What is Sustainability?

**What is Sustainability?**

CDC: “Sustainability is a community’s ongoing capacity and resolve to work together to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all.”\(^1\)

SAMHSA: “In the case of substance abuse prevention, [sustainability] involves developing prevention systems that promote and support the delivery of effective prevention strategies in order to prevent and reduce substance use, misuse and abuse among whole populations. Ultimately, sustainability is about maintaining positive outcomes in these populations.”\(^2\)

ODMHSAS: “Sustainability in its simplest form describes a characteristic of a process or outcome that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. To elaborate further, it is the ability of a program to deliver an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time after major financial, managerial, and technical assistance from an external donor is terminated.”\(^3\)

What is Sustainability Planning?

Sustainability planning is an intentional process of looking critically at your current prevention infrastructure, processes, and strategies with an eye toward developing the necessary resources to sustain meaningful prevention outcomes beyond current funding. This involves a series of concrete tasks to develop feasible, ongoing support to essential components of your prevention work. Components of sustainability planning often include priority setting, resource and feasibility analysis, communication planning, and resource and grant development.

Why Do It?

Sustainability planning is important for many reasons and on numerous levels:

- For those involved directly in prevention programming – sustainability planning can capture the positive impact made by the implementation of prevention strategies so that it is not lost after funding evaporates.

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\(^3\) State of Oklahoma (2011). Contract for Alcohol and Drug Prevention for Regions 1-17, Section B.1.27.
• For youth and families engaged in prevention efforts – sustainability planning can set-up continued benefits from effective support for positive youth development and community health.

• For the whole community – sustainability planning is conducive to building a strong health promotion and prevention infrastructure that will provide a springboard for further progress and future development in community health efforts.

Developing a Sustainability Plan  What to Do  Step-by-Step

A complete sustainability planning process involves several critical tasks resulting in key documents that will become integrated parts of the plan:

I. Review of current processes (e.g. needs and assets assessment), infrastructure (e.g. staffing competencies, evaluation, space, T/TA resources, political climate pertaining to prevention), strategies (e.g. social marketing, environmental interventions, prevention program) and outcome data
   RESULT– a clear concise statement of your current status, accomplishments, challenges and lesson-learned and current program costs

II. Develop criteria to determine which prevention processes, infrastructure and strategies are essential to sustaining outcomes
   RESULT– a clear justification for prioritizing particular processes, capacity building efforts, and strategies for sustaining prevention outcomes

III. Complete a resource analysis of what it will take to support these priorities
   RESULT– a clear projected budget and workforce development plan

IV. Consider fiscal strategies for sustainability and identify the most feasible
   RESULT– fiscal strategies that fit your needs both pragmatically and conceptually, outlined in a concrete action plan

V. Develop marketing and communication products, such as a case statement, grant proposals and/or MOUs for collaborative partnerships and to support fiscal strategies
   RESULT– clearly articulated communication and marketing products to engage supporters
VI. Develop a dissemination plan of these products in order to appropriately share with different types of stakeholders and community members, while engaging strategic collaborators and partners

RESULT—*a committed group of community members ready to support your sustainability efforts!*

### The Written Plan

*A written sustainability plan should be 5-10 pages in length that includes the results above, outlined below:*

1. Executive Summary
2. Prevention Processes; current status, accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned
3. Prevention Outcomes; outcomes achieved and continuing community need
4. Sustainability Goals; identify priority processes, infrastructure and strategies and justify need
5. Resource Analysis; projected budget and staffing plan and feasible fiscal strategies
6. Sustainability Action Plan
7. Partnerships and Leveraged Support
8. Addendum:
   a. Case Statement
   b. Memorandums of Understanding/Partnership Agreements
   c. Related Communication and Marketing Products
Sustainability planning takes time and should be an ongoing process. From beginning to end; it’s best to have at least a full year to follow this process all the way through. Grant applications can take up to a year or more to be funded and it takes time to cultivate broad community support and complete each phase. In subsequent years, a simplified but similar process will help your community build prevention infrastructure and capacity, which in turn will help your community be more poised for a variety of funding and resource opportunities in the future.
Planning to Plan  What to Do Right Now  Current Funding 1+ Years

From the moment you receive funding, you can begin to work towards sustainability by engaging in the following tasks and attending to the parallel tracks of process and outcome throughout.

**PROCESS TRACK:**
Capture the effectiveness, challenges, lessons-learned and accomplishments throughout the process – each SPF step below has embedded sustainability questions and related tasks:

**SPF Step 1) Assessment:** How will you ensure the sustainability of a data-driven community planning process?
   a. Document your data/assessment agreements, list readily available data, identify data gaps and strategies used to address them, document how you assessed capacity
   b. Identify where community capacity for assessment lives; is there a natural home for assessment in the community?

