Examples of Domain-Specific Actions for Sustainability Planning

Environmental Support Having a supportive internal and external climate for your program

- **Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis** to figure out who you need to inform or influence.
    - Stakeholder Analysis found here
    - Stakeholder Map found here

- **Develop an 'ask' and talking points, and identify the appropriate decision maker**. Your 'ask' is the action you want this decision maker to take on behalf of your program.
    - Identify potential decision makers to win over: policy makers, city council members, state legislators, other local and statewide elected officials, school board members, etc.

- **Identify the best person to make contact with each decision maker** (e.g., project director, partner, community member).
    - Identify potential groups and stakeholders to partner with in order to reach different decision makers: local business leaders, statewide coalition groups, political advocates, or other advocacy groups within your city, county, or state.

- **Obtain support from someone willing to act as a champion who can influence adoption of policies/practices that benefit your program's goals.** This could be a city council member, city mayor, school board member, local business leader, state legislator, or upper-level staff.

- **Train volunteers and champions (partners, network member, stakeholders) to educate decision makers on the importance of supporting and sustaining your program's efforts.**

- **Ensure that your organization's leaders are champions for your program.** Are they committed to promoting the value of sustaining your efforts? If not, educate them about your program's mission, goals, and outcomes. Discuss how your program fits into the larger organizational structure and contributes to *organization* goals.

Funding Stability Establishing a consistent financial base for your program

- **Develop a funding plan to provide safeguards and ensure key infrastructure is maintained** (including an adequate number of qualified staff).
  - Sample fundraising plan found here
  - Creating an effective fundraising plan found here
    - Include both long-term and short-term goals for acquiring a diverse funding portfolio.
    - Construct your funding plan so it can easily adapt to trends, new funding opportunities, and unanticipated shortfalls.
    - Ensure sufficient support within your organization to apply for new funding opportunities.

- **Explore different funding options:** federal, state, and local community grants, foundations, individual/business donors, fundraising events, social entrepreneurship, and fees for service.
  - Beginners guide to fundraising found here

- **If allowed by your organization, ask for in-kind donations** (e.g., office supplies, public transportation passes, restaurant coupons).

- **Avoid chasing dollars that do not support the core mission of your program.** Identify and cultivate partnership opportunities ahead of specific funding opportunities.

Partnerships Cultivating connections between your program and its stakeholders

- **Conduct a partner or stakeholder analysis.** Which organizations or individuals will require a lot of time and energy to keep involved? Which have a lot of influence?

- **Create a stakeholder management.** [Template available here](#)

- **Identify and engage organizations/individuals impacted by your work but are not currently involved in your efforts.** Determine how they could contribute to or benefit from your program's efforts.

- **Identify goals for each partnership.** What does your program need from each partner? How can this partner benefit from working with you?

- **Once you've started a partnership, maintain and cultivate it to ensure it is beneficial for both parties.** Be mindful of how you keep your partners up-to-date and make them feel valued.

- **Develop a plan for communicating with partners on a regular basis.** Determine appropriate methods of communication for each partner (e.g., phone, email, listserv, webinar, twitter, newsletter), as well as frequency of contact

- **To effectively manage partnerships, keep a record (using a database/spreadsheet) to document partnerships and key information** (e.g., preferred contact method, dates contacted, connections to other partners or opposition, shared projects/issues, products or updates received).

- **When leadership transitions occur (within your program or a partner organization), create a plan for bringing new leadership up to speed and continuing partnerships**. (Valuable connections and the history behind them too often get lost during these transitions.)

- **Involve key partners, stakeholders, and fellow program staff in planning process** (e.g., join strategic planning committee, provide feedback on media campaigns, serve on review panel for grants)

- **If your program is prohibited from lobbying, partner with stakeholders/organizations that can advocate on your initiative's behalf.**

- **Foster community involvement and investment in your program efforts.** Invite input from your priority audience about their needs and preferences. Hold community meetings or focus groups to learn more about your priority population.

- **Share success stories on a regular basis with your partners and community.**

Organizational Capacity Having the internal support and resources needed to effectively manage your program

- **Align your program's mission and goals with that of others around the table.** Misalignment of initiatives may make it difficult to sustain momentum and progress.

- **Identify opportunities to share staff and other resources across departments or initiatives within your organization.**

- **Ensure ongoing workforce training and development opportunities are available to staff.**

- **Maintain core staff with sufficient expertise and skills to carry out the essential operations of your program efforts**. High turnover makes it very difficult to provide consistent, high quality services.

- **Cultivate internal leaders and champions who will advocate for your program within your organization(s).** Avoid becoming too reliant on a single champion whose departure could jeopardize your initiative's standing. Rather, work to ensure you have a number of strong leaders supporting your program.

