

Healthy Communities Sustainability Assessment Tool

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability is the end goal for every healthy community; however, it must be considered and planned for at the very start of coalition development. Not only does sustainability define a community's work and level of commitment to the work, but is the vehicle by which a community creates and maintains community support and needed resources. Sustainability provides an infrastructure to identify and address community health challenges over time. It helps a community make the best use of the partnerships and resources that it has and makes it possible to leverage additional resources for future activity. In short, sustainability is a community's ongoing capacity and resolve to work together to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all.

Definitions

The following words are used throughout the Sustainability Planning Guide and the Sustainability Assessment Tool. To help you use this tool, the definitions have been provided to add clarity to the frequently used terms. Please refer to these terms when answering the assessment questions.

Coalition: An entity composed of several diverse organizations or constituencies that have agreed to work together to achieve a common goal.

Community Home: A long-term base of operations in a community that enables stakeholders to maximize resources for identifying and addressing public health challenges.

Multisectoral: Multiple segments of the community—e.g., business, schools, community institutions, workplace, health care

PSE (Policy, System, and Environmental) Change: In the context of sustainability, this can refer to policies that help create sustainable changes in systems and environments.

Social Marketing: The application and adaption of commercial marketing concepts and techniques to the analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs designed to bring about behavior change of target audiences to improve the welfare of individuals or their society. Social marketing emphasizes thorough market research to identify and understand the intended audience and what is preventing them from adopting a certain health behavior and then develop, monitor, and constantly adjust a program to stimulate appropriate behavior change. Social marketing programs can address any or all of the traditional marketing mix variables—product, price, place, or promotion.

Sustainability Elements

Every coalition is different. The needs of one coalition may vary greatly from the needs of another coalition; however, there are several key components that help to ensure sustainability efforts flourish. These key traits are fundamental to sustaining coalitions and serve as the foundation for successful coalition development and sustainment.

Sustainability Elements	
10-Step Strategic Planning	<p>Basic elements needed at the <u>beginning</u> of coalition development Goal: <i>Create a consensus among coalition members regarding the coalition’s vision and mission, and objectives for building capacity for continuing its work into the future.</i></p>
Policy Strategy	<p>Understanding the political environment Goal: <i>Implement processes that enable the coalition to establish and maximize its resources to effectively accomplish its priority policy strategies.</i></p>
Partnership	<p>Working with other organizations and community members Goal: <i>Develop the organization, process, and plans to establish strong collaborations and create a track record of success.</i></p>
Community Home	<p>Building infrastructure and capacity Goal: <i>Develop a stable and permanent base of operations to ensure the continuation of essential functions such as developing strong partnerships, leadership, funding, learning, and communications to identify and address public health challenges.</i></p>
Skill Development	<p>Training and staff development Goal: <i>Provide methods for improving the skills, knowledge, and practices of coalition members and stakeholders directed toward accomplishing coalition goals.</i></p>
Communication Strategy	<p>Translating and disseminating coalition work Goal: <i>Develop comprehensive and coordinated processes for updating and soliciting input from coalition members and stakeholders for improving coalition performance and for promoting policy strategies.</i></p>

The Sustainability Assessment

The sustainability assessment will allow coalitions to

- Take inventory of resources they currently possess and resources to which they have access.
- Provide insight into what may be lacking.
- Help organize members and assist in the development of a concrete, comprehensive, sustainability plan.

For each of the indicators listed below, rate your coalition on each component that impacts sustainability. Indicate the extent to which your coalition engages in each of the activities listed below each element. Respond to as many items as possible and only select NA when you are unable to make a final determination.

- 1-Not at all
- 2- Very Little
- 3-Neutral
- 4-Somewhat
- 5-To a great extent
- NA-Not Able to Answer

Strategic Planning

This section of the tool will help you understand your coalition’s sustainability as it relates to strategic planning for the future needs of the coalition. These are the basic foundational elements that every coalition should consider at the beginning of coalition development and revisit as needs arise. Indicate the extent to which your coalition has or does the following.

10-Steps Strategic Planning Elements							
The Coalition:							
1.	Ensures that members have a shared understanding of what sustainability is and why it is important to the coalition or movement.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2.	Ensures that members and key community decision makers work through the sustainability planning process together.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3.	Positions itself in the community and creates connection with decision makers in a way that increases the odds of sustainability.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4.	Develops criteria to determine which efforts to continue.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5.	Prioritizes strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

6. Develops processes to address future resource (people, in-kind, funding) needs.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. Develops a written sustainability plan for members and for the public.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. Implements sustainability plan.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. Evaluates outcomes and revises as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Policy Strategy

This section of the tool will help you understand your coalition’s sustainability as it relates to policy, systems, and environmental change strategies and the internal and external political environment, which may have a significant influence on funding and coalition acceptance, as well as the sustainment of coalition activities. Indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following.

