiting delegation and no route to the next 25 seats. One good hiring quarter and the team is splitting across floors or planning a move.

Both proposals treat the workplace as a single number. A nano GCC is funded in steps, so its workplace should be planned in steps too: designed for the first team, engineered for the end state, and expanded on agreed triggers.

> *The question is not how big the first office should be. It is how cheaply the next 25 seats can be added, and who decides when.*

02 Why sizing is harder than it looks

Headcount is a poor guide to seat demand. In CBRE's 2026 global benchmark, average peak utilisation reached 80% while average building utilisation was 53%[2]. An office can feel full on Tuesday and half empty on Friday. Size it to the average and the busiest days fail; size it to headcount and the quiet days carry the cost.

[1] CBRE, 2026 Global Workplace & Occupancy Insights (benchmark data for 2025). www.cbre.co.in/insights/articles/the-hybrid-reality-why-the-office-is-more-important-than-ever

[2] CBRE, see note 1.

Expansion space is not guaranteed either. CBRE's 2026 India occupier survey found 77% of occupiers, and 75% of GCCs, expect their portfolios to grow within two years[3], and GCCs took 41.7% of office leasing in India's top seven cities in the first half of 2026, according to JLL[4]. The same CBRE survey shows occupiers leaning on flexibility: 67% expect flexible space in their portfolio within two years, up from 58%[5].

These are different series, measured differently, and none predicts how a particular team will use a particular office. Together they make two points. A first office has to be sized to the busiest day rather than the headcount, and the space for the next phase has to be planned before it is needed, because others will be competing for it.

03 Three briefs, one roadmap

Split the plan into three tiers, and give each a date range and a space requirement.

- **Approved.** Funded roles being recruited now. This sets the launch fit-out.
- **Forecast.** The likely next phase, usually tied to a second workstream or a new capability. This sets the expansion route.
- **Aspirational.** The long-term end state. This sets infrastructure and site selection, but not day-one rented area.

Each stage asks something different of the workplace.

Stage	Headcount	What the workplace needs	Decision to make
Launch	About 20	Funded team, convertible rooms, reliable video collaboration, space for visitors from the parent	Confirm minimum standards; build in infrastructure for the end state
Expansion	40 to 60	New functions, secure zones or project rooms, higher peak demand	Add the next block: adjacent suite, convertible rooms or flex overflow
Scale	Up to 100	Stable mandate; more control over security, brand and services	Compare a consolidated long-term site with staying staged, on total cost

Illustrative stages, not fixed thresholds. When a function needs its own secure zone depends on the work and the parent's security requirements.

04 Four design rules

Size seats to the peak, not the headcount. Plan for the busiest regular day of the first year, plus visitors from the parent and new joiners in their first weeks. For a 20-person team that is often fewer than 20 desks, but rarely fewer meeting and call rooms than people expect.

Engineer for 100, fit out for the next 25. Power capacity, network backbone, server or comms room, access control and air-conditioning zones are expensive to retrofit and cheap to size correctly at the start. Partitions, furniture and room fit-out can follow demand.

Make rooms convertible. A project room should be able to become a secure zone, and a training room should be able to become desks, without demolition. Keep fixed, specialist build-outs to a minimum until the mandate is stable.

[3] CBRE, "Three in four occupiers plan to expand their office portfolios in India over next two years" (India Office Occupier Survey 2026, August 2026). www.cbre.co.in/press-releases/three-in-four-occupiers-plan-to-expand-their-office

[4] JLL, "India office leasing dips 3.9% to 37.9M sf; GCCs strong" (H1 2026 release, July 2026). www.jll.com/en-in/newsroom/india-office-leasing-dips-3-point-9-percent-to-379m-sf-gccs-strong

[5] CBRE, see note 3.

Know where the next 25 seats come from. An adjacent suite, convertible rooms or a flex overflow agreement nearby. Name the route and its lead time before signing. The lease terms that protect that route are covered in our companion paper, *The 20-Seat Lease Trap*.

