



# Systems Building Resource Guide 3: Sustaining Gains

As States have embarked on many significant and often transformative efforts to strengthen their approach to early learning, they face new challenges on sustaining effective work that is contributing to their goals for early learning. Systems Building Resource Guide 3: Sustaining Gains addresses sustainability and systems building; sustainability planning and implementation in a nutshell; the sustainability timeline; the people, including participants, partners and consultants; policy, legislation and regulation; overcoming challenges; and cross-sector resources. Please use the navigation bar on the left to explore the guide.

## Technical Assistance in Systems Building for State Leaders

Technical assistance to support systems building, including strategic planning, is available through the State Capacity Building Center and may be available through other federal technical assistance centers. Please check with your State Systems Specialist for more information.

## Sustainability and Systems Building

As States have embarked on many significant and often transformative efforts to strengthen their approach to early learning, they face new

### Definition of Sustainability

For the purpose of early childhood systems, sustainability means the continuation and adaptation of early learning services, initiatives, policies, and systems over time in support of specific outcomes and goals. The focus might be on a particular initiative, a program or set of programs, financing, policy, an organization, or a system.

challenges in sustaining effective work that is contributing to their goals for early learning. The federal government has stimulated progress for young children's early learning and development by providing new federally funded initiatives, some of them time-limited, which raise significant issues for States about sustainability planning and implementation. At the same time, there is an increased understanding of the educational, economic, and scientific bases for early learning and child development, and public understanding of the need for strong early learning services is growing. Early childhood leaders and coalitions are working hard to design and implement sustainability plans that will assist them in sustaining progress and reaching their goals. This guide is designed to outline what sustainability planning and implementation is, delineate process steps for getting there, help determine core functions to include, address considerations for staff and partner involvement, and identify challenges to execution.

**Sustainability planning.** This is the process by which interested stakeholders and partners create a road map for decisionmaking regarding what, why, and how to sustain so that policy, initiatives, and programs are continuously improved, adapted, or discontinued to achieve intended outcomes and goals. The process is similar to strategic planning and, ideally, sustainability planning is included in strategic planning. The resources in [Systems Guide 2: Strategic Plans](#) are designed to be useful to the planning process for sustainability. Sustainability planning is about making decisions to change or discontinue efforts so you can allow resources (including time and effort) to be directed towards successes. Creating a sustainability plan can strengthen everyone's buy-in and understanding of the efforts needed to keep the work operating and improving. The plan can be used to share progress with any potential funders and partners, and as a guide to support the ongoing management of the work.

Sustainability planning may take place within the course of both predictable and unpredictable changes in the leadership, budget, and policy environment.

**Sustainability implementation.** While sustainability planning is key to clarifying common goals and the steps necessary to reach those goals, achieving sustainability over time depends on the willingness of everyone to work together toward those goals. That willingness to collaborate comes from fostering trusting relationships, developing open communication channels among stakeholders, regularly and consistently sharing reliable data, and connecting resources.

Sustainability implementation is the ongoing work connected to the sustainability plan. While the process of putting together the plan helps to solidify stakeholder commitment to the work and the work itself, moving into implementation mode requires significant, ongoing time from everyone involved with continuing check-in and progress reporting, as well as modifications that may be necessary in the context of the implementation experience.

## Sustainability Planning and Implementation in a Nutshell

Sustainability planning and implementation in a nutshell addresses several key issues, including steps in sustainability planning and integrating core functions.

### Steps in Sustainability Planning

The seven steps outlined below may be used as a starting point to design a process for sustainability planning and implementation. Each State's process will be unique but should be connected to the goals of the early childhood vision in your State.

1. Assemble the sustainability planning team. Consider a balanced team that includes key staff from one or more public early learning agencies, as well as private partners who will work in collaboration to develop the plan.
2. Clarify your vision, mission, and guiding principles and confirm a shared understanding of them as the foundation for sustainability planning.
3. Establish criteria to determine what to continue, modify, or eliminate, and analyze current programs, policies, and systems. Use data to inform this work.
4. Create options based on the vision and analysis and determine sustainability strategies.
5. Identify the essential collaborations and partnerships to support and execute the sustainability strategies and methods.
6. Develop and implement action steps.
7. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of a sustainability plan in cooperation with essential collaborators and partners, modify as needed, and document and communicate your sustainability successes.

