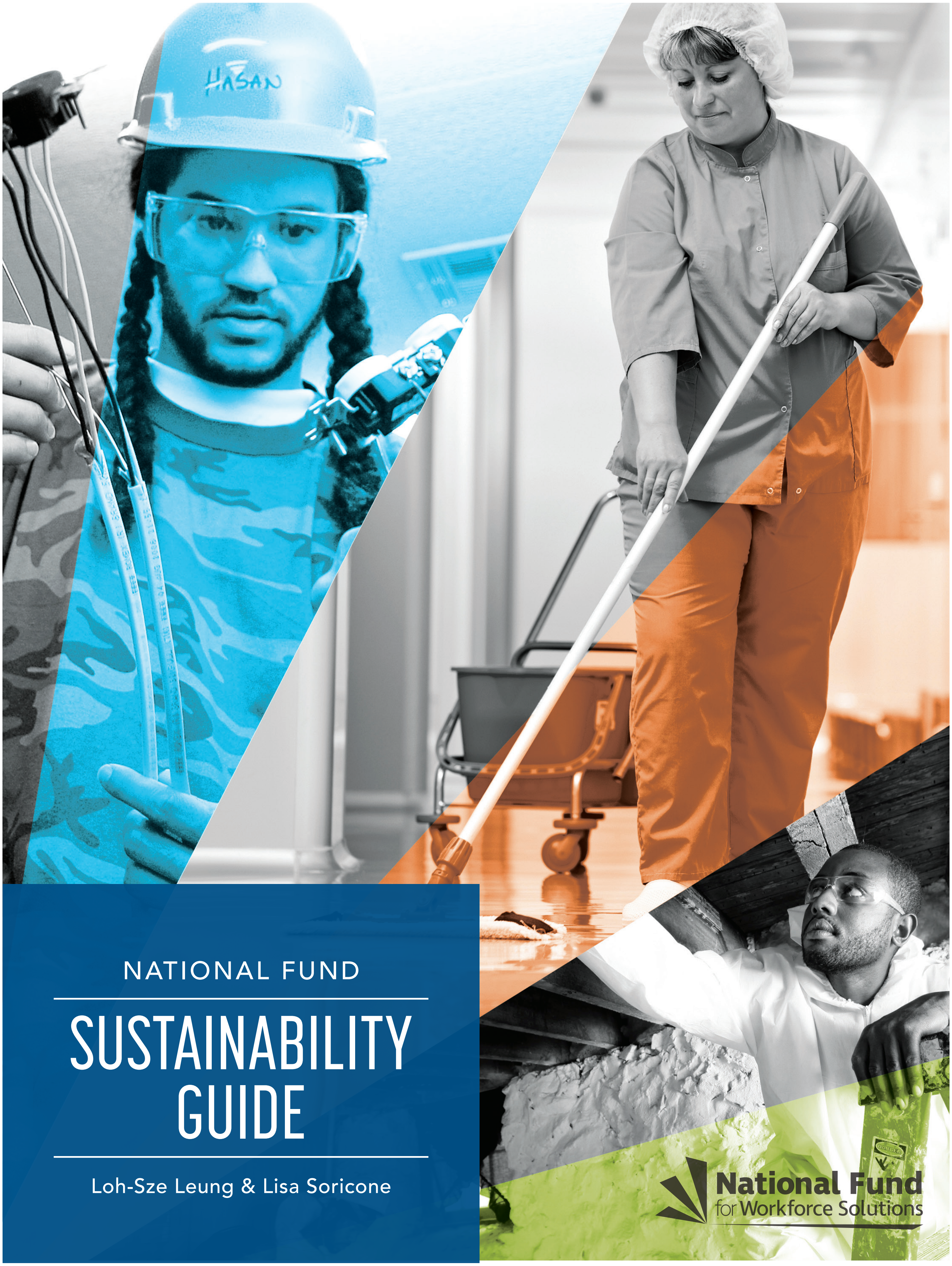

NATIONAL FUND

SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

Loh-Sze Leung & Lisa Soricone

National Fund for Workforce Solutions

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National Fund for Workforce Solutions

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is a national network promoting economic opportunity and prosperous communities through investment and innovation. Based in Washington, DC, the National Fund partners with philanthropic organizations, employers, workers, public and private community organizations, and more than 30 regional collaboratives to invest in skills, improve systems, and generate good jobs. The National Fund supports civic and business leaders in promoting evidence-based practices and policies that build shared prosperity. Learn more about the National Fund and its local partners at www.NationalFund.org.

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INTRODUCTION

When professionals in workforce development and other fields talk about "sustainability," they tend to focus on locating additional funding sources as the means to continue operation of a program or initiative. The experience of effective and stable National Fund collaboratives has shown that, while resources to continue working are critical, sustainability involves much more.

Sustainability in this context refers to the ability of collaboratives to pursue a strategic vision and mobilize the resources to address a community's workforce issues over time by simultaneously addressing industry needs and creating opportunities for low-wage workers.

The sustainability of National Fund collaboratives is founded on high-quality work that delivers value by addressing real and pressing community needs, and is pursued with strong leadership and engaged partners who contribute collectively to sustainability efforts. Sustainability is not just about sustaining collaboratives as organizations; it is about continuing meaningful work and fostering lasting positive change among the institutions and systems that serve both workers and the businesses that employ them.

This guide is intended to provide National Fund leaders and partners with a framework for thinking about what they must do to sustain their work. It also offers information, tools, and resources for working with partners to support collaborative sustainability.

To create this guide, the authors conducted interviews with site directors and partners of collaboratives that have operated four or more years. They also drew on lessons and resources derived from a Kellogg Foundation-funded sustainability initiative supporting 11 National Fund sites operating in the southern United States. Using these experiences, the authors have developed a framework and gathered resources and examples to provide insight into the elements of sustainability and to support collaborative development of these elements in their work.

Organization of the Guide

The guide is organized in three major thematic sections and concludes with a section that helps collaboratives put everything together in a sustainability plan.

The topics in each section were chosen because they reflect the experiences and insights of National Fund collaboratives and their leaders. These topics highlight the multiple elements of your work that contribute to sustainability.

Section 1 Laying the Groundwork

- A Understanding Your Context
- B Partner Engagement
- C Strategic Planning

Section 2 Strengthening Operations

- A Collaborative and Organizational Capacity
- B Budget and Funding
- C Strategic Communications

Section 3 Increasing Impact

- A Reflection and Evaluation
- B Systems Change

Section 4 Putting It All Together—Creating a Sustainability Plan

Each topic section begins with a set of self-assessment questions, a definition of terms, and a brief discussion the section's relationship to collaborative sustainability.[1] Each section contains ideas on how to address the topic in your work, as well as "Ideas in Practice" drawn from National Fund collaborative work around the country. At the end of each section is a list of related resources, tools, and continued learning on the topic.

How to Use the Guide

The comprehensive nature of this guide reflects the perspective of the National Fund's leadership that sustainability is a process that is embedded in the ongoing work of collaboratives. The guide is designed as a tool to serve newly established as well as more mature collaboratives. How you use it depends on where your collaborative is in thinking about and working toward sustainability. You can review the guide in its entirety or just focus on specific components as needed to support sustainability planning and activities. You do not have to take on every section at once. You can use the self-assessments at the start of each section (and compiled in Appendix A) to help identify and prioritize areas that are most in need of attention. You can use the questions provided to guide discussions among your partners, use frameworks for capturing the exchange of ideas, and refer to resources to learn more. The "Putting It All Together" outline can help you and your partners determine concrete steps to move forward. Ultimately, the guide is intended to serve as a resource, so make it work for you!

> ***"Sustainability is about making transformational change in the community, creating impacts that help other organizations, not ourselves, so they can start working and take it from there."***
>
> *Mireya Eavey,*
> *Sarasota Area President,*
> *United Way Suncoast*

SECTION 1

LAYING THE GROUND WORK

The first step in planning for sustainability is to ensure you have a good understanding of your context, including but not limited to your regional economic conditions, funder community, education and training landscape, and policy environment.

Then, we move into a discussion of engaging your partners within that context as well as a discussion of strategic planning as a way to assess the continued effectiveness and relevance of your work within the framework of sustainability planning.

A UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF YOUR WORK

The work of National Fund collaboratives is grounded in "place;" that is, in the communities that collaboratives are trying to support and enrich through their work to advance low-skilled workers and support the needs of the businesses that employ them.

Context potentially includes:

- Funder landscape
- Local economy and industry structure
- Labor force and population characteristics (e.g., education and poverty levels)
- Workforce system
- Education and training landscape
- Employment/job vacancies
- Political environment
- Policy environment
- Outcomes, results, and progress to date

UNDERSTANDING YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has a collective understanding of the community in terms of major issues of concern, as well as individuals and institutions that hold power.			
2) The collaborative has a collective understanding of unmet workforce needs in your community informed by employer input, in addition to population and labor market data.			
3) The collaborative has an understanding of the legislative environment as it relates to workforce development.			
4) The collaborative has an understanding of the philanthropic and public workforce funding landscape of your community.			
5) The collaborative has analyzed stakeholders to identify those who can advance or hinder the work.			

Some of the most important things you can do to sustain your work are to demonstrate that the collaborative is addressing a meaningful local need, is achieving results, and is adding value through the collective nature of its work. Understanding the context helps to define that need. It also helps to identify the resources you can draw on to support your work, and the potential barriers that might hinder your efforts or limit their effectiveness. Since community needs can change, analyzing the context you are working in should be an ongoing collaborative activity.

COMMUNITY SCAN

To help you understand your context, you will likely want to conduct a scan of your community. One way to organize your scan is to examine three key areas that contribute to your collaborative's context: policy, systems, and environment.[2]

Policy

Laws, regulations, rules, protocols, and procedures that relate to labor and workforce development.

- What, if any, relevant legislation is currently under consideration in your city/region/state?
- What, if any, movements to change policies or laws related to workforce development are underway?
- What, if any, policies related to accessing training and/or hiring influence the local labor market context (e.g., local hiring requirements or community benefit agreements)?

Systems

Features of organizations, institutions, and/or systems that influence labor and workforce policies and activities.

- What are the elements/institutions that constitute your local public workforce system? How are they perceived, and how well do they function in meeting both employer and worker needs?
- What training and education providers develop the skills of the current and future workforce? How are these entities connected?

Environment

Physical, social, or economic factors that influence opportunities and behaviors.

- What are the most prominent issues currently on the minds of political and community leaders?
- What issues are most on the minds of employers in your community?
- What geographic or other characteristics of your community create opportunities or barriers for individuals seeking to access new jobs or advancement at their current employer?
- What is the nature of the funding landscape—both philanthropic and public sources—in your community?
- What do current economic indicators say about the state of your community?
- What do population data and labor market information (LMI) tell you about the match between worker skills and employer needs?

PROCESS TIPS

Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you work with your partners to analyze your context:

- ✓ Define your "context." Agree on the parameters or boundaries of the context (both geographic and systemic) you will analyze. Your collaborative may draw from multiple subregions or communities, which may have differing challenges and opportunities. You will want to consider such differences as you determine the context(s) to be analyzed.
- ✓ Work with collaborative members to determine the best approach to collecting and reviewing information on your context. Should you use committees? What resources or partners beyond the collaborative could you draw on?
- ✓ Select appropriate means of gathering data, such as key informant interviews, report reviews, and online data sources.

COMMUNITY SCAN SUMMARY

You can summarize the findings of your scan in a table like the one below and use it as a reference/review tool for the collaborative's regular discussions. A worksheet for this exercise can be found at http://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/.

Figure 1
Community Scan Worksheet

Arena	**Significant Factors** (include conditions, events, data, individuals & institutions)	Opportunities	Challenges	Next Steps
Policy				
Systems				
Environment				

As you review the information gathered in your scan, take time with partners to consider the collaborative's current outcomes and results to date and discuss how the changing community landscape is influencing outcomes (e.g., if we are still not producing enough health care workers based on our economic indicators, how can we find ways to sustain and grow more efforts in this area?)

LOCAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT

It is critical for the collaborative to understand the economic landscape of the community to help identify needs and opportunities and guide investments. Depending on the resources of the collaborative, you may want to gather LMI directly by using available tools or by accessing information gathered by other entities, such as Workforce Development Boards, universities, local government, or other groups. See Figure 3 for information on different kinds of LMI sources.

> ***"Sustainability is about creating a framework that has the flexibility to allow you to be able to respond to a changing environment."***
>
> *Laura Chandler, Executive Director, Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council*

IDEAS IN PRACTICE

Job Opportunity Investment Network's Labor Market Study

Driven by a desire to understand the local labor market beyond anecdotal reports, in 2013, the Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN) and its partner, the CEO Council for Growth, engaged researchers from the Drexel University Center for Labor Markets and Policy to examine regional labor market data in the region surrounding Philadelphia. JOIN and the CEO Council funded the study and defined a set of research questions that would help them assess the relevance of their investments and advocacy efforts.

Researchers at Drexel produced a series of papers that highlighted trends over 10 years showing a "hollowing out" of the local economy, with growth occurring in "low-end" industries (e.g., nursing/residential care facilities and food services), offering lower pay and fewer hours, as well as "high-end" industries (e.g., hospitals and professional and technical services), offering more opportunity for higher wages and full-time employment—but no growth in industries between these ends. (See graphic below).

JOIN and the CEO Council launched a series of in-person briefings with employers and workforce professionals around the region to validate the findings and gain additional insights. In addition, JOIN set up an online survey on its website to allow people who couldn't attend to weigh in and share their reaction to the findings.

The research findings and subsequent discussions highlighted the need for JOIN and its partners to consider how their efforts might be directed toward helping individuals move beyond entry level toward middle and high-end opportunities through the development of career pathways as a new investment strategy. In addition, the process surfaced the critical importance of behavioral traits among workers and the role that practitioners might play in helping to develop them.

JOIN continues to update its understanding of labor market conditions by periodically vetting findings of the study with employers and other groups to stay abreast of any changes that could impact the direction of its investment and advocacy efforts.