05 What building for 100 on day one costs

Take a 100-seat site at 90 sq ft a seat, rent of ₹110 per sq ft a month and fit-out of ₹5,500 per sq ft, near the bottom of Cushman & Wakefield's 2026 India range of US$65 to 73 per sq ft[6]. The staged alternative opens a 25-seat block with infrastructure sized for 100 (an extra ₹15 lakh), then adds 25-seat blocks as needed, paying more for each: ₹120 rent and 15% more for phased fit-out. We ran three hiring paths over 36 months.

EXHIBIT 1 · 36-MONTH CASH COMMITTED, RENT PLUS FIT-OUT (ILLUSTRATIVE)

Hiring path	Build for 100	Staged	Saving from staging
Flat: stays at 20	₹8.51 cr	₹2.28 cr	**₹6.24 cr**
Base: 40 from month 13, 60 from month 25	₹8.51 cr	₹6.10 cr	**₹2.42 cr**
Fast: 50 from month 7, 100 from month 19	₹8.51 cr	₹8.33 cr	**₹0.18 cr**

Assumptions chosen for clarity, not market quotes. Excludes deposits, maintenance, escalation and GST. Staged path assumes each block is available when needed. Vertara Global analysis.

Building for 100 only comes close when the centre reaches 100 within about 18 months, and even then staging is marginally cheaper over three years. In the base case, staging saves ₹2.42 crore, enough to fund several senior hires. If the team stays at 20, the full-size office costs ₹6.24 crore more.

Staging has a price. A centre that does reach 100 pays about ₹71 lakh more in total fit-out and roughly ₹67,500 a month more in rent on the later blocks. That is the premium for keeping options open, and it is usually worth paying until the mandate is proven. The real risk is the last assumption in the exhibit: that the next block is there when it is needed.

06 Expand on triggers, not dates

Fit-out, IT and approvals take longer than hiring. If the decision to expand waits until the office is full, the team will be crowded for months. Agree the triggers at launch, alongside the hiring plan.

- **Track peak, not average.** Measure seat use on the busiest days, along with meeting-room demand and how often people cannot find a room. In a 25-seat office, a regular peak of 23 is 92% use while a daily average of 15 is 60%. The average says there is room; the team does not.
- **Count in lead time.** Set the trigger at the point where forecast hiring will breach capacity within the time it takes to bring the next block into use, typically several months. That is when the decision is due, not when the office is full.
- **Keep approved and forecast hires separate.** Report both every quarter so that leadership can see growth coming before it arrives.
- **Name the owner.** One sponsor should hold the authority to commission the next block once a trigger fires, without a fresh business case.

[6] Cushman & Wakefield, Asia Pacific Office Fit Out Cost Guide 2026, as reported in "India remains Asia Pacific's most cost-competitive office fit out market" (IANS, March 2026). ianslive.in

QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. How many seats does the busiest day of the first year need, as distinct from approved headcount?
2. Which infrastructure must be sized for 100 now because it cannot be upgraded cheaply later?
3. Where do the next 25 seats come from, and how long does it take to bring them into use?
4. What signal triggers the next step, and who has the authority to act on it?

07 How Vertara Global helps

We turn the GCC business plan into a staged workplace roadmap before the site is chosen: peak-based seat counts, room mix, the infrastructure to size for the end state, and the route and lead time for each expansion block. We cost the build-for-100 and staged options across slower, base and faster hiring so the board sees the range of outcomes, not one number.

Whichever operating model the client chooses, we help brief the launch fit-out, set the expansion triggers and review hiring and peak use against the roadmap every quarter, staying engaged into year two. The test of success is simple: the centre grows without an unplanned move or a floor of empty desks.

ABOUT VERTARA global

Vertara Global is a practitioner-led GCC advisory firm. We help mid-market companies across sectors and geographies design, set up, scale and transform their Global Capability Centres, from the first business case and location choice to the operating model, entity, talent and workplace.

Our services span five pillars:

1. **GCC Consulting**
2. **Legal & Entity Support**
3. **People Advisory**
4. **Digital & AI**
5. **Engineering GCC Solutions**

Client-first and leader-led: senior practitioners run every engagement, and we stay involved after handover, because year two is where many GCCs are tested.