Sustainability Planning Workbook

A tool to assist organizations to engage in sustainability planning to identify and strategize the continuation of grant-funded programs and activities after grant funds cease.

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RMC RESEARCH

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How to Use This Workbook

Sustainability of programs/activities depends on developing a clear, sensible, and convincing plan for putting and keeping in place the essential elements that make an initiative effective (adapted from The Finance Project, 2003). Programs or activities continue or are sustained because they are effective, valued and supported, integrated into an organization, and have the necessary resources.

The following steps are recommendations for organizations to consider using in developing a sustainability action plan:

Step 1   Identify Who Will Lead the Sustainability Planning Team

Step 2   Identify Sustainability Planning Team Members

Step 3   Think About the Sustainability Team's Approach to Review the Programs/Activities and Determine Planning Priorities

Step 4   Team Reviews the Specific Core Elements of the Programs and/or Activities and Their Implications

    Step 4A   Current Budget and Costs

    Step 4B   Staffing/Human Resources Implications

    Step 4C   Policy Implications

    Step 4D   Infrastructure Implications

        Step 4D1 Organizational Operations/Capacities Implications

        Step 4D2 Data and Technology Platform Systems Implications

        Step 4D3 Partnerships and Alignment Implications

Step 5   Based on the Review of Core Elements of Programs/Activities and Their Implications, Team Prioritizes Core Elements for a Sustainability Action Plan

Step 6   Identify Goals for Sustainability

Step 7   Articulate a Sustainability Summary Statement

Step 8   Identify Potential Financial Resources and Complete the Financial Resources Template

Step 9   Develop a Sustainability Action Plan

Save this file to your computer and complete the steps as your team moves through the process.

Organization: _____   **Date:** _____

Current grant funded program(s) or activities:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Step 1   Identify Who Will Lead the Sustainability Planning Team

Questions to consider:

1a   Who in your organization has the decision-making power and influence over the targeted activities/programs you want to sustain?

1b   Who in your organization has the capacity, expertise, and time to lead the efforts?

Team Lead(s) (name, position):

Step 2   Identify Sustainability Planning Team Members

Questions to consider:

2a   Who in your organization currently supports and champions the activities and/or program inside and outside your organization?

2b   Who should be on the team? (e.g., representatives knowledgeable of organization's policy and procedures, budgets and finance, HR, data)

2c   What can they contribute to the planning process?

2d   Are there ways to engage different stakeholders at different points in the planning?

2e   Who are the key organizational leaders who will need to be aware of the sustainability planning process and plan?

Sustainability Planning Team Members

Name	Position	Contact Information	Expertise/Knowledge

This team will be responsible for assessing the specific core elements of the ESII-funded programs and/or activities, determining priorities, researching potential financial resources, and oversee the planning and design of the sustainability plan.

Step 3   Think About the Sustainability Team's Approach to Review the Programs/Activities and Determine Planning Priorities

More than likely, the planning process will occur through a series of meetings over a span of time. It is critical that all members understand the scope of work and the time involved.

Questions to consider:

3a   In what ways does the sustainability plan need to align with the organization's strategic plan?

3b   By when does the team need to complete the sustainability plan? (This will inform how often the planning team will need to meet.)

3c   What are the most pressing questions to address by the team?
(See above and below on addressing policy, staffing, infrastructure, and funding implications.)

Need to align with organization's strategic plan:

Timelines for completion of sustainability action plan:

Determine schedule for team meetings:

Pressing questions for team to address during planning:

Step 4   Team Reviews the Specific Core Elements of the Programs and/or Activities and Their Implications

Not all grant-funded programs and/or activities may need to be sustained if they are not benefiting participants and producing outcomes.

Core elements are components of a program or major activities that must be maintained without alteration to ensure effectiveness and achieve outcomes.

4a   List the specific core elements of the program and/or activities that would be essential to sustain. (Be as specific as possible.)

4b   For each core element, clearly identify

- Who benefits? (students, teachers, families, others)
- What are the specific benefits?
- What data or evidence has been collected or available on outcomes?

Core Program or Activity Element	Recipients of Benefits	Benefits	Collection of Data on Outcomes

Step 4A   Current Budget and Costs

As the team reviews each core element, consider these questions:

4A1   What is the current budget for the targeted components and elements of activities and programs?

4A2   Identify numbers of persons (e.g., students, teachers, families) served and costs per participant.

4A3   Other?

Core Program or Activity Element	Current Budget	No. of Persons Served/Participating	Cost Per Participant

Step 4B   Staffing/Human Resources Implications

As the team reviews each core element, consider these questions:

4B1   Identify the current qualified staff available (names, titles, and full time equivalent [FTE] for each element).

4B2   Who in the organization is responsible for overseeing/supervising the staff (and FTEs) for the targeted program/activities? Any implications for supervising the targeted programs/activities?

4B3   What professional development (PD) of current staff will be needed to sustain the targeted programs/activities?

4B4   Total the current costs for salaries and PD.

4B5   Does the organization have the qualified staff to sustain the targeted program/activities? Are additional staff needed? If yes, how many? Qualifications? Do job descriptions and criteria need to be adapted to include this core element? By when?

4B6   Other?

Core Program or Activity Element	Current Available Qualified Staff	Current Staff Supervisor (position)	FTEs	PD Needed for Sustainability	Total Current Costs for Staffing and PD

Total Number of Additional Staff Needed

Position	FTE	Qualifications Needed	Timelines	Projected Costs for Additional Staff

Step 4C   Policy Implications

As the team reviews each core element of a program/activity, consider these questions:

4C1   Are there relevant organizational policies and procedures in place to sustain the targeted program/activities—even if there are changes in staffing or leadership?