The final sustainability plan should involve careful articulation of the goals and purpose of what is being sustained, an evaluation of the current context and criteria that informed decisionmaking, the identification of options considered and selected, engagement with stakeholders, and an ongoing mechanism for reviewing progress on implementation and making plan modifications as needed.

### Integrating Core Functions

Several core functions are critical to the success of both sustainability planning and successful implementation. These core functions are discussed below, and all can be incorporated into sound sustainability planning and implementation.

**Communication and stakeholder engagement is key in the planning and implementation process for sustainability.** Communication and engagement are critical to a successful sustainability planning process, and to the successful development and execution of a sustainability plan. Stakeholders who have an investment in the work a State is doing should be an integral part of the sustainability planning as well as the implementation process. When stakeholders are not well informed and are not included in the planning process they may fill the void with misinformation. They may create a situation that is less than productive that could result in duplicative or even contradictory sustainability plans. Intentional communication and inclusion of stakeholders throughout the process of planning and implementation is essential, particularly if there is any concern about disparate views on sustainability goals and methods.

**Effective use of data supports robust sustainability planning and implementation.** Data are invaluable in developing and implementing a sustainable plan. First, using data allows a more objective focus on what to continue, modify, or eliminate, based on an analysis of key questions regarding existing programs and policies. Second, to support implementation of the sustainability plan, data showing progress towards the desired results and goals are useful to make the case for sustainability. Third, good data can make it easier to objectively communicate information for continuing policy, programs, and systems, and harder for others to dismiss or propose eliminating policy, programs, and systems. For sustainability planning and implementation, data can and should inform communications and give stakeholders information that they can use to bring others along.

A final consideration about the role of data—collecting, analyzing, and using data during the course of ongoing policy, program, and systems implementation work helps build sustainability into the ongoing process of day-to-day work. This approach is more efficient than waiting to collect and use information exclusively for sustainability purposes.

**Leverage existing accountability frameworks.** States with strong systems for setting goals, measuring progress, and a disciplined approach to quality improvement will be able to use these systems as a foundation for sustainability planning and implementation. Approaches such as Results Based Accountability, Implementation Science, etc. stress the same fundamentals that inform sustainability planning and implementation—setting a clear vision and goals, gathering and using data to understand progress in achieving goals, assuring active steps for continuous quality improvement, engaging with relevant stakeholders to develop a shared understanding and commitment to the work, and a commitment to ongoing communication and information-sharing. States are encouraged to use their existing frameworks and approaches to support sustainability planning and implementation.

## The Sustainability Timeline

In an ideal situation, sustainability planning would be included in initial strategic plan development and addressed in an ongoing manner during the course of implementation. Regardless of the scale or scope of the sustainability effort, if sustaining is important, don't wait to tackle it. Planning for sustainability is not something that should be left until right before the plan and its implementation is needed, and not something to approach only when external funding is ending. Sustainability should be planned for from the beginning.

Many aspects of the sustainability plan are based upon sound implementation strategies that include the development and cultivation of buy-in among current participants and supporters; engagement in strong, ongoing marketing and communication for whatever you are seeking to sustain, both internally within your organization, and externally with the broader community; early and continuous use of data and other information to track and demonstrate impact; and connection to identified goals. For States already using established frameworks such as Implementation Science or Results Based Accountability to guide their efforts, the fundamentals of sustainability planning and implementation may already be integrated into the State's day-to-day processes.



Having a plan provides stakeholders with a shared sense of direction, clarifies the support needed to continue improving programs and policies, and identifies further planning needed. It can provide timely information and data for making hard decisions, clear goals, and essential stakeholder engagement and buy-in. This can save time in the long run.

Strategies for making time for this work may include allocating dedicated staff time to this process. This could include such activities as monthly or quarterly meetings; setting aside time on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis to address sustainability planning and implementation on established agendas; or establishing a time each year to address staff roles and responsibilities along with strategic planning and organizational workplan development.