**SPF Step 2) Capacity:** How will you sustain and grow prevention capacity?
   a. Track efforts to build local prevention capacity, identify workforce needs as they emerge, document cultural competence assessment
   b. Where are the assets for prevention capacity building in your community, region, state?

**SPF Step 3) Planning:** How will you sustain continued strategic planning for prevention?
   a. Capture what you have learned: what will you do again, where do you need to adapt your process?
   b. Consider who in the community is best positioned to convene planning processes (e.g. health department, health provider network, funder)

**SPF Step 4) Implementation:** How will you ensure effective implementation and continued infrastructure development to sustain prevention outcomes?
   a. Track fidelity in your strategies and key program elements
   b. Evaluate how well programs and supporting infrastructure are working, be willing to adapt for better efficiency and effectiveness – document all adaptations
   c. Look for common ground across the behavioral health Continuum of Care and build diverse alliances

**SPF Step 5) Evaluation:** How will you continue to evaluate and monitor prevention outcomes?
   a. Capture what you learned to inform the next assessment cycle; adapt/adjust
   b. Share your outcomes broadly to increase community buy-in
c. Look for data and evaluation partners across common indicators

**SPF Principle) Cultural Competence:** *How will you continue to ensure polices related to cultural competence exist?*

a. Document and continue to monitor effective policy adoption and enforcement
b. Attend to shifting demographics in your community; ensure representation of new community members in prevention planning and activities

c. Consider addressing in coalition or organization Guiding Principles or Charter document

**OUTCOME TRACK:**
Even though it will take time to see real outcomes and impact, there are ways to track your progress toward outcomes from the very beginning. It’s always good to begin with your logic model.

**Capture the Current Picture:**
Regularly review and document each of your current prevention strategies. With a critical eye, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is this prevention strategy firmly linked to our priority intervening variables (e.g. risk and protective factors)?
2. Does it address an evidenced need in the community? (e.g. a higher than average binge drinking rate)
3. Does it utilize existing resources and assets in the community? Is it appropriate for the level of readiness in the community?
4. Is there evidence this strategy is likely to be effective? Is it a good ‘fit’ with my community?
5. What were the unexpected challenges in planning and implementation? What lessons were learned?
6. Did we implement the strategy with fidelity? Were all adaptations and rationale documented?
7. Did we reach enough of the target population with enough of the intervention (dosage)?
8. Is there community support and buy-in for this strategy? Why or why not?
9. Is the strategy ‘sustainable’? (What might be supported by other funders? What might another organization adopt? What infrastructure might be added to government departments? How will we sustain volunteer support?)
10. What is still left to do? What are the next steps?
Capture Community, Coalition and Organizational Capacity
This is best done at least once a year by gathering input from key stakeholders and community leadership to answer the following questions:

1. Where is leadership on prevention efforts in our community? Has community attention increased? Who else is working on prevention-related issues? Are related policies or laws being actively pursued?
2. What are the specific talents, skills, and resources of our strategic partners and collaborators in regard to sustainability planning? (e.g. finance and budget, understanding funding streams, grant writing, marketing and communication, grassroots fundraising)
3. Where are the opportunities for strategic partnership and collaboration? (e.g. evaluation, sharing staff, space, or other resources)
4. Where do we need to build our capacity and where might we access resources to begin?

Getting Started    Telling Your Story    Current Funding 1 Year Left

Prevention Process
Gather together all of the information you’ve been saving to date and organize it. Identify where other parts of the story reside and with whom; think about the evaluator, the participating youth and families, the organizational partners. Consider bringing people together in a coalition meeting, workshop, or retreat to do a thoughtful review of your prevention efforts to-date. At a minimum, bring together those who were most instrumental in implementing the program strategies, evaluators, and key partners.

Using the SPF Process as a guide; review each step of the process and capture the following:
- What worked well?
- What would you change if you had to do it again?
- What were the unanticipated challenges?
- Where are the lessons-learned?

Prevention Outcomes
Identify each active prevention strategy and review any implementation successes, challenges, adaptations and lessons learned, level of community support and outcome data.

Prevention Costs
Map out the existing infrastructure and identify resource needs, including the following:
- Coalition and program staff
- Program materials
- Community capacity building and training
- Evaluation support
- Program and office space

Determine what the yearly working budget for the whole prevention program is. At the end of this section, you should have a clear, concise statement of your current status, accomplishments, challenges, and lessons-learned along with a real understanding of your current program costs.

**Setting Priorities**

This section involves two clear and distinct steps; the first is the development of criteria and process for deciding on what the priority strategies for the community will be. It is best to do this with your coalition or group leadership so the decision makers are aligned and committed to the same criteria.

