TOOL | SUSTAINING COLLECTIVE IMPACT EFFORTS

Building a collective impact approach requires the engagement of a diverse team of leaders, a focus on community change and evaluation and learning. Sustaining collective impact efforts is about engaging, in unique ways, all the resources available to the collaborative.

THE SUSTAINABILITY CIRCLE

Lydia I. Marek, Ph.D. and Jay A. Mancini, Ph.D. from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Blacksburg researched and developed an approach which identified seven factors of sustainable community change. This approach to sustainability has a direct correlation to collective impact efforts. The seven factors identified include:

- Leadership Competence
- Effective Collaboration
- Understanding the Community
- Demonstrating Results
- Strategic Funding
- Staff Involvement and Integration
- Community Responsivity

Source: https://cals.arizona.edu/sfcs/cyfernet/evaluation/Sustaining_2007_cyfar_pp.pdf

Each of these seven factors is instrumental in building and maintaining the viability of a collective impact or collaborative effort. The chart on the next page will provide collective impact efforts with an opportunity to understand each of the seven factors; to self-assess their current resources and to identify strategies for building sustainability. The seven factors help look beyond the perspective of financial sustainability as a sole factor for change. Understanding the importance of building community leadership, staff competence, looking at results and community engagement are pivotal to community change efforts and collective impact sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

Factor Description	What is working:	What can be worked on:
Leadership Competence: Activities that contribute to high-quality initiatives are the responsibility of leaders and include: • clearly developing and articulating a common vision and objectives; • performing regular community needs and assets assessments; • ongoing planning, adaptation of approach and evaluation; • securing funding, fiscal management; • building a sustainability approach early in the initiative.		
Effective Collaboration: Involves identifying relevant stakeholders who actively support program goals and have clearly identified roles and responsibilities. • Collaborative efforts build a broad base of support in the community and of key stakeholders for program implementation, success, and sustainability.		
Understanding the Community: Entails having knowledge of community needs and resources; having respect for community members, and involving key community members in programs. Includes: • socioeconomic and political considerations; • community participation in programs; • honoring community values and cultural relevance; • cultivating key community leader support; and • hiring local staff.		

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Factor Description	What is working:	What can be worked on:
Demonstrating Results: Evaluating process and outcomes using acceptable research methods and informing stakeholders of the results of those evaluations is critical. • Evaluation must assess the intervention and subsequent program modifications focusing on measurable results. • Evaluation findings can then be used to leverage current successes for establishing future funding.		
Strategic Funding: Includes having plans and resources in place to support current and prospective program requirements. • Intentional planning for continued funding includes an analysis of short-term and long-term funding needs; • developing a range of financing options; and • recognizing that sustainability is enhanced when there is diversity in funding streams.		
Staff Involvement and Integration: Inclusion of committed, qualified staff in program design, implementation, evaluation and decision making develops a culture that values broad-based participation in working toward program sustainability and success. • Supporting program goals occurs more readily when staff are important components in the organization and make the organization their own.		

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Factor Description	What is working:	What can be worked on:
Community Responsivity: The ability of a CI initiative to adapt programming to meet changes in community needs is critical. • Although CI Initiatives may maintain their overall goals, activities may need change to address evolving issues and contexts. • An important consideration in programs is the ability of the program to be modified to continually meet changing community needs and resources.		

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

As a collaborative group use the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool to determine both what is working and what the collaborative table needs to work on. Develop a sustainability action plan for moving forward. The sustainability action plan should include concrete activities and who will be leading each step. Here are some items to include in your sustainability action plan:

1. Create a shared understanding of sustainability
2. Create a plan to work through the process
3. Position collaborative efforts to increase the odds of sustainability
4. Look at the current picture of tasks and pending items
5. Develop criteria to determine which efforts continue
6. Decide what to continue and prioritize
7. Create options for maintaining priority efforts
8. Develop a sustainability plan
9. Implement the sustainability plan
10. Evaluate outcomes and revise as needed

FOR MORE RESOURCES ABOUT COLLECTIVE IMPACT

• Collective Impact Forum – www.collectiveimpactforum.org
• Tamarack Institute – www.tamarackcommunity.ca
• Change First – www.changefirst.com
• Collaboration for Impact – www.collaborationforimpact.org

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