

Excerpt from...

Planning for Sustainability

A NCSSLE Online Learning Event

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

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- **There are many approaches to defining or conceptualizing sustainability.**
- **Sustainability can simply be a continuity of a program or services – the ability to carry on program services through funding and resource shifts or losses.**
- **Sustainability is about institutionalizing services or the continuation of activities and impacts; creating a legacy, including continuing organizational ideals, principles, and beliefs; upholding existing relationships; and/or maintaining consistent outcomes.**

Federal Resources for Sustainability Planning



- **Building Sustainable Programs:
The Framework**

http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/snippets/508%20documents/creating_sustainableimpacts_framework.pdf



- **Building Sustainable Programs:
The Resource Guide**

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/assets/sustainability-resource-guide.pdf>



Eight Key Sustainability Factors



There are 8 key factors that influence whether a service, program or its activities and benefits will be sustained over time:

- 1. Create an action strategy**
- 2. Assess the environment**
- 3. Be adaptable**
- 4. Secure community support**
- 5. Integrate program services into community infrastructures**
- 6. Build a leadership team**
- 7. Create strategic partnerships**
- 8. Secure diverse financial opportunities**

Citation: 4

1. Create an Action Strategy



- **Research suggests that including sustainability planning early in program planning stages helped programs better coordinate sustainability planning into their future efforts.**
- **Sustainability is often the last stage to be discussed in program planning; this can lead to the implementation of services that do not anticipate the long-term environment in which they operate.**

2. Assess the Environment



- **Analyzing a school-based prevention program, a 2006 study noted the program had difficulty in its first year moving from implementation to stabilization in five target schools.**

- **Researchers recommended that the project assess community readiness for the program by considering key stakeholder perspectives, which included parents, teachers, and principals. A comprehensive community readiness assessment would have helped lay the foundation for a viable sustainability plan.**

3. Be Adaptable



- **The ability to adapt and improve to ensure effectiveness was a core feature for sustainability.**
- **Needs within the school and community change.**
- **Financial and political landscapes can change.**
- **Balance between adaptation in light of changing needs and fidelity to a proven approach can be challenging.**

4. Secure Community Support



- **A well-planned communication approach is critical for leveraging community assets and partnerships that can help sustain successful implementation.**
- **Using multiple stakeholders and sharing stories that describe the impact of a program/effort can help garner support for the programs.**
- **Community collaboration can be instrumental in a programs' success and the decision to maintain them.**

5. Integrate Programs and Services into Local Infrastructures



- **Sustainable programs adopt efficient practices (during the grant period).**
- **Streamlining management systems, hiring and training additional staff, training “trainers” and developing program materials enabled programs to continue services.**
- **Examining the policies, practices, and structures through which programs and services are offered can help sustain and replicate efforts.**
- **It is important to consider how to embed the policies, practices and structures within your organization or partnering agencies.**

Citations: 10, 12

6. Build a Team of Leaders



- **Secure and support dedicated and competent leadership for the team.**
- **Sustained programs have leaders that fight to maintain the program.**
- **Recognize that leaders can be advocates, resources, or barriers.**
- **Building a leadership team, verses a single leader, can help bolster successes even during staff turnover.**
- **Ensure a clear vision is provided for the team.**

Citation: 8

7. Create Strategic Partnerships



- **Work with external agencies and advocate with strategic partners with an interest in the issues addressed by the program.**
- **Building effective partnerships can help programs and services achieve sustainability.**
- **Strategic partnerships may increase program and service capacity, help the program become more efficient in service delivery, and decrease the likelihood of duplicated efforts.**
- **Strategic external partnerships can also help grantees:**
 - ✓ learn important lessons about implementation, community readiness, and needs.
 - ✓ gain more exposure to target audiences, and secure additional resources.

Citations: 3, 8

8. Secure Diverse Financial Opportunities



- **Understand that diversity of funding is the most significant financial factor in predicting sustainability.**
- **Understand the local funding environment to infuse adequate sustainability planning.**
- **Incorporate sustainability activities and planning into their overall program and service funding plans.**
- **Create a budgetary line item to address sustainability planning.**



- **Be intentional about what it takes to sustain your work.**
- **Involve more champions/stakeholders in your efforts.**
- **Update your sustainability plan regularly.**
- **Build necessary capacities, especially during the last year.**
- **Strengthen those things that are working.**
- **Strengthen organizational structures.**
- **Make sure your key practices are now routine.**

Questions You Should Be Asking Yourself



- 1. What were your original goals when you started?**
- 2. What have your outcomes been?**
- 3. What are the big take-aways from your work so far?**
- 4. What's working and going well?**
- 5. What are the continuing big challenges?**
- 6. As you begin to look at the upcoming year, what do you see as your major focus areas?**

As You Think Ahead to Sustaining Your Work



- **How will you transition your work as your grant work progresses?**
- **How do you continue to integrate your work?**
- **In the short term, what will you need to do in the next 3-4 months?**
- **In the long term, what will you need to do in the next 9-12 months?**
- **Who will own the work that needs to be sustained?**



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