Figure 2

Industry Growth Trends from Drexel's Labor Market Study[3]

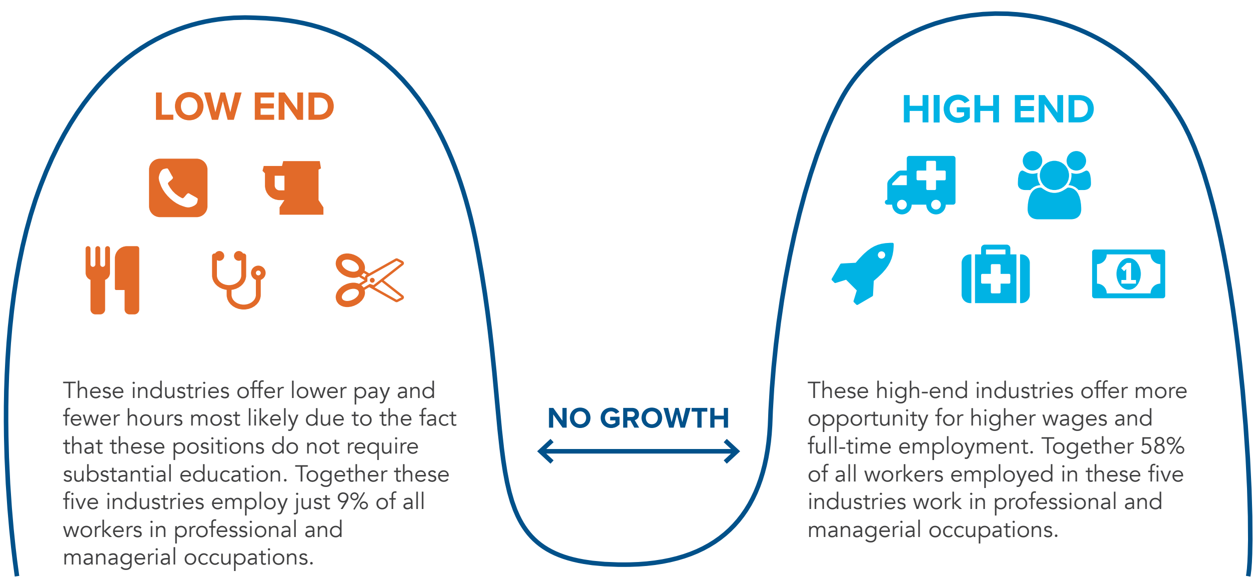


Figure 3
Sources of Labor Market Information (LMI)

	Traditional LMI	Real-time LMI	Primary Sources
Sources	**Tax records and employer participation in surveys**	**Job postings**	**Employers, trade associations**
Includes	Data available on a particular labor market, including the number of jobs, past and present, in hundreds of standardized industries and occupations, as well as data on earnings, demographics, employment, and the presence of an industry or occupation in a locality relative to the nation as a whole.	Information that can be culled from postings, such as company name and location, industry and job title, education and experience required, specific skills and job tasks, and benefits and wages.	Information gleaned directly from employers, or those representing groups of employers. These stakeholders can identify current hiring needs, skill gaps between available positions and applicants, and project openings, and articulate industry trends.
Advantages	Comprehensive and representative.	Offers immediate feedback on a labor market, especially through the use of 'real time' labor market information tools.	Specific, current, and can provide opportunities to provide reasons/explanations behind trends or justifications for future projections
Downsides	Individual employers are suppressed and cannot be identified through Traditional L MI. Some sources are not updated regularly, which causes a lag in the numbers that are reported.	Not all job openings are posted Online – low-skill jobs are underrepresented in particular and extrapolating from short time periods and small numbers of postings can offer a distorted view of the labor market.	Hiring needs can vary widely between employers and extrapolating from a limited sample can convey a misleading sense of industry demand.

With traditional and real-time LMI tools, you can

- Assess the number of past, present, and anticipated jobs in an industry or occupation
- Observe which job titles map to target occupations
- Identify the number of persons in an area employed in each industry, the share of persons in an occupation group employed in each industry, and the proportion those jobs represent in each industry
- Identify the primary employers of these occupations in a labor market area
- Identify the skills and credentials for given occupations important to local employers

In either case, you will want to test or verify the data with local employers and other community stakeholders to ensure that you are not missing important trends or context, such as the impact of a projected relocation of a new company or the opening or closing of plants or other facilities in your region. Employers and stakeholders can also help explain the reasons for certain data and trends that is not evident from the data itself.

ANALYZING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUR CONTEXT

Part of understanding your context involves examining the individuals and organizations that have a stake in your work directly or can influence your work by the role they play in the larger context surrounding your work. Analyzing these actors can help you determine who:

- Cares about your work
- Can contribute directly to it
- Can support and advance it in their own networks
- May pose resistance to your work

One way to start such an analysis is to develop a system frame like the one below, which outlines areas, or subsystems, that relate to the central purpose of simultaneously advancing workers and meeting employer needs.

Figure 4

Sample Collaborative System Frame[4]

Using this kind of organizing structure, you can identify and analyze stakeholders in your local context. Within each subsystem, consider:

- Who are the key individuals and institutions?
- What are their current relationships to our work?
- What role/perceived role do these stakeholders have in the work?
- What kind of relationship do we want to have going forward?
- How can they help our collaborative sustain our work?
- Where can we identify and cultivate champions?

You may want to go deeper in exploring the relationships among actors within your system by working with your partners to map out the actors and their connection (close or distant) to your work. As a resource for this process, FSG's *System Mapping: A Guide to Developing Actor Maps* outlines instructions for developing actor maps. These maps provide a visual representation of the key organizations and/or individuals in a system, as well as their relationships to a given issue and to one another.[5] Actor maps can support your stakeholder analysis by providing insights into actors and their roles within a system and highlighting opportunities to build new relationships.

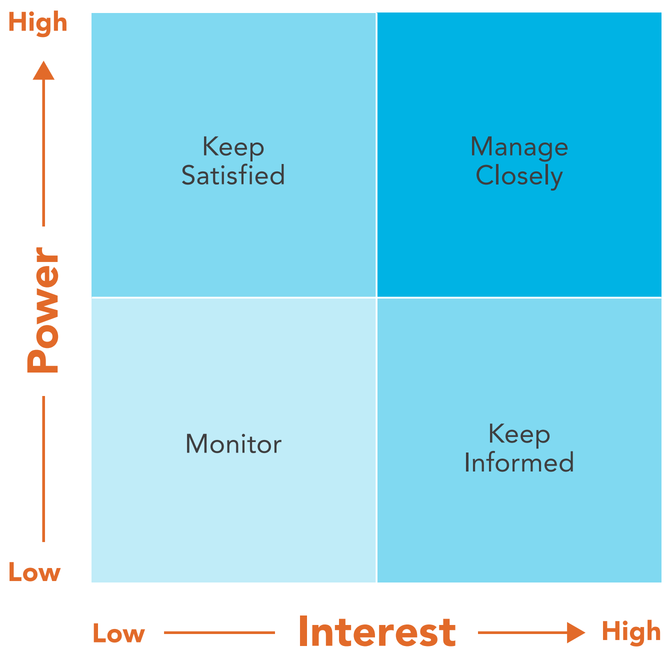
These maps can also help inform your planning and systems change goals, as they can highlight levels of engagement among actors and identify potential points of leverage and areas for intervention.[6]

Figure 5.

Analyzing Stakeholders: Power and Interest Grid

As you identify actors in your context, one way of considering your relationship with key stakeholders in your community is by analyzing power and interest. Determining where stakeholders sit along these two indices can help you determine the kind of relationship and the nature of communication you need to maintain with your stakeholders.

For instructions about stakeholder analysis, visit www.mindtools.com and search "stakeholder analysis".



You can record the results of your stakeholder analysis in a table like the one below. A worksheet for this exercise can be found at http://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/.

Figure 6
Stakeholder Analysis Worksheet

Actor	Interest/ Overlap with our Work	Current Relationship to the Collaborative and Factors that Influence the Relationship	Desired Relationship to the Collaborative	Next Steps
Local Workforce Board				
City Government				
State Work-force Agency				
State Legislature				
Corporate Foundation				
Other				

Once you identify important actors and organizations through this exercise you can consider how to leverage them in your broader sustainability efforts.

NEXT STEPS

1. Assess your collaborative's current understanding of your local context, including policies, systems, and environment. Complete the community scan summary.
2. Summarize the labor market data you currently have, identify any gaps in your understanding of local labor market conditions, and make a plan to gather this data, including sources, roles, and responsibilities.
3. Complete a stakeholder analysis, either through system mapping, analyzing power and influence, or both.
4. Work with key partners to understand and analyze the information on the local context and draw out broad themes and/or problems that the region should prioritize and address.
5. Include these areas of work in your sustainability plan.

All resources for these sections are available at the end of this section on page 24.

B PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Operating an effective workforce funding collaborative is much like leading any robust community partnership. The right people need to be at the table with a clear purpose for their collaborative effort, shared goals for their work, and joint ownership of solutions. In this context, "partner engagement" refers to the process of building a collaborative, developing relationships and trust with and among partners, establishing ways of working together, and helping to maintain the commitment of partners' time, ideas, and resources over the life of the collaborative.

Sustaining the work of a collaborative over time requires that partners maintain ownership of the collaborative and its processes, regularly participate in meetings, and contribute their ideas and resources to the strategic work of the collaborative. Over time, funder priorities shift, individuals come and go, community contexts change, and distractions of all sorts arise. Collaborative leaders must therefore strive to lead a process and foster an environment that demonstrates value—both for the communities served and the partners who comprise the collaborative.

This section focuses on ways of orienting your work to help keep partners active, committed, at the table, and involved as owners of the collaborative's goals and strategy and always thinking about ways they can contribute to sustaining the collaborative.

BUILDING THE COLLABORATIVE—PARTNER SELECTION

Sustaining your collaborative begins with having the right people at the table. You will want to engage funders and other organizations whose missions align with the work that your collaborative is undertaking. You will also want to ensure that multiple perspectives on workforce issues are represented and that the individuals that attend meetings have a sufficient level of influence within their organizations to help mobilize resources and draw on professional networks to be able to effectively support your work. They should be important stakeholders to the region in terms of business, industry, economic development and workforce development.

ASSESSING THE COLLABORATIVE'S BUILDING BLOCKS	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative composition integrates the variety of perspectives and expertise necessary to define problems and pursue solutions to them.			
2) The collaborative identifies and cultivates champions.			
3) The collaborative has established clear and agreed upon ways of working together.			
4) The collaborative has a process in place to define desired results and monitor progress in achieving them.			
5) The collaborative uses a process to assess member satisfaction with collaborative operation and achievements.			
6) The collaborative has plans in place to manage partner and individual transitions.			

As you reach out to organizations, it is important to set up in-person meetings to discuss your vision for the collaborative and, most importantly, to listen to potential members' concerns, desires, and needs to help determine whether they are a good fit for the collaborative and how they might contribute to it. Ultimately, you want to communicate the value proposition of their participation for them as well as for the collaborative.

Consider the questions below as you think about involving new partners in your collaborative.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- Does the potential partner organization have a stake in the problem you want to address and a willingness to share ownership of the solution?
- Does the potential partner share your values and level of concern over the problems your collaborative aims to address?
- Does the potential partner have a level of credibility and legitimacy in the philanthropic community, workforce development, or other related domain?
- Is the potential partner willing to invest staff and resources in the collaborative?
- Is the potential partner organization in good financial and organizational health, and do they have a proven track record?
- Does the potential partner have committed leaders who can articulate your shared vision, build a constituency, and manage these joint efforts?
- What does the potential partner expect from participation in the collaborative? Can you and the collaborative fulfill these expectations?

Adapted from A Pocket Guide for Business Leaders: Find, Train, & Keep Productive Employees Through Alliances in Your Community.[7]

COLLABORATIVE COMPOSITION: WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE TABLE?

You may not check all of the boxes below but here are two ways of thinking about whom you might want to include as partners at your table.

Figure 7
Collaborative Composition

ORGANIZATION TYPES

- ☐ Community foundation
- ☐ Other local foundations
- ☐ Workforce Development Board(s)
- ☐ Economic development organizations
- ☐ United Way
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce
- ☐ City/County Government
- ☐ Businesses or industry associations
- ☐ Organized labor
- ☐ Community based organizations
- ☐ Other

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- ☐ Philanthropy
- ☐ Public Workforce System
- ☐ Labor Market Information
- ☐ Public Policy/Advocacy
- ☐ Fundraising
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Facilitation Skills
- ☐ Community Knowledge
- ☐ Industry Expertise

CULTIVATING CHAMPIONS

Over time, as you work with your partners, individuals can serve as champions for your work and contribute to its sustainability. Champions build support and credibility and mobilize resources to sustain and even broaden the reach of your effort.

So, how do you "cultivate" champions? One approach is to create opportunities for distributed leadership; that is, providing opportunities for partners at multiple levels to take on leadership roles, such as spearheading a committee, leading work in a particular issue area, or representing the collaborative publicly. This allows your partners to have a deeper connection to your work, become more familiar with your successes and challenges, and be better positioned to see the value of the collaborative. You can support champions by working with them to identify opportunities to share information on the collaborative and by providing them with a set of talking points or other information to help them communicate your message.

ESTABLISHING WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Engaging in collaborative work with multiple partners can be complex. The "results, process, and relationship" framework can be helpful in thinking about how to make your collaboration more successful.[8]

Results are what a collaborative actually accomplishes—e.g., establishing an industry partnership, securing investments for workforce development, and changing public policy to support programs that advance workers and keep businesses competitive. Results are driven by the goals established by the collaborative, and seeing results helps to maintain partner engagement.

Process includes establishing: a governance structure, shared mission and goals, norms and values, modes of communication, roles and responsibilities, and decision-making processes. Well-designed processes make good use of the time and resources that partners can offer and keep the work of the collaborative focused toward achievement of its goals.

Relationship in collaborative work refers to the ways in which people interact and relate to the lead organization; how they feel about their involvement, contributions, and decisions made by the collaborative; and the level of trust and respect among partnership members. Failure to address this dimension of collaboration can result in conflict that impedes progress toward goals.

A list of questions to consider in attending to each of these areas is provided on the next page.

> ***"Finding agreement around values is a contributor to sustainability. All organizations have values. The key is to confirm alignment and cultivate a sense of shared purpose, a feeling that they are "all in this together," fostering a sense of a shared destiny."***
>
> *Kelly Ryan, president and CEO, Incourage Community Foundation, Workforce Central*

Checklist for Managing Results, Process, and Relationship[9]

RESULTS

- ☐ Our collaborative has clearly articulated and agreed upon a mission statement and/or goals.
- ☐ We have established and used a regular process for reviewing our goals.
- ☐ We take steps to ensure shared commitment to our goals and hold ourselves accountable for their achievement.
- ☐ We have established clear benchmarks and processes for assessing progress.
- ☐ Progress on goals is communicated regularly with collaborative members and external stakeholders.

PROCESS

- ☐ We have established a clear and transparent governance structure for the collaborative.
- ☐ We have agreed on and articulated a set of shared values and norms for participation in the collaborative.
- ☐ We have a clear decision-making process for goals, activities, and investments.
- ☐ We provide opportunities for multiple partners to demonstrate leadership.
- ☐ We have a process in place to identify and resolve areas of disagreement.
- ☐ We have established a plan for orienting new partners to the collaborative and managing leadership transitions.

RELATIONSHIP

- ☐ We take time to establish, build, and foster relationships among our partner organizations and individuals.
- ☐ We provide opportunities for all members to contribute to the collaborative's work.
- ☐ We conduct all meetings and interaction in a way that is respectful of differences among members.
- ☐ We periodically solicit feedback on each member's satisfaction with the operation and results of the collaborative and use that feedback to make necessary adjustments.
- ☐ We recognize the hard work, contributions, and achievements of collaborative members and celebrate our successes.

IDEAS IN PRACTICE
Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC)

SAWDC uses a multipronged approach to monitor the results, process, and relationship dimensions of its collaborative work. The strategy map below clearly articulates the vision, mission, high-level goals, and strategies used by the council.

