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.

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.			

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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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31 This tool is 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.