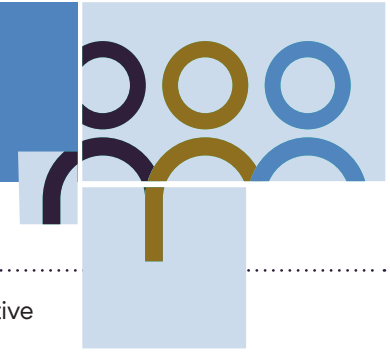


SUSTAINABILITY

A Cross-cutting Principle (*SPF)



What is Sustainability?

In prevention, sustainability is the capacity of a community to produce and maintain positive prevention outcomes over time. To maintain positive outcomes, communities will want to sustain an effective strategic planning process as well as those programs and practices that produced positive prevention results. Accomplishing these dual tasks requires the participation, resolve, and dedication of diverse community members and a lot of careful planning.

(A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework/SAMHSA, p. 29)¹

Sustaining an Effective Strategic Planning Process: Why it is Important

1 Prevention takes time.

While communities are likely to achieve some short-term outcomes initially, it can take many years to produce long-term results. When practitioners help the SPF process live on over time, communities are much more likely to make a significant and lasting impact on their substance misuse problems.

2 Substance misuse problems and priorities change.

With a well-established strategic planning process like the SPF already in place, communities will be able to recognize—and respond effectively to—important changes as they occur over time. Recent examples include the opioid crisis and the alarming increase in teen vaping.

3 Successful implementation of the SPF depends on collaboration.

The SPF is widely recognized by many public health funders and practitioners. Adherence to a common planning process can help planners establish a shared language across health issues and build the interdisciplinary partnerships needed to make a real difference. Experience with and planned use of the SPF in the future can be persuasive when describing the coalition's experience to potential funding sources.

(A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework/SAMHSA, p. 30)¹



¹The Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a community-based approach to prevention. (www.samhsa.gov) The SPF consists of 5 steps: 1) Needs Assessment, 2) Capacity Building, 3) Planning, 4) Implementation, and 5) Evaluation. Through all the steps, there is an expectation of Cultural Competence and Sustainability.

THE SPF PROCESS: How It Contributes to Sustainability?

Step 1: Assessment

During assessment, coalition members begin making decisions based on a clear understanding of local prevention needs. They also begin building relationships with data keepers and stakeholders who can play important roles in supporting and sustaining local prevention efforts over time.

Step 2: Capacity

Intentional capacity building at all levels helps to ensure that successful programs are sustained within a larger community context, and therefore, they are less vulnerable to local budgetary and political fluctuations. Effective capacity building increases a coalition's profile in the community and the community's awareness of and support for evidence-based prevention.

Step 3: Planning

When developing a comprehensive approach to preventing substance misuse, effective coalitions consider the degree to which prevention interventions fit with local needs, capacity, and culture: **the better the fit, the more likely interventions are to be both successful and sustainable.**

Step 4: Implementation

By working closely with community partners to deliver evidence-based programs and practices as intended, closely monitoring and improving their delivery, and celebrating "small wins" along the way, coalitions help to ensure their effectiveness and begin to weave prevention into the fabric of the community.

Step 5: Evaluation

Through process and outcome evaluation, coalitions can make important mid-course corrections to prevention efforts, identify which practices are worth expanding and/or sustaining, and examine ongoing plans for—and progress toward—sustaining those practices that work. By sharing evaluation findings, coalitions can also help build the support *needed to expand and sustain effective interventions.*

(A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework/SAMHSA, p. 30)¹

Achieving population-level change in your community takes time. Conditions that foster substance misuse did not develop overnight, and your coalition will not change them quickly. If you are serious about affecting the problem in a meaningful way, acknowledge that you are in it for the long haul.