The map serves as the basis for the SAWDC Scorecard, which outlines key metrics to monitor processes and results. In addition, the council and board conduct a quarterly review of outcome data, including the latest figures on participants enrolled, training completions, and job placement rates within each targeted industry sector. These data indicate areas of success and highlight opportunities for improvement.

Vision

To develop a comprehensive, integrated workforce development system which creates a skilled, diverse, motivated, adaptable workforce that better meets the needs of employers and leads to a better quality of life for our citizens.

Mission

To develop strategic partnerships which attract, educate and train students and workers to better meet employer needs and foster economic growth in a global marketplace.

Customers

Business employers and the communities where they exist

- SW Alabama has a system for workforce development that I have access to and advocates for my needs in WFD.
- There is a large qualified candidate pool.

Key Business Processes

Engage Industry Clusters

- Establish workforce partnerships and serve their WFD needs

Influence the System of Education/Training

- Align resources to workforce needs
- Influence policy and systems change to support regional needs

Inspire the Supply of Future Workers

- Create awareness of and market career opportunities in Southwest Alabama

SAWDC Staff, Committees, and Councils

- Leverage partnerships to effectively accomplish goals.
- Engage our council and increase participation.

Funding

- Ensure government participation.
- Create business participation.
- Focus grant funding on mission-related programs.

	Action	Metric	Strategic Area
Stakeholders	SW Alabama has a system for workforce development that I have access to and advocates for my needs in WFD.	Business user satisfaction survey	
		Time to fill technical/open positions in top employers	
	There is a large and qualified candidate pool.	% qualified (hireable) vs. total applied in top employers	
Key Business Processes	**1)** Engage industry clusters (partnerships).		
	Establish workforce partnerships and serve their WFD needs.	# Industry Clusters	Industry Clusters
	2) Influence the system of education/training.		
	Align resources to workforce needs.	$ and % grant money directed via SAWDC (community colleges)	Community College Alignment
	Influence policy and systems change to support regional needs.	% clients who got jobs	Policy & systems change
		# of policies/systems change influenced	
	3) Inspire the future supply of workers		
	Create awareness of and market career opportunities in Southwest Alabama.	# students/potential workers reached by SAWDC events.	SAWDC worlds of opportunity; K-12 Programs
Council, staff & others	Leverage partnerships to effectively accomplish goals.	# Active partners (non-business participation in the last 12 months)	Council & Partner Participation
	Engage our council and increase participation.	% council members on committees	
		Attendance at council meetings by business members	
Funding	Ensure government participation	% of funding from government	Funding Stability
	Create business participation	% of top employers participating	
	Focus grant funding on mission-related programs	% of funding from businesses/industry	
		% of funding from grants	

This data review is complemented by satisfaction surveys administered to both SAWDC partners and employers served by the collaborative. Among the questions asked, surveys assess respondents' evaluation of the quality of the collaborative's efforts, the benefits of working with SAWDC, and the desire to remain engaged with the collaborative going forward. Survey results help SAWDC leaders to monitor the value of their services as well as partner engagement.

How do we rate on the following attributes?

	WELL BELOW AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	WELL ABOVE AVERAGE
Professionalism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level of Engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsiveness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of Work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

MAINTAINING PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Collaboratives use a variety of strategies to maintain partner engagement and increase organizational ownership of the collaborative's work. For example, the Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford uses work groups, which focus on resource development, capacity building, public policy, and communications, are a way to engage additional staff from organizations on the collaborative steering committee. Boston's SkillWorks has made it a regular practice to give partners meaningful roles, including agenda development, drafting work plans, giving presentations, hosting meetings, and overseeing partnerships.

Similarly, engaging partners in the strategic planning process is a way to engage them and to get their buy-in to the next phase of the collaborative's work and priorities.

The most critical element of partner engagement is the value that partners experience in being part of the collaborative. That value can be derived from several sources, including: the relevance the collaborative has in meeting community needs, the effectiveness of the collaborative in addressing workforce needs in ways that exceed the capacity of any individual organization, and the information and relationships that partners gain being part of a collective. It can be helpful to check in with partners at regular intervals to understand the value they derive from being part of the collaborative. (A sample collaborative survey is provided in Appendix B).

PLANNING FOR TRANSITIONS

It is natural for both individuals and organizations to come and go over the life of a collaborative, so it is important to plan for transitions. To facilitate the entry of new collaborative members, you will want to develop onboarding processes to help new members quickly understand the work of the collaborative and their role in it. You will also want to prepare for the departure of individuals who represent organizations in the collaborative. Consider ways that you can build relationships within organizations that transcend single individuals, such as providing information on a regular basis to organization CEOs, and involving multiple staff members in work groups.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review collaborative membership and roles
2. Take the results, process, and relationship self-assessment above, and make note of any areas the collaborative needs to work on
3. Document your current partnership engagement and transition plans and make note of areas that need to be strengthened
4. Include these areas of work in your sustainability plan

C STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is a critical process to determine: 1) the purpose of the work and the approach your collaborative will take; 2) how you will make use of the resources available to conduct the work; and 3) how you will know if your work has been successful.

Planning supports the sustainability of your collaborative as it enables the collaborative to engage stakeholders, develop a shared understanding of the problem, and get buy-in around the future purpose and approach of the collaborative. Moreover, as the collaborative's work unfolds, strategic plans provide a clear framework around which to assess the effectiveness of your work, whether it is still relevant, and whether it still merits the continued investment of attention and resources.

ASSESSING YOUR STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has clear and agreed upon statements of its mission and vision.			
2) The collaborative has a structured process for gathering stakeholder input and contextual information to help shape and refine its goals.			
3) The collaborative has a structured process for determining objectives and action steps to pursue achievement of its goals.			
4) The collaborative has established a timeline for regular review of its plans and progress in carrying out action steps and achievement of goals and objectives.			

STRATEGIC PLANNING OVERVIEW

Strategic planning helps to establish organizational priorities and direct the use of resources toward the achievement of goals.

Figure 8
Key Strategic Plan Elements[10]

Vision	A vision describes the ideal conditions for your community – the way things would look if workforce development issues were all resolved.
Mission	A mission describes what the collaborative will do and why. It's more concrete and action-oriented than the vision. It should be concise, outcome-oriented and inclusive.
Objectives	Objectives should be aimed toward achieving your mission. They refer to specific measurable results for the collaborative's broad goals. Objectives tell you how much of what should be accomplished by when.
Strategies	Strategies explain how you will reach your objectives. They can range from very broad, encompassing different entities within your community to very specific, aiming at carefully defined areas.
Action Plans	Each strategy should have a set of actions that tells you what will change – who will do what to make it happen. Outline the key aspects of the intervention and/or systems changes that are sought. Include: • Action step: what will happen • Person responsible: who will do what • Date to be completed: the timing of each action • Resources required: what resources and supports are needed and available • Barriers/Resistance: include a plan to overcome them! • Collaborators: who else should know about this action
Evaluation	You will want to use a structured process to determine the degree to which you are meeting your goals and provide learning about the effectiveness and impact of your efforts.

This excerpt from a strategic plan developed by Partners for a Competitive Workforce in Cincinnati demonstrates how a vision and mission can translate into concrete collaborative strategies.

IDEAS IN PRACTICE

Excerpts from Partners for a Competitive Workforce Strategic Plan

- **Vision**
  Employers have the talent they need to compete, and people have the skills they need to get good jobs and advance their careers.
- **Mission**
  Meet employer demand by growing the skills of our current and future workforce.
- **Bold Goal**
  By 2020, 90 percent of the labor force will be gainfully employed.[11]

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE

Connect Businesses with Qualified Workers

- **Strategy 1**
  Support the Employers First Regional Workforce Network in creating a streamlined business services approach to deliver workforce solutions in response to employer needs. This process will consist of: 1) a single contact point for employers; 2) an in-depth assessment of the employer's need by a business services representative; 3) navigating workforce and education resources available to address the need and developing a proposal package tailored to meet the employer's need; and 4) continued follow-up to navigate and manage the services selected by the employer.
- **Strategy 2**
  Support Employers First in launching a communications and outreach campaign to raise employer awareness of the "menu" of workforce services.
- **Strategy 3**
  Support Employers First in developing a strong partnership with economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, industry associations, and other business organizations to coordinate workforce services with business retention and recruitment efforts.[12]

PCW's complete strategic plan is available at: http://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/

Planning Tips

There are multiple approaches to strategic planning. However, there are some common important elements to consider, regardless of the approach:[13]

- ✓ Take into account the information gathered in understanding your context (information on the labor market, local population needs, etc.)
- ✓ Be sure to involve all of your partners, including representatives of workers and/or program participants, employers, funders, education and training providers as well as other stakeholders, and support the participation of everyone, even the quieter members of your collaborative.
- ✓ Manage conflict. Establish some ground rules for working through disagreements.[14]
- ✓ Communicate the products of planning, including lists of issues and ideas, as you move toward creating the final plan.
- ✓ Set up a regular schedule (e.g., quarterly) to review your plan, progress toward goals, and relevance in terms of any environmental shifts.[15]

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

As you approach your planning, you may want to consider employing appreciative inquiry as a framework for leading your partners through the process. This is an approach to organizational change that focuses on strengths rather than on weaknesses. Appreciative inquiry is often presented in terms of a four-step process around a chosen topic:[16]

1. **Discover**
   Appreciating and identifying processes that work well.
   What works well in our approach, our systems, our community?

2. **Dream**
   Envisioning results and how things might work well in the future.
   What might be?
   What is our community calling for?

3. **Design**
   Co-constructing—planning and prioritizing processes that would work well.
   What should be the ideal?

4. **Destiny** (or **Deliver**)
   Sustaining the change.
   How can we empower, learn and adjust/improvise?

These steps can serve as the framework for guiding discussions within your collaborative.

SUPPORTS TO PLANNING

Determining how you will achieve your goals requires some careful thought as to how investment and activities are expected to bring about desired changes. Two approaches to understanding and communicating these connections are a theory of change and a logic model. Both approaches can contribute to strategic planning, ongoing decision making, and evaluation by helping to keep a focus on what you want to achieve and how you will get there.

A **theory of change** explains how and why an organization/initiative's activities are expected to lead to the changes it wants to happen. It differs from a logic model in helping to explain why the activities are expected to produce outcomes; it may incorporate research findings and usually elucidates the assumptions that underlie the connections between activities and outcomes. The theory of change outlines short- and long-term goals, what is needed to achieve them, and what measures can help to determine if they have been met.

A **logic model** describes what a program or initiative is trying to accomplish and how it will get there. It typically includes information on:[17]

- Purpose or mission—the problem or goal to which the program, effort, or initiative is addressed
- Context or conditions—the situation in which the effort will take place or factors that may affect outcomes
- Inputs: resources and barriers—resources may include time, talent, equipment, information, and money; barriers may include history of conflict, environmental factors, and economic conditions
- Activities or interventions—what the initiative will do to effect change and improvement. This may include providing information and enhancing skills; enhancing services and support; modifying access, barriers, and opportunities; changing the consequences; and modifying policies and broader systems.
- Outputs—direct evidence of having performed the activities, such as the number of services provided
- Intended effects or outcomes
  - Shorter term
    (e.g., increased knowledge or skill)
  - Intermediate
    (e.g., changes in community programs, policies, or practices)
  - Longer term
    (e.g., change in behavior or population-level outcomes)

IDEAS IN PRACTICE Theory of Change from the Incourage Community Foundation

The example below from the Incourage Community Foundation, and anchor organization for the Workforce Central collaborative in Wisconsin Rapids, WI, shows how a theory of change can integrate guiding principles, values, strategies, and outcomes.

Incourage: building a community that works well for all people

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Values-led
- Resident-centered
- Place-based

VALUES

Equity

Opportunity

Shared Stewardship

CORE STRATEGY	KEY LEVERS	SHIFTS IN COMMUNITY CAPACITY & CONDITIONS (Ongoing)	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (0-3 years)	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (4-10 years)	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (10+ years)
Connecting and leveraging all ***institutional*** capitals for increased impact: • Moral • Human • Social • Intellectual • Reputational • Financial ...while stewarding ***community*** capitals, such as natural capital	**Resident Engagement** **Financial Capital:** • Impact investments • Strategic grants • Purchasing strategy **Research and Data** **Capacity Building** **Public-Private-Philanthropic Partnerships** **Influence and Advocacy**	• Stronger and more inclusive social networks • Increasingly robust local information ecosystem • Increasing number of adaptive leaders • More local investors and users of capital understand impact investing structures • Increasing number of local institutions and entrepreneurs use data for continuous improvement • Increased diversity on governing boards and of institutional leadership • More residents are active in public life and agree on priorities for their shared future	• More residents are actively engaged in their community as decision makers, leaders, entrepreneurs and investors • Inter-organizational relationships within and across sectors are increasingly characterized by trust, shared norms and alignment of priorities for greater impact • Increased adoption of practice-proven approaches in areas that include community health, and environmental stewardship • More local investors provide – and firms, organizations, households, and entrepreneurs raise – capital for promising local projects • Increased openness and transparency in community decision-making processes	• Functioning local and regional capital markets direct capital to promising firms/organizations/households/entrepreneurs • Increased local employment in living wage jobs • Increased diversity of sector and firm size in the economy • Increased local ownership and control • Increased resident stewardship of all community assets • Reduced carbon emissions, water use and waste leading to improvements in the quality and sustainability of local and regional natural resources • Improved population health • Community demographic profile that is increasingly balanced, including a growing share of young adults and families	• A strong and inclusive local economy • A healthy, livable, sustainable community • A community that is open to change with a culture of shared stewardship

a community that works well for all people

CULTURE CHANGE
- **Openness to new ideas and entrepreneurial possibilities • Community narratives reflect pride in place**
- **Mind shift from "I cannot" to "I can" and "We can do better" • A more participatory culture**

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NEXT STEPS

1 Review your current theory of change and logic model with the collaborative. Are these documents still relevant and reflective of what you do, how you do it, and why? If not, make a plan to revise them.

2 Review your current strategic plan with the collaborative and assess how you are doing. Does it include the key elements described above? Is the plan still relevant, or has your context changed? Are you making progress as expected? If so, include a plan and timeline to review the strategic plan again in a year. If not, include a plan to revise it as part of your sustainability plan.

