Improving your Potential for Sustainability: Learnings from Rural Communities

Kentucky Rural Health Collaborative
Bowling Green, KY
November 17, 2016
Session Objectives

I. Share findings and insights from an assessment of the long term sustainability of rural health initiatives

II. Describe an expanded concept of sustainability

III. Present an overview of a Sustainability Framework to inform your own approach to sustainability planning
Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC)

MISSION: Integrating research, policy, and programs to advance health and well-being

- Andrew Young School of Policy Studies @ Georgia State University (Atlanta, GA)
- Focus on:
  - evidence-based research
  - program development
  - policy guidance on local, state, and national levels
Sustainability

• Long been an issue for non-profits and grant funded programs
• Many definitions and perspectives
• No “magic bullet”
• Continuous learning process

What is it?
Sustainability

Programs or services continue because they are valued and draw support and resources.
Our Focus on Sustainability

• Technical Assistance to more than 900 rural communities receiving HRSA’s Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) grant funding
• Literature review
• Sustainability Assessment of past FORHP grantees
• Sustainability Framework©
Sustainability Assessment

• Assessment of 102 FORHP grantees funded in 2000, 2002, 2004

• Purposes:
  – Describe the extent that programs have been sustained post-funding
  – Identify recurrent patterns that influence likelihood of sustainability
Learnings from the Field

• Over 10+ years working with rural health initiatives

• Opportunities to learn about sustainability “on the ground”
  – Sustainability planning
  – Sourcebooks/Closeout reports
  – Sustainability Formative Assessments
  – Other reports (Sustainability Primer, Cohort Reports)
Insights

I. **What** was sustained

II. **How** it was sustained

III. **Why** it was sustained
What was sustained

• No set of best practices
  – Certain programs not more likely to sustain
  – No step wise process for sustainability

• Programs rarely sustained as originally conceived
  – Services are expanded
  – Services are scaled back
  – New program approach evolves
How it was sustained

• Combination of Methods
  – absorbed by partners
  – in-kind/volunteerism
  – other grants
  – third party reimbursement
  – client fees
  – government/public subsidy
  – earned income
Why it was sustained

• Dynamics that influence sustainability
WHO Dynamic

- Primarily about leadership
  - Ability to engage the “right” people
    - Strategic
    - Influential
  - Create shared ownership and commitment
  - Resolve conflict
## WHO Dynamic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorable Characteristics</th>
<th>Unfavorable Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged leaders with strategic mindset</td>
<td>Partners sense struggle for control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widespread sense of trust among partners</td>
<td>Lack of consistent presence by partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key decision makers and influencers are involved or easily accessed</td>
<td>Conflict left unresolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners share passion and purpose for the program</td>
<td>Belief that each partner has own agenda first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision for program is shared</td>
<td>Partners are informed about activities not engaged in leading and planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT Dynamic

• Related to the substance of the intervention
  – Designed program demonstrates:
    • Relevance
    • Practicality
    • Value
  – Program is aligned to community context
# WHAT Dynamic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorable Characteristics</th>
<th>Unfavorable Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solution based on clear assessment of community needs</td>
<td>Solution only addresses symptoms and not root causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners have leverage to address the problem long-term</td>
<td>Solution approach does not match partner and provider culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders benefit directly (Network)</td>
<td>Legal barriers – real or perceived – halt progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program or service has a value that others would be willing to</td>
<td>Stakeholders and potential partners do not perceive recognizable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reimburse and/or purchase</td>
<td>value of solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The solution evolves and adapts as the environment changes</td>
<td>Solution attempts to solve too many issues with too many small,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and knowledge is acquired</td>
<td>unrelated efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHY Dynamic

• About the motivation for partners to work together
  – Well-defined vision for working together
  – Shared vision and understanding of roles
  – Use HRSA grants as a means to an end versus being an end unto itself
## WHY Dynamic

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>There is a clear focus to the vision</td>
<td>Sense of fear and desperation among partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efforts are aligned and prioritized to vision and goals</td>
<td>Many partners believe that others are just “looking for money”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners have formed a strong sense of group identity</td>
<td>Partners believe they’ve come together just to deliver on grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused both on system change and meeting partner member needs</td>
<td>All goals and plans are short-term without alignment to a larger vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear understanding of need based on evidence</td>
<td>Partners can not clearly explain why they are at the table</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW Dynamic

• Relates to the way programs or networks are operationalized
  – Effective strategies employed
  – Adequate capacity built
  – Impact and value is documented and communicated
### HOW Dynamic

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Capable and skilled staff are employed to deliver solution</td>
<td>Sustainability is a topic of discussion late in the grant period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact and value is documented and communicated</td>
<td>Organization lacks staff capacity to fully implement solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner assets are utilized to integrate program components into existing infrastructure</td>
<td>Spend resources on unreasonable and unwarranted overhead expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused both on system change and meeting partner member needs</td>
<td>Value of program is communicated only to partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear understanding of need based on evidence</td>
<td>Coalition fails to begin with the end in mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE and WHEN Dynamic

• Factors typically beyond the control of grantees
  – The legal, social, cultural, and economic environment at the time of program implementation
  – Coincidental trends at the time of program delivery
  – Makes each situation unique and prevents application of universal best practices
## WHERE and WHEN Dynamics

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<th>When Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State policies and mandates</td>
<td>Economic pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography of program location</td>
<td>Receipt of multiple grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of technology</td>
<td>Length of planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimbursement climate</td>
<td>History of working together &amp; turnover of key staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational culture – university, FQHC, PH</td>
<td>Idea surfaces before its time – acceptance, technology, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile or competitive environment</td>
<td>Ability to collect timely results to demonstrate impact</td>
</tr>
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Want to read more?

