

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING FOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS



A collaborative process that integrates planning and the ongoing work necessary for successful sustainability shifts the project focus from “keeping a project funded” to “changing the system to produce better outcomes for families.” Systems change requires the relationships and the resources that leads to sustainability of interventions and institutionalization of change in policy. Sustaining a successful project thus requires planning, mobilizing community resources, and early partner engagement.

WHEN DOES SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING START?

An effective sustainability plan starts when the planning phase begins for any project. Developing and strengthening strategic partnerships early in the life of the grant is an essential component to sustainability planning. Early engagement with key partners helps a team establish a shared vision and common project goals. Timely action allows stakeholders to align project goals with the broader community goals and with state initiatives. Sustainability planning requires a focused effort over the life of the grant to gather data, identify funding streams, determine practice and policy changes to institutionalize the project based on demonstrated effectiveness, and positive outcomes for families.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING?

Planning for long-term sustainability is a multiagency, multidisciplinary job requiring a strong governance structure with strong communication protocols in place. Although all partners are responsible for this task, the collaborative should designate one leader to ensure all steps are accomplished and that sustainability topics are part of frequent and ongoing discussions at all levels of the partnership. Partners may become project ambassadors, advocates, they may provide insights, and identify new community partners to conduct outreach, recommend system policy changes, and suggest additional funding opportunities.

SAMPLE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STEERING AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

PARTNERS

- Who are the existing and potential partners that support sustainability? What strengths do they bring to the collaboration for sustainability?
- What responsibilities are shared across partners? How will partners' strengths and challenges be considered in sustainability planning?
- Will the team continue to meet and monitor the outcomes even after the grant ends?
- How can an inventory of services in the community help avoid duplication of efforts and services, and strengthen the system of care?

FUNDERS

- What existing team resources can be realigned?
- How can the resources be expanded?
- What local or state resources might be available?
- Can training increase availability of services?

COMMUNITY

- Is there support in the community to provide the services long term?
- Who are the current program champions, and are there others who might be interested?

WHAT IS IN A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN?



WHAT ARE THE TOOLS?

Community Mapping	Promotes cross-system collaboration, aligns initiatives, and identifies and secures partnerships with existing local programs, service providers, and stakeholders
System Walkthrough	A structured process to identify effective practices, gaps, and barriers that contribute to (or hinder) the achievement of desired outcomes for families served
Cost Analysis	A method to weigh project costs against the benefits of a service to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of a project and long-term savings
Dissemination Activities	Disseminate project messages, products, outcomes and findings to key leadership and other target audiences or promote broader implementation, system change, institutionalization, and sustainability

WHAT ARE WE SUSTAINING, AND AT WHAT LEVEL?

An RPG grant provides an opportunity to test ideas, innovations, and evidence-informed practices to improve outcomes for children, parents and families. Not all ideas, innovations, or practices result in the desired outcomes. Some may be either too expensive or too complicated to sustain. Decisions regarding what to sustain require analyzing the information available.

Questions to consider:

- What is the process for deciding what project elements to sustain?
- Do we have evidence that it works?
- Should we sustain the project at the current scale, or expand it or reduce it?
- Are all necessary partners at the table?
- How invested are the service providers in the sustainability plan?

Funding downturns, staff turnover, competition for scarce resources represent challenges for sustainability. Prior RPGs have addressed these challenges by documenting and disseminating outcomes that demonstrate better results for parents, children, and families.