D SECTION RESOURCES: UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONTEXT, PARTNER ENGAGEMENT, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Understanding Your Local Context

LABOR MARKET INFORMATION (LMI) RESOURCES

Traditional LMI

1 State Labor Market Information Contact List *Includes data on employment, projections, and employers at the state and local level* http://www.bls.gov/bls/ofolist.htm

2 Emsi *Labor market research software blending data from BLS and other sources; intuitive interface; subscription* http://www.economicmodeling.com

3 JobsEQ *Technology platform that provides employment, wage, and demographic data, available at zip code level* http://www.chmuraecon.com/products/jobseq/

Real-time LMI

1 Burning Glass *Real-time labor market research software; intuitive interface; requires a subscription* http://burning-glass.com/workforce-agencies/

2 The Conference Board Help Wanted OnLine *Measures the previous month's job postings from thousands of Internet job boards, corporate boards, and job sites* https://www.conference-board.org/data/helpwantedonline.cfm

3 Emsi *New job posting analytics tool as of August 2016* http://www.economicmodeling.com/2016/08/01/emsis-expanded-job-posting-analytics/

Classification of Industries and Occupations

1 The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) provides the standard industry classification of businesses for statistical data related to the U.S. economy. https://www.naics.com

2 The Occupational Employment Statistics program provides information on the classification of occupations used for employment and wage estimates. http://www.bls.gov/oes/home.htm

Population Data Resources

U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder *A free tool to parse census and survey data*
http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml

Stakeholder Analysis

System Mapping: A Guide to Developing Actor Maps http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/system-mapping

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

1 Building Effective Business Partnerships: A Pocket Guide for Nonprofit Leaders *from the Hitachi Foundation*
http://www.hitachifoundation.org/storage/documents/pocket_guide_nonprofit.pdf

2 The Community Toolbox: Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/dothework/tools_tk_1.aspx

3 Building Collaboration *from Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*
http://www.geofunders.org/smarter-grantmaking/collaborate

4 Partnerships: A Workforce Development Practitioner's Guide
http://www.commcorp.org/resources/documents/Partnership_Guidebook_5_2013.pdf

5 Program Sustainability Assessment Tool: Partnerships
https://sustaintool.org/understand/partnerships

STRATEGIC PLANNING

1 The Community Tool Box Chapter 8: Developing a Strategic Plan
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning

2 All About Strategic Planning http://managementhelp.org/strategicplanning/index.htm

3 Strategic Planning: A 10-Step Guide
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPTEIA/Resources/mosaica_10_steps.pdf

4 Living Into Your Strategic Plan: Tools and Templates (including dashboard examples) https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/strategy-development/living-into-strategic-plan-implemention-guide

5 W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide
https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

1 Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadb193.pdf

2 The best of appreciative inquiry websites https://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/community/link.cfm

3 Better Evaluation: Appreciative Inquiry http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry


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SECTION 2

STRENGTHENING OPERATIONS

A key step in planning for sustainability is to ensure you have addressed critical parts of your collaborative's operations, including collaborative and organizational capacity, funding, and strategic communications.

A COLLABORATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

When asked to discuss important elements of sustainability, site directors universally agreed on the importance of having the "capacity to do the work," which they defined as having financial, operational, and staffing capacity commensurate with the expectations of the collaborative's members and funders.

Financial capacity includes the ability to raise funds as well as the sound internal systems and controls necessary to manage these funds. Operational capacity includes governance and an active and engaged board or leadership council. Staffing capacity includes the ability to manage the collaborative, work with stakeholders, and engage with industry representatives.

This section discusses four key areas of collaborative and organizational capacity: 1) internal systems; 2) leadership and staff; 3) governance; and 4) relationship with a fiscal agent / organizational home. We include examples of strong practices from around the National Fund and exercises to help you complete your sustainability plan.

ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has strong, defined internal supports, systems and resources in place for fiscal management, grants and contracts, fund raising and reporting, and hiring and staff development.			
2) The site director and other collaborative staff have the skill sets and capacities needed, including board development, grant making, fund raising and reporting, assessing progress and impact, communications and building a learning community.			
3) The collaborative has a clear, written governance structure and decision-making process that members and staff understand and adhere to.			
4) If applicable, the collaborative is in alignment with its fiscal/organizational home in terms of priorities and operations.			

INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT

In order to function effectively and sustain a high level of capacity, collaboratives need robust internal systems, supports, and resources.

Fiscal Management and Controls

A collaborative needs to have written internal controls that clearly describe the procedures it will follow and who is responsible. These should include, at a minimum, basic internal controls that address who has access to the collaborative's accounts and who has the authority to approve grants, contracts, and expenses. These can be defined by the organizational home or fiscal agent, or by the collaborative itself, and should be documented.

Grants and Contracts Management

The collaborative should have defined policies that describe how grants made by the collaborative and contracts entered are reviewed, approved, and evaluated. This should include procurement policies, the roles of funders, staff, and any applicable consultants, as well as the role of the fiscal agent, if applicable.

Fundraising and Reporting

The collaborative should have a clear understanding of who is responsible for managing fundraising and reporting to funders. Sometimes it is the site director who is responsible; other times it is the development staff at the fiscal agent. Often, both parties have responsibility. All models work as long as the roles are clear to all parties. No matter who is responsible for managing the fundraising and reporting, however, it is important to note that the collaborative's funders also have an important role to play. Their willingness to leverage their networks and relationships to bring in new funders; standardize or streamline applications and reporting for the collaborative; and commit to longer-term funding can be key to sustainability. Finally, if the collaborative has a fiscal agent, it should have a clear understanding of any fees or indirect costs and a protocol for communicating those costs to collaborative funders.

SITE DIRECTOR AND STAFF CAPACITY

The strength of a collaborative's staff, especially of its director, is a crucial element of sustainability. First and foremost, it is important to have a clear job description for the collaborative director that specifies a set of responsibilities distinct from any related to the fiscal/organizational home and specific to managing the collaborative. The collaborative members should have a clear understanding of who hires, supervises, and provides feedback to the collaborative director and other collaborative staff.

Effective collaborative directors generally play a number of roles, from board development and relationship management to fundraising and communications. Collaboratives should look for competencies in the following areas when hiring a collaborative director. These can also be used by collaboratives to help identify areas for growth, professional development, or additional staffing capacity.

Leadership development, relationship, and succession management for collaborative board and/or leadership body

- The collaborative director communicates and works closely with the investors and key stakeholders, guiding and supporting them in meeting the initiative's strategic goals.
- S/he staffs the board or leadership council and any committees, executes decisions effectively, and ensures that investors and stakeholders are informed of critical developments in a timely and effective manner.
- S/he facilitates and assists in the succession management for the collaborative's leadership body or board.

Grantmaking and grants management

- The collaborative director and his/her staff are responsible for soliciting, selecting, and managing all grants awarded by the initiative.
- Staff communicate regularly with grantees, analyze grantee progress, provide support to grantees, and ensure that grantee work plans are consistent with the collaborative's goals.

Fundraising and reporting

- Working with collaborative funders and members, the collaborative director and his/her staff develop fundraising plans, bring additional funders to the table, and maintain strong relationships with existing funders.

- The collaborative director and his/her staff negotiate work plans and contracts with public and private funders and assure that each funding source receives reports on program results and finances in accordance with reporting requirements.

Measuring collaborative impact

- The collaborative director and his/her staff oversee the collaborative's evaluation efforts, including contracting with any external evaluators, designing or overseeing the design of data collection procedures and templates for grantees, facilitating the regular collection and reporting of participant and business impacts, and assisting grantees and subcontractors in outcomes measurement that assists the investors in assessing the collaborative's impact.

Building a learning community

- The collaborative director and his/her staff maximize learning and collaborative action among grantees, funders, and other stakeholders, and oversee and develop such efforts as capacity building workshops, peer learning groups, presentations, webinars, tools, and publications based on the collaborative's learning and evaluation to ensure a culture of continuous improvement.

Serving as the collaborative's chief spokesperson and ambassador

- The director serves as the collaborative's lead ambassador. S/he represents the collaborative at local, regional, and national meetings, participates in other efforts that are aligned with the collaborative's interests and goals, and leads public policy and advocacy efforts to ensure the success of the collaborative's strategies.
- S/he actively forges connections to other organizations and stakeholders in the community, serving on relevant committees or boards as the opportunities arise.
- S/he supports and develops key stakeholders as spokespersons—enabling them to communicate and feel vested as spokespersons for the collaborative.
- S/he brings in and continuously develops a workforce development policy and practice knowledge base informed by the collaborative's own investments as well as by local, regional, and national issues and priorities.

Overseeing consultants and contractors

- The collaborative director and his/her staff regular communicate with all consultants and contractors retained by the investors and/or assigned by collaborative funders and/or grant initiatives, such as the National Fund for Workforce Solutions coaches or U.S. Department of Labor technical assistance consultants. The collaborative director and his/her staff negotiate the terms of contracts and contract renewals, coordinate work plans, and facilitate information sharing to develop among them a core expertise and commitment to maximizing the systems change opportunities of the initiative.

Overseeing staff and planning for succession

- The collaborative director hires and oversees any administrative or program staff, provides access to professional development opportunities, and ensures that the organization is effectively structured and managed.
- The collaborative director, working with the investors, plans for succession by effectively engaging and building the leadership of key investors, stakeholders, and staff within the collaborative.

ROLE OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

The collaborative's leaders can include funders, employers, labor, and other stakeholders. In fact, going beyond funders on the leadership body can bring in valuable perspectives that the collaborative may otherwise miss. The leadership body can and should play an active role in helping the collaborative meet its goals. The roles and responsibilities of the collaborative's leadership should be detailed in a set of governance documents. These should include a conflict of interest policy as well as clear delineation of responsibilities and decision-making authority, especially if non-funders and/or potential grantees are brought into the leadership body.

Some of the suggested roles of funders and/or collaborative leadership include:

- Providing input on and approving the strategic priorities and direction of the collaborative, including but not limited to grantmaking, advocacy, and capacity building activities.

- Providing input on and voting on any grants and contracts from the collaborative, designating the name of the grantee/vendor, the amount and purpose of the grant/contract, and any special conditions attached.
- Recommending an annual budget for the collaborative with input from the collaborative director/staff.
- Participating in hiring the collaborative director and providing input on the performance evaluation and compensation of the collaborative director.
- Making cash or in-kind contributions to the collaborative. Some collaboratives define members as those who contribute.
- Assisting staff in identifying and increasing the resources available to the collaborative to meet its programmatic and budgetary goals.
- Seeking out opportunities to recognize and highlight the collaborative's mission, goals, and accomplishments within their own organizations and externally as appropriate.
- Regularly participating in collaborative meetings and/or subcommittees and voting on or providing feedback on grants, contracts, or other collaborative decisions as detailed in the governance policies of the collaborative.

WORKING IN ALIGNMENT WITH A FISCAL AGENT OR ORGANIZATIONAL HOME

While collaboratives should have a distinct identity separate from their fiscal agent or organizational home, collaboratives should nonetheless work in alignment with their fiscal agent or organizational home. This means aligning priorities and mission as well as operations. Here are some things to look for or work toward.

Alignment of Priorities and Mission

- The collaborative's mission and goals are shared by and aligned with that of the fiscal agent or organizational home.
- The collaborative has more than one internal leader within the fiscal agent/ organizational home that serve as advocates and champions for the work.
- The fiscal agent and collaborative have a clear understanding of and respect for each party's role and contributions.
- The fiscal agent or organizational home sees the collaborative as a valued partner in meeting organizational goals, rather than as a threat or competitor for resources or visibility.

Alignment of Operations

- The collaborative and its fiscal agent identify ways to jointly fund and support complementary programs or priorities.
- The collaborative and its fiscal agent agree on whether or not the collaborative can or will receive public funding—in particular federal funding—which may require additional expense, capacity and expertise.
- The fiscal agent/organizational home provides institutional support for some of the collaborative's key services, activities, or operations (e.g., communications, fundraising, grants management/ RFP processes, and special events).
- The fiscal agent and collaborative work together to identify opportunities to share staff and physical resources.

NEXT STEPS

1. Gather your existing governance documents, job descriptions, and any other documents related to the areas of collaborative operations and capacity described above.
2. Take a careful look at these documents, examine your current practices (even if not documented), and write down any areas that need to be developed or strengthened as you move forward.
3. Describe specific next steps you will take to strengthen and support these areas of your collaborative's work. Be specific and include timelines and responsible parties. (See the Sustainability Action Plan for a suggested format for this planning work.)

IDEAS IN PRACTICE

SkillWorks Partners for a Productive Workforce (Boston, MA)

Established by a group of public and private investors in 2003, SkillWorks established a Funders Group consisting of all investors in the initiative and instituted a "one funder, one vote" policy to gain buy-in and build an environment of consensus building. The collaborative also had strong support from its fiscal agent and organizational home, the Boston Foundation, including support from senior leadership.

The collaborative transitioned from a consultant-managed model to a full-time director in 2005 as the funders determined that the activities of the collaborative would benefit from more dedicated time and attention.

As the collaborative developed and evolved, a number of approaches and practices proved helpful:

- **The Boston Foundation's strong internal controls and processes** enabled the collaborative to manage federal grants and allowed the foundation to successfully compete for and manage other federal funding, which was seen as a positive impact of SkillWorks on the foundation.
- **The collaborative's identity as a platform for multiple funders, along with** the approach of consensus building and providing all funders with equal footing within the collaborative, reassured funders that SkillWorks was not just an initiative of, or a platform for, the Boston Foundation. Early collaborative leadership helped to make this possible by clearly creating a separate initiative brand and website and delineating the roles and responsibilities of collaborative staff with respect to the fiscal agent.
- **Developing a written set of governance documents** was a concrete way to develop leaders and champions among the SkillWorks funders group. Completed as a key follow-up step to an initiative strategic planning process, developing these documents also allowed the group to plan for succession and move toward sustainability.

B DIVERSE AND STABLE FUNDING

It is important for the collaborative to have a consistent level of funding over time from a range of funding sources, including but not limited to public, business/ employer, and philanthropic sources. This funding should support not only programs and initiatives of the collaborative but the infrastructure and management of the collaborative itself, including collaborative staff, convening stakeholders and employers, evaluation and data collection efforts, and any indirect or overhead costs.

A diverse range of funding sources protects against dependence on any one funder or type of funder, whether public, private, or philanthropic, and mitigates fluctuations due to changes in funders' priorities, budgets, or political and economic circumstances.

Funder diversification provides the collaborative with broader representation of interests and points of view. It also gives the collaborative community credibility and helps transform the collaborative from a grantee to a collaborative space for philanthropy.

Planning for funding sustainability should be a strategic process and part of how the collaborative addresses its long-term needs and goals. Significant fluctuations in funding may prevent the collaborative from making long-term investment decisions, which may make it more difficult to document participant or employer outcomes and have a particularly adverse effect on sustaining systems change efforts. As with any organization, unstable funding may also lead to staff turnover.

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT FUNDING PICTURE	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has a long-term financial plan.			
2) The collaborative is funded through a variety of sources (public, private, business, philanthropic, pooled, aligned).			
3) The collaborative regularly and strategically engages its funders in bringing in new funders or sources of funding.			
4) The collaborative has supportive public partners at the local and/or state level.			
5) The collaborative has a combination of stable (long-term/general operating) and flexible (shorter-term/program-specific) funding.			
6) The collaborative's fiscal agent supports the collaborative's fund raising efforts, and each party has clearly defined roles, responsibilities and processes for communicating with funders.			

