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Overview of the Training

- Grounded in long-term research on program sustainability
- Grounded in reliable frameworks designed to further understanding of building community capacity, sustainability, and program planning
- Focused on factors of sustaining community-based programs
- Oriented toward producing a sustainability plan at the conclusion of the training
- Dependent on an interactive training environment



Workshop Objectives

Over the course of the workshop, participants will:

- Learn the factors/elements of sustainability
- Determine your project's sustainability needs
- Develop a viable sustainability plan



Introduction and Purpose

- Community-based programs are important components of service delivery to families
- Despite prevalence of these programs, relatively little information on elements of sustainability is known
- Data suggest many of them are not sustained once initial start-up funding is exhausted
- What are primary elements of program sustainability?



Building Community Capacity

- Behind our approach to program sustainability is a building community capacity framework
 - Resilience oriented
 - Focused on connections between people, between organizations, and between people and organizations.
 - Sustaining community-based programs is part of capacity building.
 - Capacity building is part of sustainability.



Building Community Capacity

- Requires commitment from agency professionals, community leaders, and individuals and families in the community as well as the interaction between them.
- Rests on the foundation of connections
- Implications for sustainability
 - “The People” underwrite important and enduring programs.



A Community Capacity Oriented Organization

- Is part of the community rather than apart from it
- Knows the communities within “the community”
- Understands and values connections
- Is not satisfied with the status quo
- Committed to intentionally addressing community issues
- Places more emphasis on outreach
- Works in partnership with other agencies and organizations
- Sees community members as partners
- Places building community capacity at the top of the agenda



A Matter of Responsibility

“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).



What is sustainability?

- Sustainability is the capacity of programs to continuously respond to community issues.
- A sustained program maintains a focus consonant with its original goals and objectives.
 - This includes the individuals, families and communities it was originally intended to serve.
 - Programs can vary in intensity and frequency
 - Actual program activities can change



- Programs ebb and flow and wax and wane regarding the breadth and depth of their programming.
 - Some contract, some expand, whereas others maintain the original program activities.
- Some become aligned with other organizations and established institutions, whereas others maintain their independence.
- Certain programs offer the same prevention activities for years and others introduce different activities that maintain focus on their general goals and objectives.



Sustainability: What Does it Look Like?



Elements of Sustainability: Overview

- Elements are varied
- Elements are interrelated
- The significance of particular elements vary from program to program
- Continues to deliver programming to intended audiences over the long term consonant with program goals and objectives
- Modifies as necessary through expansion and contraction
- Supports community capacity
 - Communities with high capacity can better respond to community needs



Factors of Sustainability: Framework and Research Results

- ◉ **Leadership competence**
- ◉ **Effective collaboration**
- ◉ **Understanding the community**
- ◉ **Demonstrated program results**
- ◉ **Strategic funding**
- ◉ **Staff involvement and integration**
- ◉ **Program responsiveness**



Leadership Competence

- ◎ **Leaders establish goals, develop clear and realistic plans regarding development, implementation, and evaluation.**
 - Leaders clearly establish the project's mission and vision.
 - Leaders planned within the first two years for sustaining the project.
 - Leaders continue planning for sustainability.
 - Leaders developed and follow a realistic project plan
 - Leaders identify alternative (and multiple) strategies for project survival.



Research Results: Leadership Competence

- **Program developers should look for leaders who have:**
 - A range of skills and experiences
 - A commitment to sustainability
 - The ability to develop and articulate a long range plan
 - The foresight to engage the community in their plans
- **Contingencies for unstable leadership should be incorporated into the sustainability plan**



Effective Collaboration

- **Stakeholders who understand and support program goals, have clear roles, and who are actively involved in programs.**
 - Local decision makers are project collaborators.
 - Community service agencies are project collaborators.
 - Collaborators share responsibility for providing program resources.
 - Collaborators share credit for project success.
 - Collaborators have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
 - Collaborators share a vision for the project.
 - Turf issues are resolved.
 - Collaborators' work on this project is supported by their agency.
 - Collaborators are involved in program design, implementation, or evaluation.