The Dynamics of Sustainability: A Primer for Rural Health Organizations

http://www.raconline.org/pdf/sustain_primer508.pdf
There is More

- More than continuation of services
- Need to broaden concept of sustainability
- Long term sustainability requires an expanded view of sustainability planning
Sustainability vs. Sustained Impact
Sustained Impact

Long term effects that may or may not be dependent on the continuation of a program
Sustained Impact

New Ways of Serving
• Culture changes
• Relationships
• Practice standards

Policy, Systems, Environment change

Public awareness, perceptions, and behaviors

Capacity Created
• Training
• Assets purchased or created
What is Your Program’s Sustained Impact?

SUSTAINABILITY of programs, services, and collaboratives

Evaluation data: Process & outcome

Expertise and practice wisdom of partners

SUSTAINED IMPACT
Positioning vs. Fundraising
Fundraising

• Predominate thought that sustainability is just a matter of finding the money
• Organizations chase grants and morph to fit the opportunity
• Ultimately, grants run dry
Positioning

• Understand why or why not organizations sustain
  – There are dynamics that influence sustainability
  – Organizations must understand these dynamics in order to position themselves for sustainability

Are you an organization that people want to support?
GHPC Sustainability Framework©
GHPC Sustainability Framework

• A framework for:
  1. Positioning organizations and programs for sustainability
  2. Identifying resources for sustainability
GHPC Sustainability Framework

- Funding strategies

- Indirect funding
- Earned income
- Contribution/sponsorships
- Government budgets
- Grants
- Events
Positioning for Sustainability

Strategic Vision
- The organization has a clearly defined vision for what it hopes to achieve
- All those associated with the organization share the vision
- All activities are aligned with the vision

Collaboration
- Stakeholders are included in program planning and implementation
- Partners play an integral role and have a shared interest in the outcomes
Positioning for Sustainability

Leadership

- The ability to:
  - Inspire others to create and achieve a shared vision
  - Understand the relationship between short-term activities and their impact on long-term success
  - Exert influence in leveraging support and resources

Relevance & Practicality

- Approach based on clear assessment and understanding of the need
- Approach is tailored to the environment (cultural, political, economic)
Positioning for Sustainability

- Evaluation generates data necessary to monitor and manage program implementation and measure program impact
- Organization is able to demonstrate social, economic, and health benefits to the community it serves
- Organization defines perceptions, translates successes, and creates awareness through effective communication
- Information is exchanged among partners and stakeholders through structured and informal channels

Evaluation/Return on Investment

Communication
Positioning for Sustainability

Efficiency & Effectiveness

- Organizational operations maximize the ability of those being served to participate and produce intended results
- Program approach is based on the success and challenges of similar initiatives
- Organization draws from and contributes to existing community resources

Capacity

- Program is adequately staffed by personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge
- Organization has experience with projects of similar programmatic focus or scope
GHPC Sustainability Framework

• Funding strategies

Indirect funding

Events

Earned income

Grants

Contribution/sponsorships

Government budgets
GHPC Sustainability Framework

• Funding strategies

  • In-kind contributions
  • Volunteerism
  • Institutional support

Indirect funding

Events

Earned income

Grants

Contribution/sponsorships

Government budgets
GHPC Sustainability Framework

- Funding strategies

  - Indirect funding
    - Events
    - Grants
    - Government budgets
  - Earned income
    - Contribution/sponsorships
  - Fees charged for services provided
  - Reimbursement from second party payers
  - Product sales
  - Consulting fees
  - Membership dues
GHPC Sustainability Framework

- Funding strategies

- Indirect funding
  - Events
  - Grants

- Earned income
- Contribution/sponsorships
- Government budgets

- Lunches and dinners
- Golf tournaments, fun runs, etc.
GHPC Sustainability Framework

• Funding strategies

Indirect funding

Events

Earned income

Grants

Contribution/sponsorships

Government budgets

• Businesses
• Social and civic clubs
• Faith-based organizations
• Individuals
GHPC Sustainability Framework

- Funding strategies

  - Indirect funding
    - Events
    - Earned income
    - Contribution/sponsorships
    - Government budgets

  - Government
  - Private foundations

Grants
GHPC Sustainability Framework

- Funding strategies

  - Indirect funding
    - Events
    - Grants

  - Earned income
  - Contribution/sponsorships
  - Government budgets

- Inclusion as line item in local, state, or federal budget
Fundamental Assertion

Strategy  The Way You Think
Capacity  The Actions You Take
Sustainability  The Results You Get
Sustainability Resources/Tools

• Sustainability Framework©
• The Dynamics of Sustainability: A Primer for Rural Health Organizations
  – Case studies
• Sustained Impact Template
• Sustainability Formative Assessment Tool
• Sustainability Planning Workbook

www.ruralhealthlink.org