DEVELOPING A THREE-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

After you have assessed your current funding landscape, you will want to pull multiple elements above into a strategic, three-year financial plan for the collaborative. Figure 10 provides a sample three-year budget. Here are a few ways to get started:

Figure 9 **Funding Flowchart**

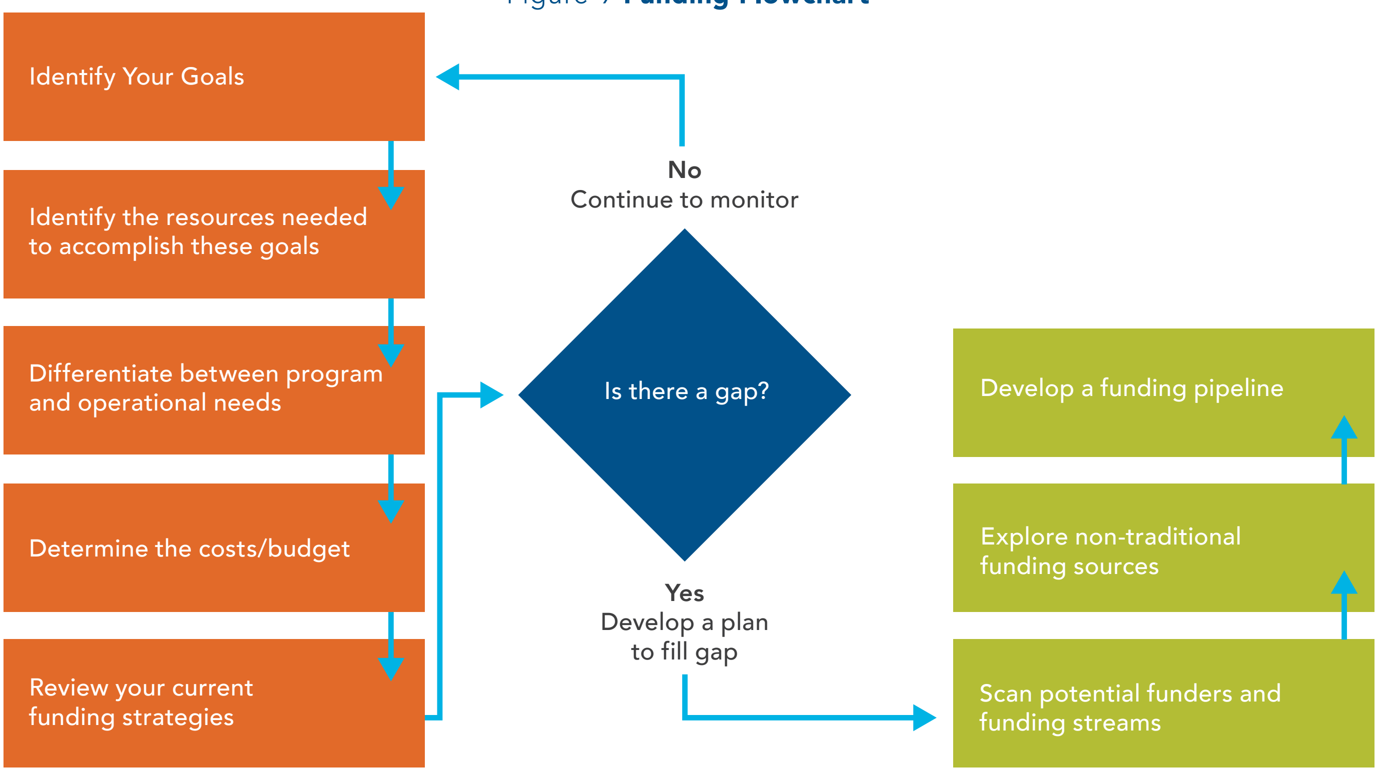

Figure 10

Sample Three-Year Budget

Projected Expenses	Year 1 ($)	Year 2 ($)	Year 3 ($)	3-Year Expenses ($)
Salaries/Benefits • Director • Associate	150,000	160,000	170,000	480,000
Non-personnel Initiative Management • Communications • Rent/Telephone • Office supplies • Fiscal agency fee/indirect	100,000	100,000	100,000	300,000
Evaluation and Data Management • Contract with evaluator • Data management system • Business impact report	75,000	75,000	75,000	225,000
Forums/Convenings/Sponsorships • State workforce forum • Report release forum	25,000	25,000	25,000	75,000
Capacity Building Activities • Coaching training and guide development • Business impact training • Partnership management training	50,000	50,000	50,000	150,000
Program/Training Grants	500,000	500,000	500,000	1,500,000
Employer Organizing • Grant/contract(s) to support employer organizing and convening in 2 key sectors	100,000	100,000	100,000	300,000
Public Policy Activities • State budget advocacy • Develop and implement "Skills" campaign and materials	75,000	75,000	75,000	225,000
Total	**1,075,000**	**1,085,000**	**1,095,000**	**3,255,000**

SAMPLE THREE-YEAR FUNDING STRATEGIES[18]

After you put together your three-year budget, you'll need to consider your funding strategies, which should include a range of methods and sources of funding.

Figure 11 provides an overview of a number of methods and funding sources that you may want to think about. Use this as a starting point to brainstorm with your current funders and partners, including employers, to make a list of current and possible funders/supporters that are relevant to your initiatives. Be as specific as possible. List names of foundations, businesses, government agencies, and individuals who you can approach for support, both cash and in-kind.

Look specifically to employers who benefit from and/or help drive collaborative funding and priorities. They may have access to sponsorship, membership, or training/tuition reimbursement dollars that can help support the collaborative's work, especially if they can see a direct benefit to their company in terms of jobs filled or training provided. They may also be able to contribute in-kind support such as equipment, training/facilitation space, work-based learning opportunities, apprenticeships, internships, or guest speakers/trainers. Some employers may also dedicate staffing to the collaborative or provide opportunities for workforce or college advisors to be on site to work with their employees.

In addition to employers, other collaborative partners can also play a role in providing in-kind support. They may be able to institutionalize or absorb current collaborative activities or expenses, and it is worth exploring these possibilities with partners in a thoughtful way.

The collaborative may also have revenue generation or earned income opportunities. Some collaboratives may be able to leverage their expertise to provide consulting or workforce-planning services. Others may be able to secure sponsorships for signature events or conferences.

In general, make the value proposition of contributing to the collaborative as clear as possible for all potential funders, adapting this statement as necessary for different audiences.

Remember: chasing funding that does not support the core mission and goals of the collaborative may distract you from your strategic plan, consume organizational capacity, and even alienate current partners and funders.

Figure 11
Funding Diversification[19]

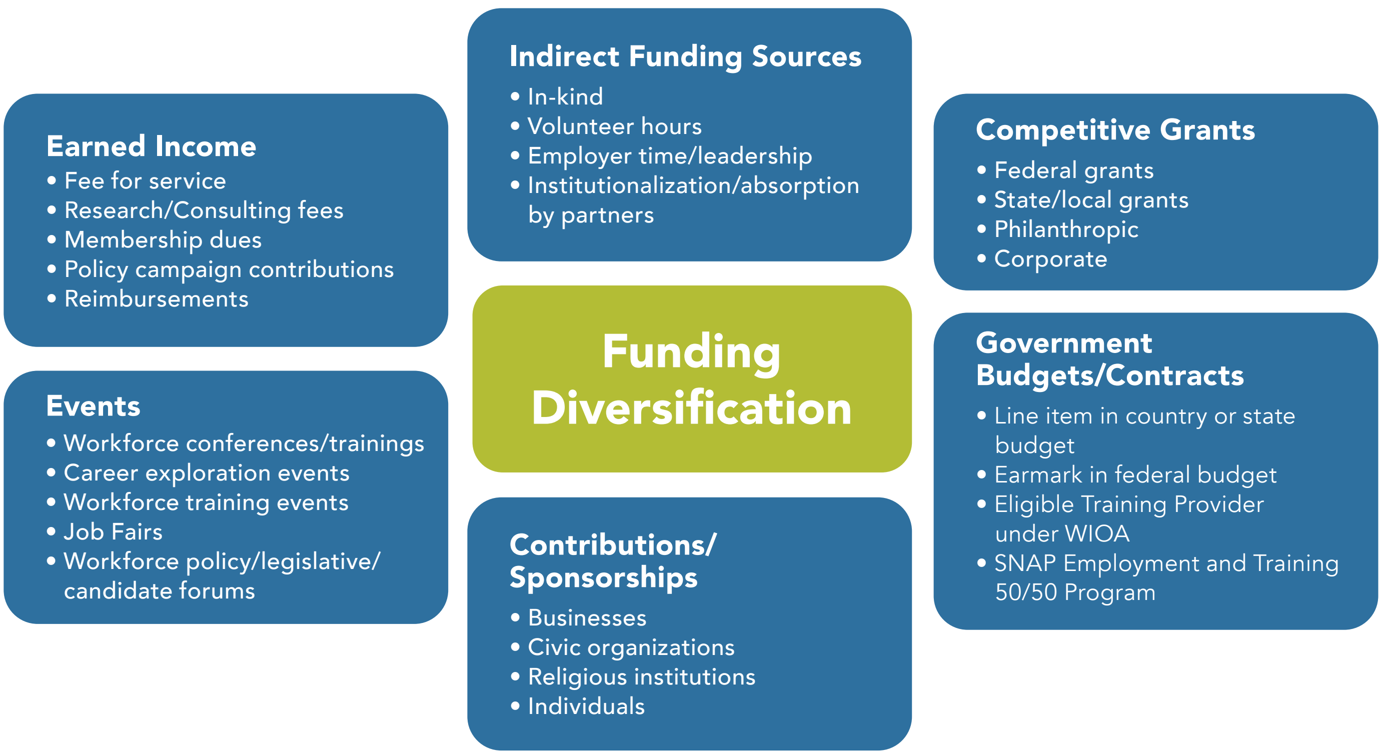

Figure 12

Sample Three-Year Funding Strategies Table[20]

Projected Expenses	3-Year Expenses ($)	Current Funding	Proposed Gap Funding Strategies
Salaries/Benefits	480,000	50% of salaries paid by fiscal agent	50% from other grants
Non-personnel Initiative Management	300,000	$30,000/year rent from fiscal agent; $10,000/year in-kind communications	$60,000/year from other grants
Evaluation and Data Management	225,000	$150,000 grant for evaluation from Foundation A	$75,000 from other grants
Forums/Convenings/ Sponsorships	75,000	$0	$60,000 in event sponsorships; $15,000 in event fees
Capacity Building Activities	150,000	$100,000 grants for capacity building from Foundation B & C; $10,000 in identified sponsorships; $10,000 in in-kind support for space, food	$30,000 from new grants or sponsorships
Program/Training Grants	1,500,000	$250,000 in existing city grant for training; $250,000 in existing philanthropic grants for training; $500,000 in federal funds from TechHire	$500,000 from other grants
Employer Organizing	300,000	$100,000 in identified membership dues/fees from businesses	$100,000 from other grants; $100,000 from employer contributions (dues or grants)
Public Policy Activities	225,000	$100,000 grant from Foundations D & E for public policy advocacy	$105,000 from other grants; $10,000 from campaign dues/fees; $10,000 in-kind support of printing and materials
Total	**3,255,000**	**Secured: $1,730,000**	**Gap: $1,525,000**

SEEKING AND SECURING PUBLIC FUNDING FROM FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL SOURCES

Federal and state funding may offer opportunities for collaboratives to significantly scale their work, start new work, or bring in new partners and funders. In the case of AmeriCorps funding, it may also allow sites to expand staffing capacity or invest in programmatic work in a different way. Below are a few resources for public workforce funding and some tips for collaboratives seeking public funding.

Partial list of potential federal workforce funding sources

- **U.S. Department of Labor**
  https://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm
  e.g., H1-B Visa grant programs, Community-Based Job Training Grants, Senior Community Service Employment Grants, ApprenticeshipUSA, America's Promise Job Driven Grants program, Women in Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Occupations, YouthBuild, Reentry Demonstration Projects for Young Adults, Career Pathways for Youth, Strengthening Working Families, adult reentry programs, and TechHire partnerships. Collaboratives should also work with their regional/local Workforce Development Board. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act mandates the use of industry partnerships, and it makes little sense to duplicate efforts if the collaborative or board is already operating partnerships in relevant sectors.
- **U.S. Department of Commerce—Economic Development Administration**
  https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/
  e.g., EDA Planning Program and Local Technical Assistance Program promote the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region as well as the development of effective economic development programs. The Economic Development Assistance Program is an annual grant program primarily for capital improvements but could be useful for partnership with community colleges and economic development organizations that need new facilities for training.
- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
  http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/index.html
  e.g., Nursing Workforce Diversity grants and Health Profession Opportunity Grants, if reauthorized.
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
  http://www.fns.usda.gov/Federal-Jobs-Programs
  e.g., the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Employment and Training programs.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
  https://www.epa.gov/grants
  e.g., Brownfields Cleanup Grants and the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants Program.
- **U.S. Department of Education**
  http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grants-apply.html?src=pn
  e.g., Programs for youth and young adults, including Investing in Innovation Fund grants, Talent Search, career and technical education, Pay for Success grants and others.
- **Corporation for National and Community Service**
  http://www.nationalservice.gov/
  e.g., AmeriCorps State and National grants and Social Innovation Fund grants.

In addition to federal sources, collaboratives should be aware of and regularly check for state and local funding from state departments of labor, commerce, education, and rehabilitation; and from local and regional economic development agencies.

Capacity to manage public funds

Public funding—especially from federal government sources—comes with a lot of requirements. These often include implementing specific accounting practices or systems that segregate and account for federal dollars; timesheets or other mechanisms to track personnel hours billed to federal grants; comprehensive audits if the grantee receives more than $750,000 per year from federal sources; additional background check requirements for staff; different hiring and procurement processes; and fiscal and programmatic reporting requirements. Collaboratives and their fiscal agents need to carefully consider their own capacity as well as the costs of compliance before seeking these funds.

TIPS FOR GRANTSEEKERS

- Sign up for alerts on Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/) and regularly review funding opportunities.
- Subscribe to the Federal Register (https://www.federalregister.gov/) for daily summaries of federal notices. You can customize your subscription to the agencies or topics you are interested in.
- Register for a D-U-N-S number (https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform) or ensure that your fiscal agent has one already.
- Apply for and obtain an approved indirect cost rate (https://www.dol.gov/oasam/boc/costdeterminationguide/main.htm).
- Build your grant partnership early. Federal grants usually require partners, and it is advantageous if your partnership is used to working together before the grant announcement comes out.
- Put together a grantwriting team with representatives from key partners. Divide up the work, develop a work plan, and meet regularly.
- Begin working on the proposal well ahead of time. Do not wait until the last minute to get started.
- Take note of key deadlines and grant requirements. You can be disqualified for leaving off a single signature or submitting your grant just one minute late.
- Build the costs of compliance and evaluation into your grant budget.

WORKING WITH AND MANAGING FUNDERS

One key to keeping your funders engaged and to working with them to streamline requirements and reporting is to ensure that funders see and experience the real value added of being a member of the collaborative. As your collaborative brings in more funders and new sources of funding, here are some additional things to keep in mind.