Research Results: Effective Collaboration

- **Projects that expect to be sustained should recognize that partnerships must be active, rather than passive; must be about supportive behaviors rather than only about supportive sentiments.**
 - Partnerships should more effectively address community issues together than they could otherwise do separately.
 - Over time, partnerships may provide a permanent home for a project or program.
 - Partnership contributions to sustainability are most evident in the resources they provide and the breadth and depth of their involvement.



Understanding the Community

- **Entails knowledge of community needs and assets, respect for community members, and involving them in meeting program goals.**
 - Community needs are regularly assessed.
 - Community resources and assets are regularly assessed.
 - The project addresses key community needs.
 - Community resources are effectively utilized by the project.
 - Project goals are matched with community needs.
 - Project needs are matched with community resources.
 - The projects accounts for diversity in the community.
 - The project has strong local governmental support.
 - Community members are involved in program design or implementation.



Research Results: Understanding the Community

● Program Developers should:

- Assess both community needs and assets
- Assess the match between project goals and community needs and resources
- Assess the receptivity of community members and existing community organizations to new programs
- Have knowledge of the community climate prior to developing programs
- Use good public relations and marketing to promote program success to the community
- Involve adults and youth from the community in program efforts.



Demonstrating Program Results

- **The evaluation of program processes and outcomes with acceptable methods; informing stakeholders of results.**
 - Evaluation plans are developed prior to implementing programs.
 - Project effectiveness is demonstrated through evaluation.
 - Evaluations are conducted on a regular basis.
 - Evaluation results are used to modify programming (expand, reduce, eliminate).
 - Project successes are made known to the community, funders, etc..
 - Public relations (marketing) strategies are in place to highlight successes and recruit participants, funders, and collaborators.



Research Results: Demonstrating Program Results

- Project success needs to be documented through outcome based evaluation.
- When creating program budgets, program developers should specify monies dedicated to evaluation.
- There should be continuous assessments of community needs and assets.
- Successes should be marketed to both the community and to the funder.
- Results focused logic models provide visual map.



Strategic Funding

- **Plans and resources in place for present and future programming; ongoing mechanisms to secure funding.**
 - Current funding is sufficient for the project's operations.
 - Funding is available on a long term basis (at least 2 or more years).
 - There are plans in place for obtaining additional funding.
 - There is adequate funding for hiring and retaining quality staff.



Research Results: Strategic Funding

- The search for additional funding should be made an ongoing, continuous activity.
- Arranging a mechanism whereby another person or organization is responsible for securing funding will prevent staff time being diverted from program implementation.



Staff Involvement and Integration

- **Staff are committed to program goals and are involved in important program decisions and activities.**
 - Staff are involved in program design.
 - Staff are involved in project decision making.
 - Staff are committed to the project mission, vision, and goals.
 - Staff are qualified to work on the project.
 - Staff are adequately trained.
 - Staff are from the community that the project serves.



Research Results: Staff Involvement and Integration

- To address the issue of insufficient qualified staff, staff training should be an ongoing component of a project
- Program developers should continuously assess program needs and hire staff that are well matched with those needs.
- Project leaders need to address staff issues early and promote frequent and open communication.



Program Responsivity

- ◎ **Projects need to have the ability to adapt to changing community needs if they are to be sustained.**
 - Goals and programming that no longer meet the community's needs are reassessed and changed as appropriate.
 - Projects that no longer meet the community's needs are eliminated.
 - When there are community needs that are not being met, programs are developed or expanded to better meet those community needs.
 - Sites are consolidated, as appropriate, to better use project resources.



Research Results: Program Responsivity

- Program developers should:
 - Develop new programs in response to changes in the community.
 - Respond to redundancy, gaps, and duplication of services within the community.
 - Create new programming approaches to match community needs and interests.
 - Make sure programs are both timely and relevant.
 - Have a system, formal and informal, for assessing changes in the community.



Research Results Summary

- All 7 factors/elements in the Sustainability Framework are empirically related to program sustainability although the strength of the relationships may vary.