**Developing Criteria/Evaluating Strategies**

In the below sample grid, examples of criteria are given for one community prevention strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Still a Need</th>
<th>Resources In Place</th>
<th>Community Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased collaboration</td>
<td>• Meets a long-term community goal (i.e. tobacco free by 2020).</td>
<td>• Filling a niche that is not being filled by another group.</td>
<td>• The community supports the effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Measurable improvement in community health</td>
<td>• The issue(s) addressed by this effort is/are still a community need.</td>
<td>• Able to leverage additional resources</td>
<td>• Key decision-makers support the effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improves community life in other ways</td>
<td>• Discontinuing will have a negative impact on the community and/or population served.</td>
<td>• Able to secure additional funding or resources to support this activity.</td>
<td>• Individuals within the community are able to identify specific accomplishment s/ activities that we have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improvements in health promoting policy</td>
<td>• This issue/problem is worth devoting our resources to, relative to other issues/problems</td>
<td>• Good capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased community capacity to deal with the issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Strategy: Retail Compliance (assign one to each bullet point)*
(short term and long term) justify the cost of doing the work.
in the community.
to continue this work.
conducted.

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Sustainability Score: 12 points

After putting each strategy through this criteria process, some clear winners should emerge. Be sure those same ones are moving you toward your projected outcomes.

**Looking for Outcomes**

For each strategy also review the logic model to ensure the strategy is still strongly linked to your expected outcomes and review any existing program, process and/or outcome level data.

**What to Do When Outcomes Are Not Yet Available**

Use the data you have and build the case for why continuing on this path will lead you to outcomes. Use local examples and stories to show how prevention is making a difference in your community; engage evaluators to use the most up-to-date data available.

E.g. in the chart below, one prevention strategy is tracked through process and observation for movement toward anticipated outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Process data</th>
<th>Observational data</th>
<th>Prevention Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Compliance</td>
<td>Completed 21 compliance checks including three stores with high rates of non</td>
<td>Youth report that it’s harder to buy alcohol in retail establishments</td>
<td>Underage 30 day youth is stable for the second year of data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checks</td>
<td>compliance, engaged 5 youth, deeper collaboration with police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Police report less public drinking on weekends</td>
<td>(It is anticipated that use may decrease after retail access is curtailed over time.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gather information on the continued community need for your prevention efforts; highlight any changes that have impacted your work such as policy change (e.g. medical marijuana...
legalization, BAC level laws), changes in demographics (e.g. increase in middle school-aged youth), or changes in substance use patterns (e.g. a rise in prescription drug use rates). Pull all of this information together to make a well-reasoned, strongly documented case for sustaining priority prevention processes, infrastructure and strategies. Be sure to link this to overall community health concerns.

At the end of this section, you will have a clear justification for priority processes, infrastructure, and strategies for sustaining prevention outcomes.

**Sustainability Goals**

Set clear sustainability goals that outline the needed resources to sustain the priorities you’ve defined above. Consider dosage, reach, capacity building, length of intervention and evaluation requirements. For each priority area articulate a goal, objective, requirements and costs as illustrated below:

**Goal:** Maintain the quality and frequency of retail compliance checks  
**Objective:** Complete 40 compliance checks with teams of 2 trained police officers and 2 youth at a minimum of 20 retail vendors of alcohol a year  
**Requirements:** Stipends for police officers and youth leaders, training on methods  
**Costs:** [Police stipends: $50 x 4 officers x 20 checks = $4000] + [Youth stipends: $10 x 4 youth x 20 checks= $800 (provided by x)] + [Training on best practices for compliance checks (provided in-kind by x)]

**Resource Analysis**

Complete a resource analysis of what it will take to continue the above priority prevention processes, infrastructure and strategies. Bring together all the costs in an integrated program budget. Below is a budget and staffing plan for two strategies; consider the resource categories (your program may have others):
Program Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Item</th>
<th>Strategy 1</th>
<th>Strategy 2</th>
<th>In Kind/Partner</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing#</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTEs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fringe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stipends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program materials*</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It’s very helpful to have a budget narrative that more fully explains each item:

# One FTE to run prevention coalition, coordinate law enforcement strategies and complete all grant and community reporting requirements @ $ per year

*Program curriculum and materials cost for 60 HS participants- $50 per student x 60 students= $3000.00

At the end of this section, you will have a clear projected budget and staffing plan.

Identify Fiscal Strategies  Determine Feasibility  6-7  Months Left

Consider fiscal strategies for sustainability – feasible fiscal strategies outlined in a concrete action plan.

Fiscal strategies may include

I. full or partial program adoption by a community partner

II. systems or policy change that’s fully integrated into an existing structure
III. a variety of strategies to raise revenue including grants, donations and in kind commitments

**Example:** a social marketing process that already has strong adopters, just needs new signs and notification quarterly to change the signs; both of which can be accomplished with one volunteer and in kind printing donation.