- **Institutionalize the essential services/activities of your program efforts within all partner organizations.** For example, one organization started an electronic newsletter for partners and recognized the value of this communication method, so began incorporating the cost of the newsletter into general operations.

- **Consider working with another related organization by integrating policy approaches or aligning resources.** For example, where allowed, jointly fund staff or work together on an issue. Perhaps another closely-related program would be willing to share communications or marketing expenses with you on a project.

Program Evaluation Assessing your program to inform planning and document results

- **Ensure that program staff and/or contractors are available to collect, analyze, and report evaluation data on your program.**

- **Develop a comprehensive evaluation plan.** The plan should describe how you will collect data about your programs and the individual(s) responsible for collecting each piece.
  - For guidance on developing an effective evaluation plan:
    - CDC Evaluation Workbook document
    - Community Tool Box website
    - BetterEvaluation website

- **Develop a logic model and base data collection needs on the outcomes you are trying to achieve.**

- **When conducting an evaluation, engage all involved staff and stakeholders**. Failure to convey the importance of each individual's contribution may result in decreased staff buy-in and less accurate assessments overall.

- **Conduct regular needs assessments to ensure that you meet the needs of your priority population.**

- **Routinely assess implementation and outcomes of program activities.** Use the results to ensure the ongoing quality, fidelity, and reach of your program policies and initiatives.

- **Regularly collect data on service populations to demonstrate need for and/or effectiveness of your program**. If you do not have sufficient resources to collect this data, look for publicly available data sources (e.g., census, MAGIRT website).

- **Collect and share relevant data among program staff and partners.** This includes reporting measurable outcomes and demonstrating the value of your program to political decision makers and funders.

- **Establish regular meetings to review data and develop a plan for making necessary changes.**

Program Adaptation Taking actions that adapt your program to ensure ongoing effectiveness

- **Anticipate changes in the external environment that might affect your program efforts** (e.g., changes in your local community, state or federal regulations, or funding availability). Work with internal and external partners to prioritize initiative components so that you are ready with scaled-up and scaled-down versions of activities.

- **Make a plan to periodically review evaluation results to assess which components of your program are not working and should be adapted or discontinued.** Redirect resources from unsuccessful or unnecessary activities to other efforts.

- **Learn about outcome management (also known as 'managing for results' or 'efforts to outcomes').** Develop an outcome-oriented measurement process for your program and establish practices for using evaluation data to improve activities/services.

- **Identify a point person who is responsible for being up-to-date on the developing research and best practices in your content area.**

- **Implement interventions that are evidence-based and adapt them to meet the needs of the population you intend to reach**.

- **Communicate frequently with your service populations to find out how well your program efforts fit their needs or how efforts could be improved.**

- **Adjust strategies to meet the current best practices as they change or develop.**

- **Develop Continuous Quality Improvement methods.**

- **Develop a communication and marketing plan that actively conveys the goals, successes, and necessity of your program to a variety of audiences (e.g., stakeholders, funders, media).** Tailor your communication to each audience by using different forms of communication or tweaking your message.

- **Develop an internal communication plan.** Who needs to know what? Ensure that organizational leadership is aware of you program's outcomes and benefits.

- **Create a brand for your program and use consistent messaging and logos to get your point across.** This can help make your program more identifiable within the community. Carefully research which messages have been proven effective within your field.

- **Communicate the program's success to individuals/groups from a variety of sectors (e.g., businesses, elected officials, governmental agency representatives, partners, civic and religious groups).** Use language understandable to a broad audience; avoid using technical terms and jargon.

- **Make use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to reach different audiences and gain support for your cause.**

- **Identify key media contacts, and establish and maintain regular communication with them.**

- **Document how your program impacts the lives of people in the community, and communicate these successes to decision makers and funders.**

- **Train partners/stakeholders on how to share your program's messages to ensure consistency and a unified front.**

- **Celebrate successes with stakeholders at all levels, especially staff that deliver your activities/efforts.** This could simply be an email thanking everyone involved for their contributions.

Strategic Planning Using structured processes to guide your program's direction, goals, and strategies

- **Conduct strategic planning in concert with external partners to ensure buy-in to your program's goals and direction.**

- **Ensure implementation plans outline clear roles and responsibilities for program staff and other stakeholders.**

- **Maintain a clear channel of communication among stakeholders and staff during the strategic planning process.** Transparency promotes the free flow of ideas and provides an opportunity for members at all levels of your program to talk about what is and is not working.

- **Use the strategic plan to guide fiscal management decisions that affect your program's immediate and future needs.**

- **Regularly assess and plan for sustainability as part of strategic planning activities.**

- **When drafting a strategic plan, include how you will address the seven other sustainability domains.**