Ultimate Result: Program Sustained

- Can be defined in various ways
- Being sustained always transitory, here today and gone tomorrow
- Possible definitions:
 - Program goals met or exceeded
 - Programs expanded, sites expanded
 - Number of years in existence
 - Functioning to full capacity
 - Routine part of larger organization



In Summary: Implications for Sustainability

- The roads to sustainability are complex.
- Answering the sustainability question requires more than one answer.
- Consequently, program professionals must be “intentional” about elevating the sustainability conversation.
- A first step in this intentionality is the analysis of situations, conditions, desires, statuses, and discomfort.



The Sustainability Process: Applying Knowledge

Developing a Sustainability Plan

- Be as detailed as possible.
- This is your map into the future as you work towards sustaining your project.
- Your plan needs to be reassessed on at least an annual basis.



Program Sustainability: Mapping the Community Program Terrain

- Focus on your project.
- Respond to all items individually (rather than conferring with your colleagues)
- For each item, please indicate whether what is being described is:
 - **Green:** clearly a characteristic of your project
 - **Yellow:** somewhat a characteristic of your project or has an uncertain status to you
 - **Red:** clearly NOT a characteristic of your project



Next Steps in Mapping

- Now that you have completed your individual analysis of sustainability factors and items, transfer your “data” to the sustainability factor wall chart.
- You have green, yellow, and red markers.
 - Please place a circle of the color you marked on your worksheet on the wall chart corresponding to the factor and item.



Reading the Wall

- Step back far enough from the wall chart to see it all.
- What is your first response?
- Particular patterns?
- Surprises?
- Confirmations?
- Implications?
- What story does it tell? 3 chapters?
- Next steps?



Examining your Project

◎ Look at the 7 factors:

- Where are the most “greens?”
- Where are the most “reds?”
- Are there particular sustainability factors that stand out for you either in terms of successes or gaps?
- What can be done to strengthen the gaps that you have identified?
 - Can any “greens” be used to tackle the “reds?”
- All things considered, are you satisfied with what you see?
- What are your project’s next steps in turns the “reds” into “greens” or “yellows?”



Small Group Work:

○ Tallying Sustainability Factors across Projects

- Add up each of the greens, yellows and reds for each factor from your individual sheet
- Put the numbers in the space of your next worksheet
- These numbers will help provide a very general representation of your project
 - *Discuss the strengths, gaps, and uncertainties.*
 - *Different perceptions in your group? Talk about them.*



Highlighting and Prioritizing Factors

- **What story is being told about the current status of your project?**
 - Check those factors that are mainly green.
 - Check those factors that are mainly yellow.
 - Check those factors that are mainly red.



Determining Item Priority

- Look at the overall schema for each factor (green, yellow, red dots)
- Under each factor, list 2-3 items that *your group* determines needs to be set as a priority for sustainability planning.
 - Think of these as desired results related to sustainability
- List those items on your worksheet.
- You do not need to include something for every factor – that is *your group's decision*.



Building Priority Consensus

- ***Work within your group to come to a consensus of 5-10 items based on prior worksheets.***
 - These items will form the basis for your initial sustainability plan.
 - This plan needs to be reassessed and modified over time. This is merely a point of entry.
 - This plan is your entry-level map into the future as you work toward sustaining your program.
 - You have several worksheets that you completed that will enable you to develop your plan.
 - Worksheet content can now be discussed and transferred to the “Sustainability Action Plan.”



Sustainability Action Plan

- **List the factor and item on the worksheets provided for each item selected.**
 - List the activity(ies)
 - Who will do what?
 - What is the timeline?
 - How will you know that you have made progress on this activity?
 - How and when will progress on this activity be disseminated to this group? To others?



Processing Your Sustainability Plan

- **At this point in time, where do your sustainability efforts need to occur?**
- **Level of difficulty?**
 - What do you perceive as challenges to your efforts?
 - How will these potential barriers be overcome?
 - What will facilitate your efforts?
- **What are your next steps?**
- **Take them!**
- **Revisit the sustainability plan on a regular basis**
 - can't remain on a shelf!



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