Reporting and Grants Management

- Work to understand each funder's interests, priorities, and expectations with regard to the collaborative, and be transparent about the collaborative's goals, capacity, and needs.
- If you can, work with your funders on streamlined reporting in terms of requirements and timing. Getting multiple funders to agree to one set of outcomes/requirements, a common reporting format, or a common reporting calendar can be a huge time saver.
- Before applying for a grant, consider the effort required to submit and manage that grant, and weigh that against the resources that the grant provides. Have a realistic conversation with your fiscal agent about the grant management and reporting resources and capacity available to support the collaborative. Does the collaborative or fiscal agent have the financial systems to effectively track different types of funding streams? This is particularly important for federal funding, where there may be accounting, auditing, personnel, and systems requirements that the fiscal agent will have to follow if funds are awarded.[21]
- Work closely with your fiscal agent to determine the roles you will each play in reaching out to new funders as well as the resources you will need to successfully apply for and report on funding. These will include board lists; organizational charts; organizational budgets for past, current, and future years; audited financial statements; 990s; and annual reports.

Funding and Governance

- As a collaborative, you will need to figure out the link between funding and governance. Will you require partners to contribute to the collaborative in order to participate in collaborative decision making?
- What is your conflict of interest policy should funding or policy decisions arise that affect funders in the collaborative?

IDEAS IN PRACTICE

Pooled Funding

Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative

The Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative was established in 2005 at the San Francisco Foundation. The collaborative has a pooled funding model.

Funders have mostly been local foundations, although the collaborative has also had support in the past from the California Employment Development Department and the National Fund's Social Innovation Fund grant.

The pooled fund is held at the San Francisco Foundation. Each funder has one vote in policy and funding decisions. The collaborative has a full-time director who is a legal employee of the foundation but whose salary is paid by all of the funders through the pooled fund.

The annual budget of the collaborative has varied, but is in the range of $1.5 million per year.

The site director has primary responsibility for setting the budget and raising funds for the collaborative.

Aligned Funding

Partners for a Competitive Workforce

Partners for a Competitive Workforce (PCW) is a partnership in the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana tristate region focused on meeting employer demand by growing the skills of the region's current and future workforce. It was established in 2008 and is currently managed by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati.

The partnership has both pooled and aligned funds, with $1.38 million in pooled funds and $12.8 million in aligned funds in 2014.

PCW actively solicits aligned funds when an opportunity like a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) grant comes up. The collaborative convenes folks, helps to figure out who the best lead entity would be, and supports the application.

The biggest sources of aligned funding have been public, such as Individual Training Accounts or On-the-Job Training Funds from the Workforce Investment Boards and DOL Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training grants that PCW's partners have received.

If the money flows through PCW or the United Way, it is considered pooled. If it flows through another entity, it is aligned with PCW's work. Any reporting on outcomes is the responsibility of the organization that received the funding. PCW doesn't have any formal MOUs and the aligned groups are considered PCW partners.

NEXT STEPS

1. Identify the strategies and activities that you will work to sustain over the next three years.
2. Develop a three-year line-item budget for each collaborative strategy/activity.
3. Describe the strategies you will use to sustain each strategy/activity.
4. Identify potential sources of support.
5. Include a timeline and strategies for developing or applying for new sources of support.
6. If you are at the stage of "planning to plan," describe specific next steps you will take to strengthen and support your collaborative's funding picture. Be specific and include timelines and responsible parties. (You may wish to refer to the *Sustainability Action Plan Template* for a suggested format.)

C STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Strategic Communication is the ability to explain your collaborative's role in and its contribution to the local or regional workforce ecosystem, which may include or intersect with economic development, community development, education, and other systems.

A collaborative may have many communication strategies and approaches—including those that focus on policy or systems-change campaigns; examples of business impact; program outcomes and evaluation; stories of individual impact; or local workforce or economic needs and trends.

Effectively communicating the collaborative's value builds greater external visibility and support. If the collaborative is engaged in systems-change work, effective communication may also increase the likelihood that stakeholders will take part in those efforts. Regular internal communication about the details and the evidence of your impact keeps funders and other partners engaged in the work.

In interviews, site directors emphasized that partners need to see results and evidence of return on investment to stay committed to the work. Yet they also expressed the challenges of articulating the value of a funder collaborative, and particularly quantifying its convening, connecting, and system-building work and outcomes.

This section helps collaboratives assess and develop their communications strategies and plans; communicate their value added; communicate a brand identity; and develop campaigns and communications materials that increase awareness of workforce issues and raise the collaborative's profile. We include a few examples of strong practices from around the National Fund; provide an excerpt of a sample strategic communications plan, which can be used as a template; and conclude with a set of practical tools and resources.

> ***"Backbone organizations, like our collaboratives, are not direct service providers. It can be challenging to articulate the value of the backbone and of systems change. [Yet] it is critically important to talk about how things are different at the systems level."***
>
> *Janice Urbanik, Executive Director, Partners for a Competitive Workforce*

ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE'S COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has a strategic communications plan to secure and maintain support from key stakeholders and the public.			
2) Staff and funders communicate regularly and effectively the need for and value of the collaborative to key audiences, including the business community, policy makers, and funders/potential funders.			
3) The collaborative has a clear brand identity and is marketed to communicate its unique value to key audiences (policymakers, employers, philanthropy).			
4) The collaborative increases community awareness of workforce issues and solutions and builds support for the solutions.			
5) The collaborative tracks the results and measures the success of its communications efforts.			

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

After you have assessed your capacity, you will want to pull all the elements above into a strategic communications plan.

Just keep these things in mind:

- Define your communications goals.
  - It's not just to get the collaborative's name in the paper. Sample goals might include:
    - Influencing a particular policy;
    - Increasing or maintaining your profile with funders;
    - Generating community interest in workforce issues;
    - Marketing collaborative services to increase participation or funding;
    - Highlighting challenges faced by lower-income workers and solutions that work to address these challenges; or
    - Building greater support on your issue by highlighting the importance of workforce issues and their relationship with more "tangible" issues like poverty or competitiveness.
- Communication is about telling a story.
  - Stories resonate with people. Telling a compelling story is a way to accomplish multiple goals—such as funding, policy, or maintaining your visibility.
  - In the case of workforce development, we are telling a story about why our communities need to focus on and invest in skills and careers and what solutions we can offer.
  - An effective story may inspire your audiences to take action.
- Measure the success of your efforts.
  - Outputs (e.g., number of page views or articles) are easiest to measure, but you should also think about appropriate metrics that relate to your communications goal (e.g., influence on a particular policy or audience, or greater awareness in the community about workforce issues).

The key elements of a communications plan include:

- **Why –** goals and objectives for communications
- **What –** clear, distilled messages
- **Who –** identified target audiences
- **How –** materials needed and methods used
- **When –** timing

These elements are illustrated below in an excerpt from the CareerSTAT communications plan.

COMMUNICATING A COLLABORATIVE'S VALUE ADDED

While it can be daunting to describe the value added of a collaborative, some effective messages and practices can help.

In developing your value proposition, **DO**:

- Describe the problem(s) your collaborative is addressing
- Tell specifically how you are addressing the problem—and what makes it different than other approaches
- Include specific outcomes and accomplishments of your work—and how you were able to get there
- Include insights and quotes from third-party validators
- Use graphics and pictures to make your story come alive
- Avoid jargon and use simple language

Figure 13

Excerpts from the CareerSTAT Communications Plan (April–June 2016)

Goals	Broad: Develop the CareerSTAT brand as a national resource and expert network on frontline health care worker development. Specific: Deepen engagement with the CareerSTAT members network, maintain active press presence, and better integrate National Fund/CareerSTAT audiences.
Key Messages	• CareerSTAT and its materials (guide and case studies) provide a series of best practices for the industry on frontline health care workforce investment. • CareerSTAT's Frontline Worker Champions are business examples showcasing the value of frontline workforce investment. • CareerSTAT is a dynamic network operating across the country and participation can improve an organization's investment programs or HR policies.
Target Audiences	Existing CareerSTAT members, health care representatives from a diverse array of health care institutions, health care boards of directors and C-suite
How & When	April–June 2016: • Redesign CareerSTAT marketing materials • Promote the Business Guide in industry outlets as a leading resource • Pitch CareerSTAT and best practices to Chief Executive magazine • Promote Frontline Champions Program to generate nominations • Present at CLOs in Healthcare conference

IDEAS IN PRACTICE
CareerEdge (Bradenton-Sarasota, FL)

CareerEdge's publication, *The Power of Partnerships*, clearly articulates the value added of this Bradenton-Sarasota region's funder collaborative. Here is an overview of how CareerEdge describes what it brings to the table. These are fleshed out more fully in the publication, with examples of accomplishments and outcomes.

Unrestricted Funds

- Nimble, flexible, innovative
- Additive to the workforce board

Employer-Focused

- Market- and demand-driven
- Employer commitment of resources

Sector-Based

- Gain critical mass around common needs within an industry
- Industry-level employer partnerships

Data-Driven

- Evidence-based
- Aggregation of needs across employers

Founded as a Collaborative

- Bridging gaps between government, education, and business
- Connecting partners toward a common cause
- Holding each other accountable

See: http://careeredgefunders.org/the-power-of-partnerships/

Developing and Communicating a Collaborative's Brand Identity

Different from a collaborative's value proposition (what the collaborative does and adds), a collaborative's brand identity or "personality" is about who the collaborative is and what it invokes. These are themes that can guide your communications strategies.

The National Fund recently completed a brand positioning survey with Anthology Communications that revealed a number of brand traits that are also relevant to its collaborative partners.

The National Fund[22]

- Values innovation, creativity
- Spreads ideas freely—has a generous and egalitarian spirit
- Is optimistic about the future—identifies problems in order to solve them
- Cares about results and impact, not convention
- Dares to ask the question: "What if . . . ?"
- Fast moving, agile, responsive, and flexible

An effective communications strategy will balance a focus on brand—"who you are"—with a focus on tactics—"what you do."

DEVELOPING A DISTINCT COLLABORATIVE IDENTITY

Many collaboratives are part of larger organizations and/or have fiscal agents with their own brands and identities, which can prove challenging when trying to differentiate between the activities of the collaborative and those of the organizational home.

Even in this context, it is possible to develop a distinct identity for the collaborative. Using a combination of characteristics, activities, and outcomes consistently will help tell a collaborative's unique story. In addition, it is helpful to have an identifiable public "face" such as an employer partner, distinct from the spokesperson for the fiscal agent, who is skilled in telling this story.

Increasing Community Awareness of Workforce Issues and Solutions

One key purpose of strategic communications is to increase community awareness of the problems you are trying to address and the solutions you are proposing.

Given the stakeholders and resources that many National Fund collaboratives have at the table, as well as their systems building or systems-change approaches, increasing community awareness is a natural way for a collaborative to set itself apart in the workforce ecosystem.

There are multiple ways to tackle this, but a few suggestions include and can be found in the Sustainability Resource Center at https://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/:

- Developing a policy platform that identifies the problem(s) that need to be addressed and your recommendation (*See Sustainability Resource Center:* Iowa Skills2Compete).
- Working with local businesses to identify workforce or talent pipeline issues and the role of workforce training in addressing these issues (See Sustainability Resource Center: *SkillUp Washington Manufacturing Employer Survey*).
- Developing an OpEd or pitch as a story to a local business reporter.
- Communicating the return on investment of workforce training (See Sustainability Resource Center: *Return on Investment Study for Three National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) Partnership Programs in Ohio*).
- Identifying local/regional economic issues, such as new economic development or industries, inequality, unemployment, or changing demographics, and developing a workforce story to tell (See Sustainability *Resource Center:* *Labor Market Data & Trends* produced by JOIN).
- Focusing on and telling a human story—whether of a participant, business, or both, and the impact that workforce programs have had.
- Reaching out to local elected officials and inviting them to site visits, meetings, and events.

PRO TIPS: WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- Cultivate relationships with reporters
- See reporters as experts and help them see you as an expert
- Compliment reporters on good stories and not just stories about you.
- Write thank you notes/emails
- Think of the different angles you can use to frame your work. Some angles include: inequality, education, business, economic development, and a personal narrative
- Generally speaking, the "good for business, good for the economy" angle resonates with the media
- Make your language accessible and avoid jargon if possible
- Look beyond big papers and network television—look for industry publications, trade journals, and blogs

NEXT STEPS

1. Gather together any existing communications strategies, plans, or documents.
2. Take a careful look at your existing documents, examine your current communications plans, and write down any areas that need to be developed or strengthened as you move forward.
3. If you are at the stage of "planning to plan," describe specific next steps you will take to strengthen and support your collaborative's communications strategies. Be specific, and include timelines and responsible parties (See the *Sustainability Action Plan*[23] for a suggested format for this planning work).
4. If you are ready to write a communications plan, use the CareerSTAT template provided above to as a starting point to develop your collaborative's plan.

D SECTION RESOURCES: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY, BUDGET AND FUNDING, AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

RESOURCES: COLLABORATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

1. Overview of organizational capacity with respect to sustainability planning: https://sustaintool.org/understand/organizational-capacity
2. Defining your organizational structure: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure/overview/main
3. Building Future Leaders Diagnostic Survey and guide (a tool for assessing succession planning and a guide to strengthen it): http://www.bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Career-Professional-Development/Develop-My-Staff/Building-Future-Leaders-Diagnostic-Survey.aspx
4. *Nonprofit Leadership Development: What's Your "Plan A" for Growing Future Leaders?*
5. Staff/succession planning (SkillWorks tool kit): http://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/
6. Collaborative Governance (SkillWorks sample): http://nationalfund.com/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/

RESOURCES: BUDGET AND FUNDING

1. Federal funding information: www.grants.gov
2. Foundation information: www.foundationcenter.org/findfunders/foundfinder and www.fundsnetservices.com
3. Grant writing resources: http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/shortcourse/ and http://ctb.ku.edu/en/writing-grant-application
4. The Bridgespan Group's Finding Your Funding Model is a practical guide for nonprofits in general: http://www.bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Funding-Strategy/Finding-Your-Funding-Model-A-Practical-Approach-to.aspx#.Vly3Mnv1gt8
5. DOL Funding Opportunities - http://www.dol.gov/dol/grants/funding-ops.htm and http://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm

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RESOURCES: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Developing a plan

1. SmartChart 3.0—a great interactive tool for developing a communications plan: http://smartchart.org/
2. Implementing Social Marketing: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/implement-social-marketing-effort

Developing materials

1. Infographics: https://piktochart.com/
2. Graphic design: http://www.canva.com
3. Diagrams, charts, and graphics: https://docs.google.com/drawings


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SECTION 3

INCREASING IMPACT

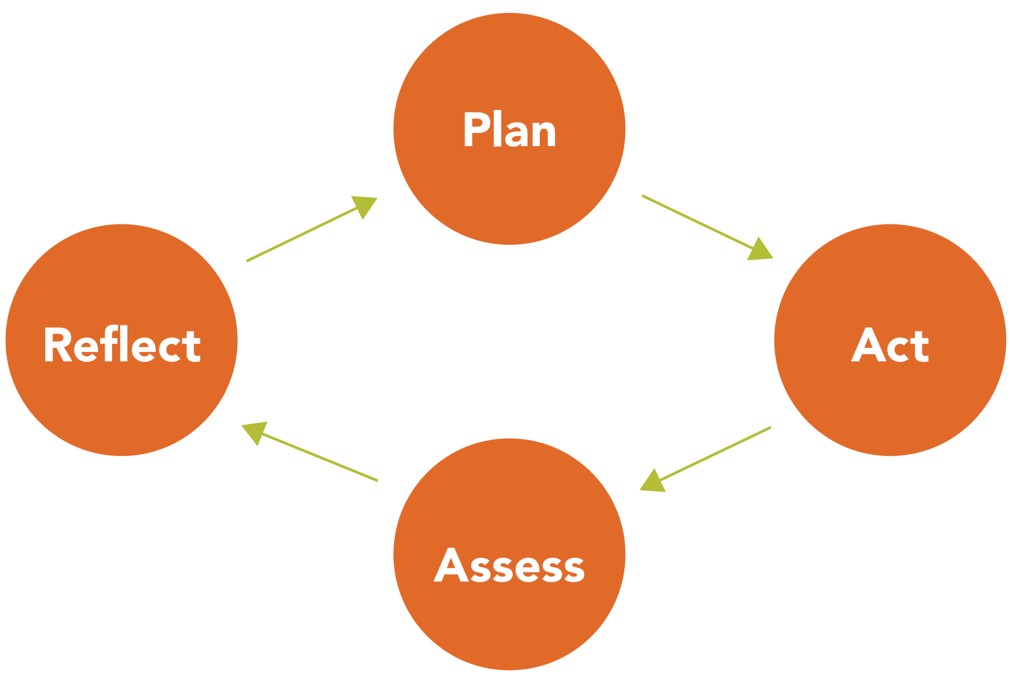
The third step in planning for sustainability is to ensure you have built in thoughtful mechanisms for evaluating your activities and investments, reflecting on your learning, and taking on systems-change goals and priorities. Engaging stakeholders in doing this work will expand the impact of your collaborative.

A REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

Reflection is a critical process in supporting the sustainability of your collaborative as it helps to ensure the quality, relevance, and value of collaborative activities. During the reflection process, collaborative members should examine the results of collaborative activities to determine the extent to which the collaborative is meeting its goals and whether course corrections might be needed, and consider the context of the work to identify any significant changes. In reflecting, collaborative members can draw on data, formal evaluation findings, and informal stakeholder insights. Reflection should be part of a regular, repeated cycle of planning, acting, assessing, and reflecting.

Evaluation is a critical support to your reflection process. For the National Fund, evaluation is about much more than accountability—it is an essential vehicle for learning about your work. It can help answer questions about your progress toward goals, identify areas for improvement, and provide valuable information that you can use to communicate the value and success of your collaborative's work.

Figure 14
Continuous Improvement Cycle



ASSESSING YOUR REFLECTION AND EVALUATION PROCESS	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has developed an explicit process for reflection, including review of key questions at regular intervals.			
2) The collaborative has established an evaluation process to support reflection and planning.			
3) Collaborative activities include designated time/activities to review evaluation reports and findings.			
4) The collaborative regularly seeks input from external stakeholders as part of its reflection activities.			

Key Reflection Questions

Your reflection process should allow leadership and partners to explore questions that are important for sustaining your work, such as:

- What progress are we making toward our goals?
- What are we hearing/seeing/learning about the implementation and effectiveness of our activities?
- Does this information suggest the need for any changes in our work?
- What has changed in our context—including opportunities and challenges—that might suggest the need for modifying our goals, strategies, activities, or resources?
- Is the focus of our work still relevant in addressing workforce needs?

EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Embedding evaluation and reflection in your work fosters the development of a "learning mindset" within your collaborative with the aim of improving the collaborative's effectiveness.

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations offers a set of useful suggestions for developing a culture within your collaborative for using evaluation as a vehicle for learning.[24]

- Use evaluation for improvement, not just proof: How can evaluation inform your grantmaking and other decisions/strategies?
- Use evaluation to show contribution: How can evaluation serve as a way to learn about the range of factors that affect progress on an issue and how a specific intervention may or may not contribute to change?
- Learn with others, not alone: How can you build a learning community that involves staff, your grantees, and community members to inform development of an evaluation that meets multiple needs?
- Look beyond individual grants: While you will want to collect data on individual grants or projects, what can you learn from looking across grants and activities to help inform your strategies toward achieving larger goals?
- Learn from failure: How can you create a safe space for grantees and partners to discuss failure and mistakes without negative consequences and help to support better results in the future?

IDEAS IN PRACTICE
National Fund Local Evaluations

National Fund collaboratives use evaluation to examine multiple aspects of their work, including their overall strategies, participant outcomes, business impact, and social impact. Below are a few examples of the evaluations that can be found on the National Fund website (www.nationalfund.org):

- The Job Opportunity Investment Network: *How Workforce Partnership Training Benefits Business, Workers & Community*
- Partners for a Competitive Workforce: *Participant Employment and Earnings Outcomes (1st Quarter 2007—2nd Quarter 2012)*
- *Workforce Central Evaluation: January 2012*
- *Social Benefit Analysis of Hotel Training Center's Room Attendant Training Program*
- SkillWorks *System Change—Phase II year 2*
- TriHealth: *Investing in the Future of the Healthcare Workforce: An Analysis of the Impact of the HCC Programs at TriHealth*

PLANNING AN EVALUATION

Successful evaluation requires thoughtful planning to ensure that the process addresses the questions and concerns of your collaborative through a feasible and timely approach. To help plan your evaluation, you can work with collaborative members to discuss answers to a set of basic questions:[25]

- **WHY** What is the purpose of the evaluation? Who is the intended audience? What are the intended uses of the evaluation?
- **WHAT** What do we want to learn? How much information will we need to collect for our purposes? How will we use what we learn?
- **WHO** How will we involve the appropriate stakeholders in the evaluation? With whom will we share the results and how?
- **HOW** Who will collect and analyze the necessary data? What is our capacity? How can we leverage existing resources, infrastructure, and capacity to assist in evaluation?
- **WHEN** When are key elements of data available? When do we need information to support important decision-making junctures?

You can find more helpful information to plan your evaluation in the *National Fund Evaluation Guide* included in the resource list at the end of this section.

NEXT STEPS

- Review your collaborative's current reflection and evaluation process
- Take the reflection self-assessment above, and make note of any areas the collaborative needs to work on to strengthen evaluation and a learning mindset.
- Include these areas of work in your sustainability plan, being sure to note roles, responsibilities, and timelines.

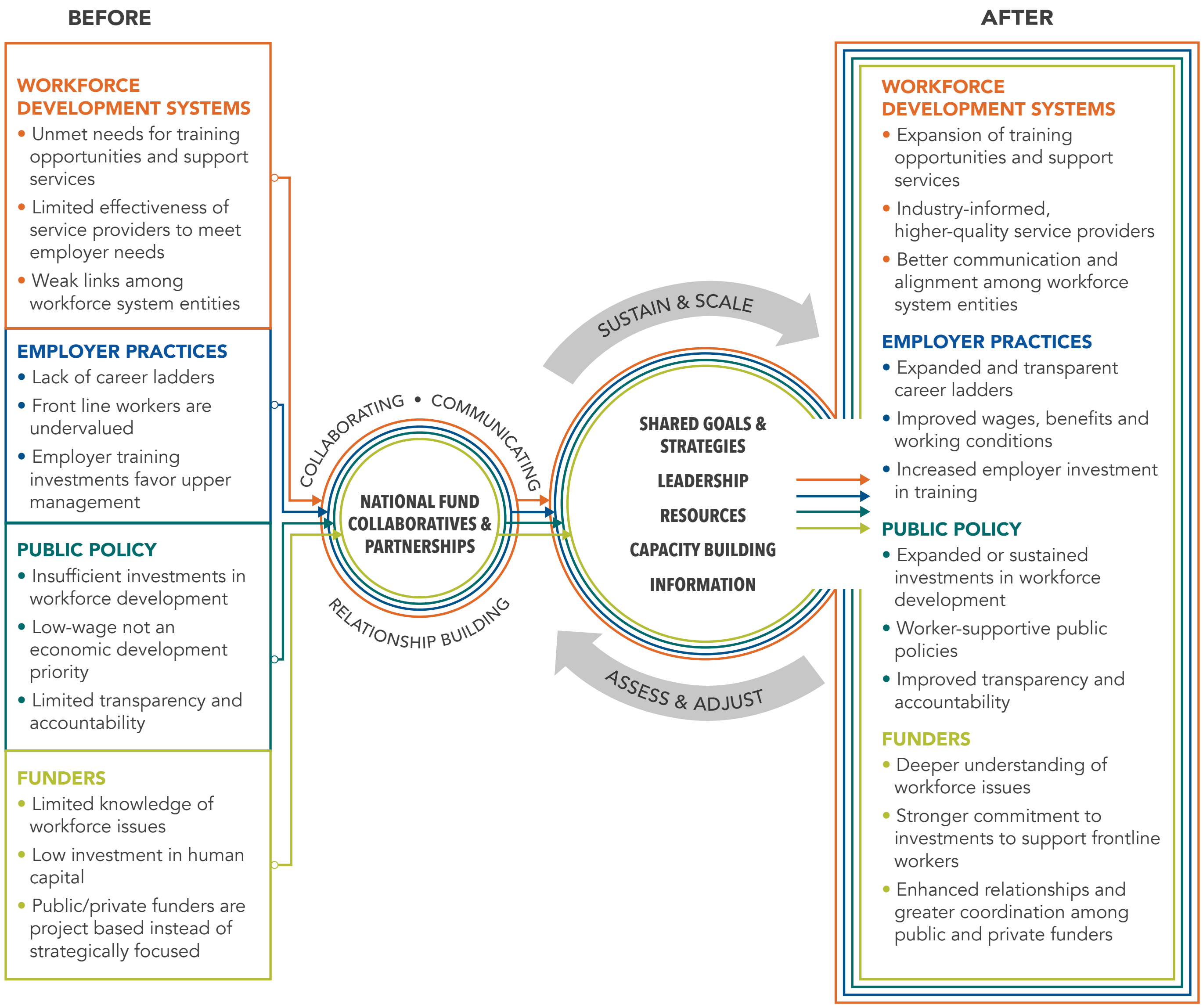
B SYSTEMS CHANGE

Systems change is an important means for ensuring collaborative solutions and strategies are sustained for the long term. The term systems change refers to changes in organizational policies, procedures, practices, and culture, within or across organizations that improve services or activities aimed at benefiting specific stakeholders, markets, or populations. It also encompasses changes in the operational boundaries between organizations, the relationships among entities and people within and across system levels, and the perspectives of different actors within the systems (i.e., how they think about and approach challenges, goals, and strategies).[26,27]

National Fund collaboratives achieve systems change when their work affects the way that organizations work, individually and collectively; when efforts alter stakeholder perspectives in ways that change their priorities and actions; when the changes brought about in institutions and systems increase the scale of services and opportunities offered to workers and employers; and when the structures and working relationships created are institutionalized and sustained.[28]

Systems change broadens the impact of your work and ensures that the changes you foster are maintained over time. These results increase the value that the collaborative brings to your community and can support your efforts to sustain your work.

Figure 15
Mechanisms Supporting Systems Change in the National Fund*



*Excerpted from *Systems Change in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*

ASSESSING YOUR APPROACH TO SYSTEMS CHANGE	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has identified the systems that relate to/impact your work.			
2) The collaborative has articulated systems change goals that relate to the larger goals of the collaborative's work in at least one of four areas: educational and workforce development systems; employer business practices; policy, regulation, practice or investment; and the behavior of philanthropy.			
3) The collaborative has identified a set of indicators of success that correspond to its systems' change goals.			
4) The collaborative has developed a process for monitoring and documenting systems changes that result from the collaborative's efforts beyond National Fund reporting requirements.			

WHAT IS A SYSTEM?

For the National Fund, a "system" is a set of organizations—which may include individual employers, employer associations, community colleges and/or other training organizations, publicly funded career centers and other workforce development agencies, community-based nonprofit organizations, and funders—whose functions intersect toward some common purpose.[29]

PURSUING SYSTEMS CHANGE

Systems change needs to be an explicit goal of your work and should be woven into your strategic planning process. You can draw on the analysis of your context and stakeholder knowledge to identify the systems that relate to your work to identify areas in needs of change.

The National Fund has established a framework for systems change in four areas that are tracked across the fund. The table on the next page explains the areas and offers indicators of success in achieving change in each area.

> ***"Sustainability is about whether we have achieved local or regional ownership of the [National Fund] model and the degree to which the principles of the model have been integrated into the way that we as organizations operate."***
>
> *Paula Gilberto,*
> *President and CEO of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut*

Figure 16

The National Fund Systems Change Framework

SYSTEMS CHANGE AREA	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
1 How **educational and workforce development systems** support **A** Low-skilled, low-wage workers in acquiring education and skills and finding jobs or advancing in their jobs and careers, and **B** Employers to meet the education, training, and skill needs for frontline workers—both new employees and incumbent workers.	• Expansion or improvement of training/job placement services. (Institutions/organizations are working with employers or industry associations and training and placing more individuals for employers.) • Expansion of support services to promote training completion. (Institutions/organizations are providing better support to low-income, low-wage workers to complete education or training.) • Improvements in the ways workforce entities and systems engage employers. • Creating/fostering new linkages and communication among entities.
2 How **employer business practices** **A** Provide low-skilled, low-wage workers with opportunities for education/training/skills or career advancement, and **B** Improve wages, benefits, or working conditions for low-skilled, low-wage workers.	• Expansion and increased clarity of career ladders and advancement opportunities. • Increased employer-supported training opportunities. • Increase in the number of workers having access to benefits. • Wage increases for trained workers. • New HR practices put in place within/across employers or industries.
3 New local, regional, or state **policy**, **regulation**, **practice**, or **investment** that incents or supports outcomes related to systems change areas 1 or 2.	• New policies. • New investments to support training/advancement of low-income workers.
4 How **philanthropy** supports low-skilled, low-wage workers in acquiring education and skills and finding jobs or advancing in their jobs and careers.	• Expansion of funding support for low-skilled, low-wage workers acquiring education and skills and finding jobs or advancing in their jobs and careers. • Creation of a workforce funder collaborative in the region. • Increase in number of funders who are members of the regional workforce funder collaborative. • Increase in funds pooled and aligned by philanthropy in support of low-skilled, low-wage workers acquiring education and skills and finding jobs or advancing in their jobs and careers. • Creating/fostering new linkages and communication among funding entities.

TIPS FOR PURSUING SYSTEMS CHANGE GOALS

- Develop a theory of change: What will be different as a result of your efforts? What system(s) will be altered? How?
- Take the time to document and describe your baseline conditions as they relate to your goals. For example, you could look at:
  - Regional economic and workforce conditions
  - Political will / external support for your work among local leaders and philanthropy
  - Historic relations among groups and organizations in your community
  - Level of collaboration/coordination among organizations
  - Exchange of information among peers
  - Existing service systems
  - Data collection capacity
  - Level of public/employer/philanthropic investments
- Monitor progress toward your systems-change goals.
- Document change. How are conditions different from those described in your baseline?
- Communicate evidence of systems change or progress toward systems change to internal and external stakeholders.

Adapted from Evaluating Community Change: A Framework for Grantmakers

SYSTEMS CHANGE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

You can record the results of your systems change planning in a table like the one below. A worksheet for this exercise can be found at http://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/sustainability-guide/.

