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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
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
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?
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
“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).
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?

- Strategic Funding
- Leadership Competence
- Understanding the Community
- Effective Collaboration
- Program Responsivity
- Demonstrating Program Results
- Staff Involvement and Integration
- Marek & Mancini, 2005
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 responsivity
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.

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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.
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 project accounts for diversity in the community.
  - The project has strong local governmental support.
  - Community members are involved in program design or implementation.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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 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.
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.
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.
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.
All 7 factors/elements in the Sustainability Framework are empirically related to program sustainability although the strength of the relationships may vary.
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
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.
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.
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
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.
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?
Examing 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?”

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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.
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.
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.*
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?
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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