Policy Strategy Elements						
The Coalition:						
1. Ensures its members and community leaders have a shared understanding of critical community health issues.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Has a clear understanding of the policy landscape.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Has a strong base of support with the ability to garner resources.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Has identified political champions to promote key policies.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Has support from leaders in relevant community settings.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. Employs multisectoral policy strategies that impact populations on the community, county, state, and national level.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. Promotes policy strategies that address health equity and health disparities.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Partnerships

This section of the tool will help you understand your coalition’s sustainability as it relates to the collaborative connection the coalition has with other organizations and community members. Community exists at both the local or state level and cuts across various sectors. Indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following.

Partnership Elements						
The Coalition:						
1. Has community buy-in (key leader and partners that can enable or block efforts activity support strategies).	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Strategically recruits partners into the coalition	1	2	3	4	5	NA

	that from a variety of sectors and disciplines to support stated coalition objectives.						
3.	Consists of diverse community organizations that are engaged and dedicate staff, in-kind donations, and funding to achieve strategies of the coalition (outcome).	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4.	Has a strong collaborative partnership with federal, state, and local public health agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5.	Puts member commitments in writing (e.g., MOU).	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6.	Has a clear communication strategy for updating and engaging internal partners/members.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7.	Ensures that member and external stakeholder roles and responsibilities are clear and matched to their skills, interests, and resources.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8.	Ensures that planning is done collaboratively with partners, stakeholders, and coalition members.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Community Home

This section of the tool will help you understand your coalition’s sustainability as it relates to the long-term infrastructural capacity of the coalition including adequate staff, sustainable procedures and processes, and funding stability. Indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following.

Community Home Elements							
<i>The Community Home:</i>							
1.	Develops a shared understanding of critical community health issues with members and community leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2.	Reaches an agreement on the definition and importance of sustainability among coalition members and community leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3.	Has a stable base of operations that serves as a fiscal agent and is positioned to address a wide variety of community health issues (including the funding of issue specific coalitions or task groups if needed).	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4.	Develops goals, strategies and processes that appeal to a variety of community-based organizations.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5.	Has an internal process to address and manage conflict, competing interests, and shifting priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6.	Has adequate skilled staff with sufficient time to maintain coalition processes.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7.	Utilizes a management structure and process that	1	2	3	4	5	NA

enable it to attract and manage funding from a variety of sources.

Skill Development

This section of the tool will help you understand your coalition’s stability as it relates to the skill, knowledge, and ability of staff to carry out the mission of the coalition; as well as; determine the relevancy and timeliness of training offered to staff. Indicate the extent to which your coalition has does the following.

Skill Development Elements

The Coalition:

1. Provides or connects partners with learning and training opportunities to enhance their capacity for achieving the coalition’s objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Ensures that coalition staff and discussion leaders have and practice the process skills to foster collaborative decision making.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Ensures that a variety of approaches are available for training (i.e., internal training, support to area or state workshops, internet, or self-help training).	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Communication Strategy

This section of the tool will help you understand your coalition’s sustainability as it relates to the communication of activities and outcomes to community members, stakeholders, partners, and decision makers. Indicate the extent to which your coalition has or does the following. The results of having a strong communication strategy will be leader and community support through public comments, contributions and volunteering.

Strategy Elements

The Coalition has communication strategies that:

1. Use paid (if available) and earned media (media events, op editorials, public interest articles, etc.) to secure and maintain public support of the group and its mission.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Serve to manage the internal work of the coalition (i.e., timely meeting notes, agenda development, reports, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Keep stakeholders informed (through e-mails, social media, blogs, visits, etc.) and solicits input about coalition success, policy strategies, and coalition needs.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Increase community awareness and support of	1	2	3	4	5	NA

	issues and policies.						
5.	Tailor marketing messages to appeal to priority populations.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6.	Implement a social marketing strategy to increase awareness, foster understanding the issues, and gain public support for the community efforts.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Interpreting Results

The Sustainability Assessment Tool includes a general inventory of activities that have been shown to have a positive impact on sustainability efforts. The skills listed in this assessment tool are self-rated by you and your coalition. The odds of successful coalition sustainability will likely increase as your assessment score increases. A low score on any of the elements provides users with an opportunity for improvement. Please refer to *A Sustainability Planning Guide for Healthy Communities* to assist with your coalition's sustainability efforts.