Figure 17

Sample Framework for Structuring Systems-Change Planning

Area of Systems Change from NF Framework	Local System to be Targeted	Baseline Conditions	Vision for Systems Change	Action Steps

IDEAS IN PRACTICE

Central Iowa Works Drives Public Policy to Address Middle Skills Gap and Systems Change

In carrying out its systems-change work, the Central Iowa Works collaborative has pursued an ambitious policy agenda to foster changes required to address local workforce issues. In collaboration with the United Way of Central Iowa, the collaborative leads the IOWA Skills2Compete Coalition as an important vehicle for bringing about change. The Coalition includes representatives from employers, labor, education and training institutions, community colleges, community organizations, and public agencies. Meeting two to three times a year, the Coalition helps to define policy priorities, often bringing otherwise opposing organizations together around issues of common concern to advance the citizens and economy of Iowa.

In recent years, Central Iowa Works and its partners have focused their efforts on policies to help address the gap between the qualifications of many Iowa residents and the skills required to fill middle-skill jobs that can provide family-sustaining wages in areas such as health care technology, administrative support, and construction. The Coalition has pursued an agenda that includes funding for adult education, maintenance of child care subsidies for low-income working parents, funding for education for incarcerated individuals, supports for transportation, and the development of career pathways linking K-12 to postsecondary education.

Central Iowa Works and its partners have been successful in several areas of policy change. The Coalition helped to secure the first state appropriation for adult education ($12 million) in 2013 and has helped to sustain that level since then. In addition, they successfully pushed for a statewide workforce evaluation system to monitor the outcomes of these educational investments aimed at helping Iowans acquire high school and postsecondary credentials. The Coalition was also successful in launching the development of a career pathways system to help prepare young people to attain the education required to obtain middle-skill jobs in the future. For fostering such systemic change and for its success with training thousands of low-income individuals, the collaborative won the 2015 United Way Worldwide Common Good Award, which was awarded to only three organizations around the world.

Central Iowa Works leadership acknowledges several keys to its success in achieving change. Having employers as an engaged voice in seeking policy change helps to gain the attention of lawmakers. Working with the United Way and the community college system helps to add leverage to the collaborative's advocacy efforts. Emphasizing statewide issues encourages a broad range of legislators to consider proposed changes as they affect constituents in similar ways across the state. And finally, collaborative leaders recognize that systems change work of this kind requires time and persistence. They understand that to achieve change, they must introduce a proposal and push for its acceptance, but not to give up if efforts are not successful the first time around.

Additional documentation of systems change in the National Fund can be found in, *Systems Change in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*

NEXT STEPS

- Review your collaborative's current systems change goals.
- Take the systems-change self-assessment above, and make note of any areas the collaborative needs to work on.
- If you are at the point where the collaborative feels comfortable with its systems-change goals, complete the systems-change planning framework above and include it in your sustainability plan.
- If you are at the place where more work needs to be done to refine your systems-change goals and framework, include your plan to develop this framework in your sustainability plan, including roles, responsibilities, and timeline.

C SECTION RESOURCES: EVALUATION, REFLECTION, AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

RESOURCES: EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

1 National Fund for Workforce Solutions—
Evaluation Guide: How Collaboratives Can Design, Manage, and Use Evaluations
https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NFWS_evaluation_guide_2009.pdf

2 *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook*
https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook

3 *GEO 2014 Evaluating Community Change: A Framework for Grantmakers*
http://www.geofunders.org/resource-library/all/record/a066000000FgMTiAAN

4 GEO—Learn for Improvement
http://www.geofunders.org/smarter-grantmaking/learn-for-improvement

5 Community Tool Box—*Developing an Evaluation Plan*
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/evaluation-plan/main

6 Center for Disease Control and Prevention—Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan
http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/CDC-Evaluation-Workbook-508.pdf

7 BetterEvaluation—Information on managing an evaluation http://betterevaluation.org/

8 "Using Data for Collective Impact Step One: Agree on the Data"
https://www.livingcities.org/blog/1067-using-data-for-collective-impact-step-one-agree-on-the-data

9 Collective Impact Forum—*Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact*
http://collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/guide-evaluating-collective-impact

10 Program Sustainability Assessment Tool—Program Evaluation
https://sustaintool.org/understand/program-evaluation

RESOURCES: SYSTEMS CHANGE

1 National Fund—*Systems Change in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions*
https://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/systems-change-in-the-national-fund/

2 State Sector Strategies—State and Regional Roles in Sector Evaluation
http://www.sectorstrategies.org/toolkit/mod12/roles

3 GEO—*Evaluating Community Change: A Framework for Grantmakers*
http://www.geofunders.org/resource-library/all/record/a066000000FgMTiAAN

4 SkillWorks—*Systems Change Final Report*
http://www.skill-works.org/documents/SystemChange_Final_10-8-2014.pdf

SECTION 4

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER—CREATING A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

A sustainability plan should help an organization or collaborative articulate its future plans, determine the expenses associated with implementing the plans, and mobilize the resources needed to implement them successfully. In the sections of this guide, we have discussed the major domains of sustainability for a workforce funding collaborative: understanding your context, partner engagement, systems change, strategic planning, budget and funding, reflection and evaluation, organizational capacity and leadership, and strategic communications.

Now, we are going to put all of these elements together in a plan. Each of the preceding "Next steps" sections has included suggested next steps such as:

1. Reviewing existing documents, plans, and policies
2. Assessing those documents using the tools, suggestions, and strategies highlighted in each section
3. If you are "planning to plan," describing your specific next steps to strengthen or further develop that part of your collaborative's sustainability strategy
4. Or, if you have already completed the planning for that section as part of the sustainability initiative or other process, write down or provide what you have developed

The outline in this section takes the tasks you have completed and the data you have gathered previously and rolls them up into a suggested framework for your collaborative's sustainability plan. In completing your sustainability plan, be sure to include roles and responsibilities of staff and collaborative members as well as timelines for any items that the collaborative has not yet completed but is working to develop. You may wish to refer to the Sustainability Action Plan template for a suggested format.

Sustainability Plan Outline[30]

Remember—the work of sustainability is never done. As your collaborative evolves, you will continue to engage current and new partners, seek out new sources of support and resources, and identify additional ways to achieve impact in your community. Your collaborative's sustainability plan is an initial roadmap to help guide your next efforts.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLABORATIVE

- Mission, vision, and goals.
- A brief summary of your collaborative, the needs it addresses, and the outcomes it has achieved.
- Discuss the sustained impacts of your collaborative's efforts.
- Why are you thinking about sustainability now?
- *Try to keep this introduction brief—up to a page or so. Feel free to point people to resources/documents you have created.*

SECTION 1
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK: CONTEXT, PARTNERS, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Context

- Describe the current local and/or regional context in which your collaborative operates.
- What are your community's workforce and economic assets, opportunities, and needs?
- Describe the collaborative's plan to stay abreast of trends and developments that affect the local labor market and the collaborative's role within this context.

Partner Engagement

- List current and potential key partners and stakeholders, including their individual roles and strengths, and whether they are current or potential future partners.
- Describe how you will work to engage key partners and stakeholders in the work of the collaborative moving forward, including how the collaborative will bring them to the table if they are not already engaged.
- Use the *results, process, relationship* framework to inform the work of engaging partners.

Strategic Planning

- Describe your collaborative's goals going forward as well as the strategies, activities, and initiatives that you will continue or sustain in pursuit of these goals.
- Provide your theory of change and logic model or include your plan to develop these documents.
- Describe your plan to review and/or revise your strategic plan as necessary to meet your collaborative's mission, vision, and goals.

SECTION 2
STRENGTHENING OPERATIONS AND CAPACITY

Collaborative and Organizational Capacity

- Describe the governance structure, staffing, and oversight that will be needed to support the collaborative going forward.
- Describe specific next steps you will be taking to strengthen and support this area of your collaborative's work.

Budget and Funding Strategies

- Develop a three-year budget for the collaborative strategies/activities you plan to sustain.
- Describe the approach you will use to sustain each strategy/activity.
- Identify potential sources of support.
- Include a timeline and strategies for developing or applying for new sources of support.

Strategic Communications

- Describe the collaborative's brand identity going forward or the process and timeline for determining the collaborative's brand identity.
- Describe the collaborative's efforts to increase community awareness of local/regional workforce issues and solutions going forward.
- If you have developed a strategic communications plan, include it here, being sure to identify the goals, key messages, target audiences, methods, timing, and metrics of success.
- If you are at the stage of "planning to plan," describe the specific next steps you will take to strengthen and support this area of your collaborative's work.

SECTION 3
INCREASING IMPACT

Reflection and Evaluation

- Describe your collaborative's process for reflection and learning, assessing progress toward goals, and making course corrections if necessary.
- Describe how your collaborative uses data and information to inform decision-making and take action.
- Describe your collaborative's approach to evaluation, especially to support planning and reflection.
- Describe specific next steps you will be taking to strengthen and support this area of your collaborative's work.

Systems Change

- Describe your collaborative's systems-change goals.
- Complete the systems-change planning framework, identifying the systems being targeted, the baseline conditions, the vision for change, and action steps. Or, if you are in the process of refining your systems-change goals and framework, describe your plan to develop this framework, including roles, responsibilities, and timeline.

APPENDIX A

COLLABORATIVE SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT[31]

For your convenience, we have pulled together the assessments from each of the sections in the guide in one place.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has a collective understanding of the community in terms of major issues of concern, as well as individuals and institutions that hold power.			
2) The collaborative has a collective understanding of unmet workforce needs in your community informed by employer input, in addition to population and labor market data.			
3) The collaborative has an understanding of the legislative environment as it relates to workforce development.			
4) The collaborative has an understanding of the philanthropic and public workforce funding landscape of your community.			
5) The collaborative has analyzed stakeholders to identify those who can advance or hinder the work.			

ASSESSING THE COLLABORATIVE'S BUILDING BLOCKS	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative composition integrates the variety of perspectives and expertise necessary to define problems and pursue solutions to them.			
2) The collaborative identifies and cultivates champions.			
3) The collaborative has established clear and agreed upon ways of working together.			
4) The collaborative has a process in place to define desired results and monitor progress in achieving them.			
5) The collaborative uses a process to assess member satisfaction with collaborative operation and achievements.			
6) The collaborative has plans in place to manage partner and individual transitions.			

ASSESSING YOUR STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has clear and agreed upon statements of its mission and vision.			
2) The collaborative has a structured process for gathering stakeholder input and contextual information to help shape and refine its goals.			
3) The collaborative has a structured process for determining objectives and action steps to pursue achievement of its goals.			
4) The collaborative has established a timeline for regular review of its plans and progress in carrying out action steps and achievement of goals and objectives.			

ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has strong, defined internal supports, systems and resources in place for fiscal management, grants and contracts, fund raising and reporting, and hiring and staff development.			
2) The site director and other collaborative staff have the skill sets and capacities needed, including board development, grant making, fund raising and reporting, assessing progress and impact, communications and building a learning community.			
3) The collaborative has a clear, written governance structure and decision-making process that members and staff understand and adhere to.			
4) If applicable, the collaborative is in alignment with its fiscal/organizational home in terms of priorities and operations.			

ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE'S COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has a strategic communications plan to secure and maintain support from key stakeholders and the public.			
2) Staff and funders communicate regularly and effectively the need for and value of the collaborative to key audiences, including the business community, policy makers, and funders/potential funders.			
3) The collaborative has a clear brand identity and is marketed to communicate its unique value to key audiences (policymakers, employers, philanthropy).			
4) The collaborative increases community awareness of workforce issues and solutions and builds support for the solutions.			
5) The collaborative tracks the results and measures the success of its communications efforts.			

ASSESSING YOUR REFLECTION AND EVALUATION PROCESS	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has identified the systems that relate to/impact your work.			
2) The collaborative has articulated systems change goals that relate to the larger goals of the collaborative's work in at least one of four areas: educational and workforce development systems; employer business practices; policy, regulation, practice or investment; and the behavior of philanthropy.			
3) The collaborative has identified a set of indicators of success that correspond to its systems' change goals.			
4) The collaborative has developed a process for monitoring and documenting systems changes that result from the collaborative's efforts beyond National Fund reporting requirements.			

ASSESSING YOUR APPROACH TO SYSTEMS CHANGE	MISSING	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED
1) The collaborative has identified the systems that relate to/impact your work.			
2) The collaborative has articulated systems change goals that relate to the larger goals of the collaborative's work in at least one of four areas: educational and workforce development systems; employer business practices; policy, regulation, practice or investment; and the behavior of philanthropy.			
3) The collaborative has identified a set of indicators of success that correspond to its systems' change goals.			
4) The collaborative has developed a process for monitoring and documenting systems changes that result from the collaborative's efforts beyond National Fund reporting requirements.			

APPENDIX B

COLLABORATIVE MEMBER EVALUATION

Please indicate your agreement with each statement below based on a scale from 1 to 5:

1 Strongly Disagree 2 Agree 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree

I. Collaborative Goals

The collaborative has developed a shared definition of the problem/issue we aim to solve.	1	2	3	4	5
Collaborative members have developed a shared vision for the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the goals of the collaborative.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the progress of the collaborative toward achieving its goals.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

II. Collaborative Operating Process

I feel that all necessary perspectives are represented in the composition of our collaborative.	1	2	3	4	5
The governance model of our collaborative is clear and transparent.	1	2	3	4	5
The collaborative has developed an effective process for decision making.	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership of the collaborative is effective and shared appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
Feedback on the group process is solicited and used to make adjustments.	1	2	3	4	5
There is open communication among the members of the collaborative.	1	2	3	4	5
There is sufficient trust among members of the collaborative to allow the group to carry out its mission.	1	2	3	4	5
Meetings are well organized with clear agendas.	1	2	3	4	5
Meetings feel like a valuable use of my time.	1	2	3	4	5
Collaborative members are kept fully informed about our activities and progress toward achieving our goals.	1	2	3	4	5
All collaborative members have an opportunity to express their views.	1	2	3	4	5

I feel that my contributions are equally valued among those of other members.	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of our process for managing disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

III. Organizational Impact

Participation in the collaborative has allowed my organization to achieve more in addressing issues than we could have done alone.	1	2	3	4	5
My organization is committed to continuing its participation in the collaborative in the next few years.	1	2	3	4	5

IV. What have been the benefits to your organization of participation in the collaborative? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Established new relationships with organizations in my region interested in solving workforce development issues
- ☐ Strengthened our organization's visibility/reputation in the region
- ☐ Gained new knowledge/information about industry / local economy
- ☐ Gained new knowledge/information about population in my region
- ☐ Gained new ways of approaching work that can be applied to my own organization

Please list any additional benefits you've experienced not listed above:

V. If you had to sum up the value of participating in the collaborative in one statement, what would it be?

VI. What would you change about the collaborative to make it even better?

ENDNOTES

1 The assessment questions and definitions in each section have been adapted from: the *Program Sustainability Assessment Tool v2*, copyright 2013, Washington University, St Louis, MO. All rights reserved. If you would like more information about the original framework or Program Sustainability Assessment Tool, visit https://www.sustaintool.org.

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