4C2   Do any organizational policies and procedures need to be modified to sustain the targeted program/activities?
If yes, what modifications are needed?

4C3   Do the targeted programs/activities need any new organizational policies and procedures to sustain the components?

4C4   Other?

Core Program or Activity Element	Current Relevant Organizational Policies & Procedures	Any Modifications Needed	Cost Implications

Identify any new organizational policies needed:

Step 4D   Infrastructure Implications

As the team reviews each core element, consider the following aspects.

Step 4D1   Organizational Operations/Capacities Implications

Questions to consider:

4D1a   How integrated are the grant-funded activities into the current organizational structures? Any implications?

4D1b   To what extent are grant-funded activities coordinated with other offices, programs, and activities within the organization? (List these.) Any implications?

4D1c   To what extent is the program/activity element part of the organization's daily operations?

4D1d   Other?

Core Program or Activity Element	Degree of Integration Into Current Organizational Structures	Coordination With Others (Offices, Programs, etc.)	Extent Part of Daily Operations

Step 4D2   Data and Technology Platform Systems Implications

Questions to consider:

4D2a   Do any changes/modifications need to be made to the collection of grant-related data for sustainability?

4D2b   Do the current grants have implications for adapting the collection and reporting of data?

4D2c   What are the current technology systems/platforms being used? What are their current costs?

4D2d   Do any changes/modifications need to be considered in technology systems/platforms for targeted activities/programs?

4D2e   Other?

Core Program or Activity Element	Needed Changes to Data Collection	Any Implications From GPS	Current Technology Systems/Platforms	Current Costs for Data Collection, Technology Systems/Platforms	Cost Projections

Step 4D3   Partnerships and Alignment Implications

As the team reviews each core element, consider these questions:

4D3a   Are there any potential changes to current grant partnerships to sustain the targeted program/activities? To current contractual partners?

4D3b   Are there any implications from the alignment of the targeted programs/activities to other organizations?

4D3c   Other?

Potential changes to partnerships:

Potential changes to contractual partners:

Summary of any implications:

Step 5 Based on the Review of Core Elements of Programs/Activities and Their Implications, Team Prioritizes Core Elements for a Sustainability Action Plan

Questions to consider:

Which prioritized specific elements of activities and/or core programs does your organization want to sustain? (Based on the completed review.) What would your organization not want to sacrifice from the programs/activities, even in tough financial times?

5a   For how long do you want to sustain these?

5b   What specific projected results do you want to achieve by sustaining the activities?

5c   Why does your organization want to sustain these core elements of activities/programs?

5d   What are the total projected costs?

5e   Determine gaps between current budget and projected costs for each year of sustainability.

Prioritized Core Element(s)	Length of Time for Sustainability	Projected Results	Reasons for Sustainability	Total Projected Costs	Current Budget	Gaps Between Current Budget & Projected Costs

Step 6   Identify Goals for Sustainability

What are the goals for sustaining specific core elements activities/programs funded by current grants?
Be as specific as possible. It is suggested that the team create specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals.

Step 7   Articulate a Sustainability Summary Statement

It is important for the team to be able to articulate a statement that includes:

- What you want to sustain (prioritized core elements)
- For how long
- What results you want to achieve
- Staffing, policy, and infrastructure needs
- Budget needs
- Why your organization should sustain these elements
- Overall goals for the sustainability plan

This summary statement can be shared with leadership and stakeholders as part of the communication strategies.

Sustainability summary statement:

Step 8   Identify Potential Financial Resources and Complete the Potential Financial Resources Template

Questions to consider:

8a   Where are there gaps between the current budget and projected costs for sustaining the components and structures? (Step 5)

8b   Based on the gaps, does the team need to create a strategic, multipronged financial approach for the sustainability plan?

8c   What other potential financial resources are available? (In kind, federal, state, local, public/private)

8d   Which of the potential resources would require low effort or high effort to obtain? Which funding sources should be prioritized? What are their timelines?

Example of Template

Core Program or Activity Element to Sustain	Name of Available Financial Resource	Contact Information	Source & Type	Amount of Funds Available	Eligibility Criteria & Application Requirements	Timelines (due dates)	Comments

Step 9   Develop Sustainability Action Plan

(See template.)

Goals (SMART):

Example of Template

Prioritized Core Program or Activity Element (as specific as possible)	Objectives	Action Steps to Achieve Objectives	Persons Responsible	Timelines	Resources Needed	Expected Results	Comments

References

Region 8 Comprehensive Center. (2023). *Sustainability Planning Workbook for Indiana Employability Skills Innovation and Implementation (ESII) Grantees.*

The Finance Project. (2003). *Sustainability Planning Workbook: Building a Sustainable Initiative.*

Templates

Potential Financial Resources Template

Organization: _____   **Date:** _____

Core Program or Activity Element to Sustain	Name of Available Financial Resource	Contact Information	Source & Type	Amount of Funds Available	Eligibility Criteria & Application Requirements	Timelines (Due Dates)	Comments

Sustainability Action Plan Template

Organization: _____   Date: _____

Team Members: _____

Goals (SMART):

Prioritized Core Program or Activity Element (as specific as possible)	Objectives	Action Steps to Achieve Objectives	Persons Responsible	Timelines	Resources Needed	Expected Results	Comments

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