(Community Coalitions Handbook Primer Handbook/CADCA National Coalition Institute, p.31)²

Sustainability is more than Funding

While long-term sustainability must include a focus on funding, it depends on much more than maintaining sufficient fiscal resources. Sustaining an initiative over time also requires a combination of non-financial resources from the initiative itself and the broader community.

Necessary internal resources include:

- leadership from management and board members;
- access to technical expertise from within the organization; and
- the existence of strong administrative and financial management systems.

Critical external resources include:

- support from policymakers, the public, or other key stakeholders;
- access to technical expertise outside the organization; and
- engagement of community-based organizations, parents, or other community members.

(Community Coalitions Handbook Primer Handbook/CADCA National Coalition Institute, p.9)²

True sustainability does not come from a grant application every few years—it grows from a strategic orientation to your coalition’s work and ongoing attention to the building blocks that make up your coalition’s vitality and viability.

(Fostering Long-Term Change to Create Drug-Free Communities Primer SUSTAINABILITY/CADCA National Coalition Institute, p. 6)³

Seven Habits of Highly Sustainable Coalitions

Ask yourself, to what extent does our coalition practice this? Where do opportunities exist to instill this habit and put it to work in our coalition’s efforts?

- 1. Guard your capacity.** Protect and nurture your coalition’s capacity: its membership, relationships, leadership and organizational strength.
- 2. Track your progress.** Both formal evaluations and informal tracking of progress toward goals can inform course corrections and build motivation.
- 3. Focus on the goal.** Substance use is complex and relates to other community and youth issues. Clarity of goals helps to avoid the distraction of issues that are related but not specific to the problem.
- 4. Seek local support first.** Smart coalitions take a “local first” approach, engaging local partners and documenting local buy-in before seeking external funding.
- 5. Always add value.** Your coalition functions because key stakeholders in the community see value in having a collaborative venue. Look for ways that various strategies can raise funds and develop partnerships that add value for diverse groups in the community.
- 6. Tell a story.** All too often, coalitions get so bogged down in doing the work that they lose track of how to talk about their contributions. Coalitions need to make sure that they continuously spread the word about their efforts and impacts.
- 7. Keep learning.** Smart coalitions recognize that there is always room to grow and more to know about preventing and combating community problems.

Developing your coalition’s story provides a succinct way to communicate with potential funders and partners about your aims. Stories resonate, and because they connect with our emotions, they have a more memorable quality than mere facts and figures. Stories also build capacity by promoting solidarity and a shared sense of the coalition’s past, present, and future among coalition members themselves.

(Fostering Long-Term Change to Create Drug-Free Communities Primer SUSTAINABILITY/CADCA National Coalition Institute, p. 7)³

Checklist for Sustainability

Identify Potential Partners; Build and Maintain Relationships:

(From the beginning and on an ongoing basis)

- Build and maintain relationships.
- Overcome barriers.
- Scan the environment.
- Document and periodically review your impacts.

Do Your Homework:

(Concurrent with every coalition planning cycle)

- Start with a good overall coalition plan.
- Define what resources the work entails.
- Develop your talking points.

Draft the Plan:

(Start in year 1 and update annually)

- Identify what must be sustained.
- Identify what resources are required.
- Create case statements.
- Determine funding strategies.
- Identify potential partners.
- Develop an action plan to contact and present to potential partners.

Implement, Review, Learn, Adjust

- Implement your resource development strategies.
- Review your progress and adapt.

(Fostering Long-Term Change to Create Drug-Free Communities Primer Sustainability/CADCA National Coalition Institute, p. 42)³

References:

- 1 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework*. Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190620-samhsa-strategic-prevention-framework-guide.pdf>
- 2 Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Coalition Institute. *Community Coalitions Handbook Primer Handbook*. https://www.cadca.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/community_coalitions.pdf
- 3 Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Coalition on Institute. *Fostering Long-Term Change to Create Drug-Free Communities Primer Sustainability*. <https://www.cadca.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/sustainability.pdf>