Tasks:

A. Determine feasibility of each strategy and determine the ‘best fit’ fiscal strategies to pursue.
B. Develop an action plan for implementation of fiscal strategies including timeline and who is responsible.

**Feasibility Checklist:** Use in a group and ask participants to vote on what they like and what they think is feasible.

| 1. Marketing your organization | Like this | Feasibility |
| 2. Sharing positions and resources | |
| 3. Becoming a line item in an existing budget | |
| 4. Incorporating activities or services in organizations with a similar mission | |
| 5. Applying for grants | |
| 6. Tapping into personnel resources | |
| 7. Soliciting in-kind support | |
| 8. Developing and implementing fundraisers | |
| 9. Pursuing third-party funding | |
| 10. Developing a fee-for-service structure | |
| 11. Acquiring public funding | |
| 12. Securing endowments and planned giving arrangements | |
| 13. Establishing membership fees and dues | |
| 14. Making a business plan | |

**Identify Fiscal Strategies Action Planning 5-6 Months Left**

*Develop an action plan for implementation of fiscal strategies, including a timeline and identification of persons responsible for each task.*

- Review your communication and marketing plan from last year. Make updates based on what you’ve learned through the sustainability planning process.
• Develop marketing and communication products such as a case statement, grant proposals and/or MOUs for collaborative partnerships and adoption of strategies - a set of clearly articulated communication products to engage supporters.

• Integration and alignment with your current action plan or workplan will help you tap into any potential synergies. For example, an already scheduled town hall meeting is also a potential outreach strategy for engaging local funders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Strategy</th>
<th>Technology and Resources Required</th>
<th>By When</th>
<th>By Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Related Tasks:
+ Develop a simple, clear and short “case statement” for all your outreach efforts
+ Build technology and communication capacity
+ Build relationships with your local media
+ Develop or expand your social media presence

Partnerships and Leveraged Support

Under 5 Months Left

Share with key stakeholders; engage strategic collaborators and partners – a clear group of community members ready to support your sustainability efforts!

Evaluate your current collaborations and partners and think about who else you might engage.
+ Think about all the partners and collaborators you have worked with up to the present; what will it take to continue that support; what will they need? What will you need?
+ Consider those you haven’t reached out to yet; what it would take to bring in these new partners? What would they need to partner with you? What might they be able to contribute to your efforts with little effort or additional resources on their part?
+ Future Memorandums of Understanding or Agreement (MOU/MOA) will outline both parties clear understanding of the needs and potential skills, assets and contributions of each other, as well as any cash resources that may be shared. For example; fees for training and agreements to share outreach events and pathways (mailing lists, social media).

Related Tasks:
+ Network well; stay connected to community based networks and alliances that align with your goals.
+ Keep strong and up to date and well documented agreements and contracts
+ Use media and social media to ensure broad community awareness of your efforts
+ Stay relevant-connect publicly to current events/emerging trends
+ Build relationships constantly
## Sustainability Resources and Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value of volunteer time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time">http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs: A Toolkit for Community- and Faith-Based Service Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC’s Healthy Communities Program Sustainability Planning Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe School Healthy Students: Leaving a Legacy: Six Strategies for Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/implementing/sustainability/legacy-wheel">http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/implementing/sustainability/legacy-wheel</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Civic Partnerships: Sustainability Toolkit Order the entire kit for $60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/publications/sustainability_toolkit.htm">http://www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/publications/sustainability_toolkit.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Institute-Collaboration Multiplier</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-44/127.html?msource=cp15">http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-44/127.html?msource=cp15</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>SUSTAINING IMPROVED OUTCOMES: A Toolkit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation prospecting</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://foundationcenter.org/">http://foundationcenter.org/</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary
Your ‘elevator speech’; it should be short, clear and concise. What is the prevention focus and why does it matter? What has been accomplished and what is left to do? Provide a brief overview of your ‘case’ for continuing core strategies and fiscal strategies to support your sustainability goals.

Prevention Processes
Coalition/Community Current Status, Accomplishments, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Prevention Outcomes
Community Needs Statement- Outcomes attained, projected outcomes not yet attained.

Sustainability Goals
Identify Priority Processes, Infrastructure and Strategies linked to your prevention outcomes and provide justification for continued and new support. Set clear sustainability goals.

Resource Analysis
Create a clear budget and staffing plan outlining the resources needed to sustain priority processes and strategies.

Sustainability Action Plan
Identify feasible fiscal strategies; develop an action plan to engage stakeholders, garner resources and leverage support. (Create a two page Case Statement; align with your Communication and Marketing Plan)

Partnerships and Leveraged Support
List the collaborative partnerships that support your prevention efforts (attach Memorandums of Agreement MOAs, Memorandums of Understanding MOUs). What is your plan to leverage this support to engage new resources?