

Creating Sustainable Impacts OAH Sustainability Workshop



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Sustainability



- What is it?
- What contributes to it?
- What detracts from it?
- How do you know you have sustained your?

Why Sustain????



Funding providers and the professionals who receive their funds have an obligation to work toward sustaining programs.

The poignancy of this obligation was expressed by a service provider who said:



We have a responsibility to our program recipients; they've had so many losses in their lives and for us to come in for a year or two or three and give them hope, only to have the program go away, we've just caused another loss and a further loss of hope in their lives.

(Akerlund, 2000, p. 353)

Planning, planning, and oh... Planning!!



Early sustainability planning leads to sustainability!

Need a plan

Right partners and involvement

Sustainability plans are:

Living documents so need to be intentionally reviewed

Roadmaps for being intentional

Entry-level activity rather than an endpoint.

Sustaining programs is a process that benefits from continual monitoring and adaptation.

Defining Sustainability



- No one definition
- Needs to be determined and defined at the beginning of a project – otherwise, how will you know?
- There are levels of sustainability – not just is or isn't and numerous ways that sustainability looks

Conceptualizing sustainability itself is more complex than simply the question of whether a program continues to provide services.



Rather than being seen as a dichotomy, sustainability might be more accurately measured via:

levels of program activity, and
an assessment of the degree that current program goals are consonant with original program goals, and
the degree to which program benefits are available to communities.

Our Definition of Sustainability



Took five years to define!!!

A sustained project is one whose programs and services are maintained continuously over time, and that keeps a focus consonant with its original goals and objectives including the individuals, families, and communities it was originally intended to serve.

Sustainability is the power or the capacity of projects to continuously respond to identified community issues.

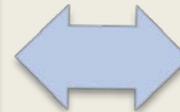
How the Definition Works:

Within the definition there are several degrees of freedom, including:

the intensity and level of programs and services that are offered



the flexibility a program demonstrates with regard to specific services and programs.



how institutionalized a program becomes

Forms of Sustainability



Programs may ebb and flow and wax and wane regarding the breadth and depth of their programming.

Some contract while others expand while yet others truly maintain the original program activities.

Some programs become aligned with or become part of other organizations and established institutions while others have maintained their independence.

Certain programs have kept and offered the same set of prevention and intervention programs for many years while others have introduced different programs that are still focused on their general goals and objectives.

Understanding Sustainability



There are questions that need to be addressed and understood.

- Is the project meeting its original goals?
- Is the project maintaining, expanding, reducing, changing efforts to meet its goals?
- Is there secure future funding?
- How do changes impact the original goals?

Common Long-Term Modifications



- Reducing sites
- Reducing programs (in quantity or quality)
- Changing targeted audience
- Changing staffing patterns

Question to Consider:

How much of the above can be done and the project still be considered “sustained?”

Facilitators of Sustainability



- Various frameworks exist with much overlap
- My research points to:
 - Leadership Competence
 - Effective Collaboration
 - Understanding the Community
 - Program Responsivity (was Program Adaptability)
 - Strategic Funding (was Adequate Funding)
 - Staff Involvement and Integration (was Staff Quality and Involvement)
 - Demonstrating Program Results (was Demonstrated program impact)

Which factors are most important?



Leadership, funding, and staffing are likely the primary linchpins in program success and sustainability.

- Could survive short term without:
 - strong collaboration,
 - without demonstrating program results through research,
 - without being responsive to community changes.
- Less likely to be successful, even in the short term, with:
 - poor leadership,
 - inadequate funding, and
 - poorly involved staff.

