



# Sustainability Planning Framework

Partnerships are unique and complex and operate in dynamic environments, so there is not one simple formula to sustain efforts. However, the following is an overarching framework that can help partners determine potential strategies to sustain their work together over time.

## 1. CREATE A VISION

- Know what you want to sustain.
- Know how your initiative fits within the larger community.
- Know what you mean by sustainability:
  - scope of activities,
  - scale of operation, and
  - timeline.

## 2. FOCUS ON RESULTS

- Identify and implement strategies that you can reasonably expect to lead to desired results.
- Be clear about the results you want to achieve for children and youth as well as the systems that serve them.
- Use indicators and performance measures to track progress and improve your work.

## 3. BE STRATEGIC ABOUT FINANCING

- Determine the expected fiscal needs.
- Make the best use of existing resources (fiscal and in-kind).
- Maximize available revenue sources.
- Pursue opportunities to create greater flexibility in categorical funding.
- Generate new resources by engaging public- and private-sector partners.
- Explore new state and local revenue sources.

## 4. GARNER A BROAD BASE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Develop a plan to create a desired identity.
- Nurture a community presence and support.
- Encourage involvement of clients or recipients of services.
- Support public education and engagement.
- Build partnerships that foster collaboration rather than competition.



## 5. GAIN KEY CHAMPION SUPPORT

- Identify key decisionmakers and opinion leaders.
- Develop an effective outreach plan.
- Cultivate a broad base of champions:
  - elected leaders;
  - business leaders;
  - peers;
  - clients (for example: youth, parents, and others);
  - community leaders; and
  - philanthropists.

## 7. BUILD STRONG INTERNAL SYSTEMS

- Design internal systems with input from those who will be using them.
- Engage those needed to maintain the systems put in place (for example: staff, board(s), volunteers, and others).
- Develop strong fiscal management, accounting, information, communication, and personnel systems.
- Use those systems to review strategies and make changes as needed.

## 6. BE ADAPTABLE TO CHANGING CONDITIONS

- Consider new ways to frame the work as the assets, needs, and priorities of the community change.
- Monitor opportunities for funding from additional sources.
- Keep abreast of research in the field and data about the economic, demographic, and social conditions of the community.
- Use research to help shape policy at the local, state, and national levels.
- Track, contribute, and adapt to a changing policy climate.
- Participate in collaborative advocacy to encourage change.

## 8. DEVELOP A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- Develop a comprehensive plan that accounts for short- and long-term needs.
- Include key information regarding the vision, resources needed, and plan for acquiring resources.
- Identify challenges or obstacles.
- Identify and communicate with key partners.

Photos courtesy of the Partnership Center.

This resource is adapted from the following: *The Finance Project. (2003). Module 1: Building a sustainable initiative. In The sustainability planning workbook: Building for the future. Washington, DC: Author.*

