

Traffic Safety Program

Sustainability Kit

A stylized graphic consisting of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of orange, tan, and grey, creating a sense of depth and movement. The shapes are arranged to form a path that leads towards the year 2009.

2009

Introduction

Again and again, community organizations that rely on funds from grants and contracts come back to the same question: “How do we find the resources to sustain and support our program’s services over time?”

Sustainability is the capacity of an organization to achieve long-term success and stability and to serve its community without the threat or loss of financial support and quality of services and programs. Sustainability is about maintaining programs and projects after a funding period is over, and ensuring the organization has become a permanent part of the community’s resources.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Region 8 identified a need to assist grassroots organizations with the development of strategies for building capacity and planning for long-term sustainability and success. Critical elements of achieving sustainability are included in this toolkit. The toolkit is design to help develop sustainable organizations and program services. It provides helpful information to guide sustainability efforts, samples of tools, and actual fill-in-the-blank planning templates and worksheets. The toolkit is organized into six sections:

1. Strategic planning
2. Developing a marketing plan
3. Managing finances
4. Evaluation plans
5. Resources for sustainability
6. Tools, templates, worksheets and more

The basis for this toolkit came from a similar toolkit that was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) entitled *Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs: A Tool Kit for Community-and Faith-Based Service Providers*. SAMHSA granted permission for the use of the materials and tools, citing from the source, “All material appearing in this report is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA. Citation of the source is appreciated.”

Strategic Planning

The key to a financially stable traffic safety organization is a well-developed strategic plan. A strategic plan is like a map to help traffic safety organizations keep on course. The strategic planning process provides a systematic way for an organization to express its values, describe its vision, state or update its mission, develop and accomplish short- and- long-term goals, and track progress.

Organizational assessment is one of the first and most useful tools of strategic planning. Organizational assessment is a procedure used to gather information about an organization, determine the problems it may have, and then find the solutions for those problems. This sort of assessment helps a foundation review programs, staff, finances and timelines.

Strategic planning begins by asking the following questions:

- What do we want to achieve (goals)?
- What deliverables will we accomplish to reach the goals (objectives)?
 - Objectives should be **SMART**:
 - **S**pecific
 - **M**easurable
 - **A**ttainable
 - **R**ealistic
 - **T**imely
- How will we know when we have it?
- Where, when and with who do we want to work?
- Where will it work?
- What obstacles do we face?
- What resources, including financial, do we have?
- What resources, including financial, do we need?
- Where can we find the resources we need?
- What activities and tasks will we do to achieve our goals and objectives?
- Did we do what we said we would (process evaluation)?
- Did we achieve our desired goals (outcome evaluation)?

In addition to the programmatic component, the overall strategic plan should have a sustainability component including goals, objectives, activities, and evaluation.

Components of a strategic plan include:

- SWOT Analysis = Identify the internal Strengths and Weaknesses and the external Opportunities and Threats.
- Vision and Mission =
 - Vision statement: outlines what the organization wants to be.
 - Mission statement: Tells what the fundamental purpose of the organization is.
- Goals = the anticipated outcomes
- Objectives = measurable results that accomplish the goals
- Strategies = action steps and timelines to reach objectives
- Budget = revenue, revenue sources, and expenditures
- Operating or work plan = the milestones to be met during the coming year that will help achieve the goals and objectives

Tips For Sustainability Success

1. Organizations always want to improve their performance. Conducting an organizational assessment every year will help identify any areas where improvement can be made. It will also help determine any weaknesses while also showing strengths.
2. Remember to focus on the community, share resources, let assets create revenue, and keep the community engaged.
3. Always thank donors.
4. Utilize volunteers.
5. Take sustainability seriously. Do not assume that if the idea is good it will automatically attract future support. Sustainability must be planned.
6. Set clear and realistic expectations. What do you hope to sustain? What makes the most sense?
7. Build capacity. Consider whether or not to build the capacity of your organization in order to foster sustainability, such as developing new training activities that meet the workforce and industry demands in your local or regional area, or increasing the number of faculty, staff, or training courses currently offered.
8. Consider ways to institutionalize, or incorporate, all or some part of the effort into existing, ongoing organizational or community operations, rather than continuing it as a separate project.
9. Collaborate with partners on an ongoing basis. Make sure your partners realize the benefit of participating in your project, are kept up to date on how the project is doing, and feel involved. Build into the project design a role for partners in developing and implementing the sustainability plan.
10. Document and evaluate outputs and outcomes as marketing tools. Produce data and reports that can be used as tools to explain the initiative's mission and successes and to serve as outreach tools to garner further support. Toot your own horn as you go along. Do not wait until the end of the project period to get the word out about your successes.
11. Actively pursue the resources needed to ensure sustainability. Make sure specific staff members are tasked with pursuing needed resources. If possible, assemble a team to identify public and private resources that best align with what you wish to sustain, as well as any issues or challenges that may need to be addressed in order to successfully pursue those resources.

12. Look at what others have done to sustain their projects. The Urban Institute report on the High Growth Job Training Initiative, which is available at <http://www.urban.org/publications/411556.html>, includes grantee contacts and a summary of their sustainability strategies. Look at what other projects have done to see how they have sustained themselves and see what ideas might be adaptable to your project.
13. Access NHTSA's Safe Communities Service Center at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.abcc73310e5f8dcba046a0/>. There are a number of resources available, as well as news stories about coalitions across the country and their projects.