Obstacles to Sustainability



Funding

Staffing

Turnover

Community
politics

Community
receptivity

Economy

Conflict

User fees

Project
ownership
issues

Two major obstacles



1. Funding

- Need for more funding
- Need for stable funding

2. Staffing

- Not enough staff due to lack of funding or inability to recruit appropriate personnel
- Lack of committed staff
- Staff turnover



**Examples:
Are they sustained?
You decide!**

Example #1: After school program



After school program for at risk youth

- Provided homework assistance, healthy snacks, life skill education, physical activity
- After grant funding ended – continued to provide all of those same activities
- After probing, found out that changes had occurred that included needing to charge user fees when it was primarily free before

Example #2



Goals:

- Improve standardized academic achievement scores
- Improve grades and behavior at school
- Improve science and language literacy
- Improve self concept
- Etc.....

2 years
later:

- Goals remained the same
- Increased from service area of 4 schools to 15
- Number of participants and staff members doubled
- Reduced time spent at each school

Example #3



Goals:

Provide safe place for children after school

Prevent teen pregnancy

Develop program and curricula to provide positive alternative for time use

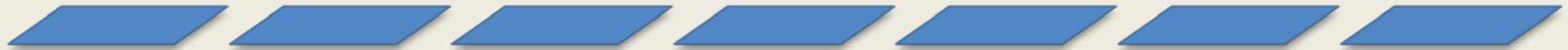
Increase students sense of personal power, self efficacy, responsible decision make, communication skills, sense of personal responsibility

Develop pre-employment skills and expand career options

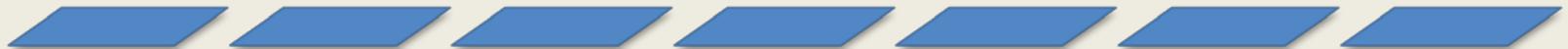
Enhance parenting skills for participant parents



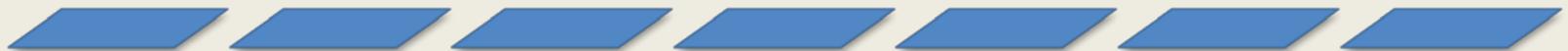
Targeted girls and boys in 6th-8th grades identified as at risk by the three middle schools. (75-80% came from low to moderate income homes.



Twice a week girls went to YWCA and boys to BGCA



Homework help provided as well as field trips, open rec, curriculum



**One
year
after
grant
funding
ended:**



Number of participants
has decreased

Programming only
during the school year

To satisfy funding
requirements from a
local housing authority
and neighborhood
groups, most
participants come from
certain neighborhoods
and housing projects

No longer available
during summer

BGCA conducts reduced
program one hour a day
five days a week

Minimal collaboration
between BGCA and
YWCA

YWCA serves 40 girls
using original
curriculum

No longer can provide
transportation to
children from school to
YWCA and then home



Example #4



Reading literacy program for at risk youth to reduce school drop-out rates.

Rural area so transportation was needed to get 4th-6th graders to after school programs

Provided programming 2 days/week during school year

Field trips on weekend and school holidays to enhance literacy efforts

Summer programs ran 3 days/week for 8 weeks

Parent education provided through monthly parent newsletters

One year after grant funding ended:

- Funding for activities taken over by another project and implement the program through schools and other community agencies
- Transition to other community agencies was planned from the beginning of the grant
- Programming has expanded from 2 to 3 sites
- Budget and number of participants and collaborators has increased
- The former program director of the project is now a director of the project that took it over

Example #5



Goals:

1. Enhance academic performance of at risk youth by providing before and after school programs and summer enrichment program
2. Provide family enrichment opportunities
 - Provided tutoring, homework assistance, life skills education, anti-violence curriculum, recreation at two before school and three after school sites
 - Monthly Family Fun Nights – required if child was in program



One year after funding ended:

- Program now run by the coalition and is at one after school site
- Continues same activities
- No longer has summer program
- Before school projects eliminated when schools offered a morning breakfast program
- Coalition meets to provide program direction and search for funding



Other changes made:

- 1. Expanded definition of at-risk to include latchkey children**
- 2. Obtained non-profit tax-exempt 5013c status**
- 3. Cut back in staff and increased reliance on volunteers**

Funding now mostly through:

- 1. Two local school districts**
- 2. Sliding scale user fees**

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