Like any type of planning, it is likely to be difficult to find the time, energy, and discipline to engage in sustainability planning and implementation. Find the time. Protect that time. Be disciplined in thought and action. Help others to do the same.

**Timing and proactive nature of sustainability planning.** Sustainability planning can happen at any time, as long as there is sufficient stakeholder engagement and commitment to the process. If it is specific to a particular program or funding stream that is time-limited, it should happen simultaneously with the initial planning and implementation of the program. It may be helpful for the planning process to include options for sustaining the program by connecting and aligning it with other ongoing efforts in the early childhood system.

Even if the optimal time has passed, it is worthwhile to plan for sustainability. It is the best way to be prepared in the event things change in the early childhood environment, and to be able to make informed decisions about what should be sustained along with a reasonable plan to achieve the goals. It is never too late to start sustainability planning, although the comprehensive nature of planning may be impacted by a late start.

**Time needed for sustainability planning.** Each plan will be unique to its context. The scale and scope of what is being considered may impact the timeline; as may the stakeholder, policy, budget, and leadership environment. Creating the sustainability plan may take anywhere from a few months to more than a year. Once the plan is created, time will be needed to implement the plan and to track, monitor, and update the implementation strategy.

**Monitor context, data, actions, and decisions throughout implementation. When necessary, modify elements of the plan to reflect changing circumstances.** The plan is a living document. Updates should be made and tracked regularly as the plan is implemented. It is critical to actively monitor how the implementation is going and to reflect and modify the plan *as needed*, based on consideration of additional data and changing circumstances, to support the plan goals. There is no set timeframe for these plans to be updated. Like any plan, if it isn't current and accurate, it won't be helpful. Since one of the goals of creating a sustainability plan is to have a road map that will inform action and decisions, using the plan and reflecting on whether the strategy is working or needs to be changed should be done on a regular basis.

## The People: Participants, Partners and Consultants

Planning and implementation team composition is unique to each State and its context. However, there are some key questions that may be helpful in identifying participants. Who are the key partners that have knowledge of the work, at both the macro and micro level, that is under consideration? These are likely to be individuals from the public sector as well as early childhood stakeholders throughout your State. Who are the key individuals and organizations of influence, both external and internal? These individuals and organizations are also important to include. Consider including those who understand the complexity and details, as well as those who can successfully convey information externally. If the planning or implementation team seems unwieldy in size, consider breaking the group into smaller teams to allow for full engagement of the members.



### Potential Stakeholders

The list below is intended to stimulate your thinking about participants from various organizations and stakeholders. It is not intended to serve as a checklist or to indicate the appropriate size of the planning team in your State.

- Business and industry
- Child Advocates
- Child Welfare community
- Corrections and law enforcement
- Early childhood professional and provider organizations
- Early learning advocacy organizations
- Families or parent organizations
- Foundations
- Health and behavioral health programs
- Higher education
- Local early learning programs across all sectors (child care, Early Head Start/Head Start, preschool, Early Intervention, IDEA Parts B and C)
- Local government
- Local school districts and public charters
- Media
- Policy analysis organizations and think tanks
- Professional development systems
- Relevant state agencies or divisions
- Research institutions
- United Way organizations

Planning and implementation team members, regardless of their affiliation, should be engaged and committed to sustainability, including the planning and implementation process itself, and be able to honor the time commitment involved. Make the most of the resources your partners have to offer; make communication efforts a priority, including developments, challenges, and successes during the planning as well as the implementation of the sustainability plan.

Other considerations for harnessing the people involved in sustainability planning and implementation are as follows:

- **Staffing decisions for leading the planning and implementation process**

Whether to bring on an outside consultant to facilitate the planning and implementation process is a decision that should be made by those who are leading the effort. A benefit to having a neutral facilitator during planning is that it allows for those who will be responsible for implementing the plan to fully participate in the process. Even with a facilitator, creating a process that will result in a comprehensive, well thought out plan requires a great deal of time.

Regardless of who is responsible for staffing, all of the people involved need to have adequate time to devote to this activity, including supporting appropriate facilitation of the planning team as well as addressing essential communication issues. Likewise, the implementation and monitoring of the plan requires meaningful time. The success of the planning, implementation, and monitoring will depend, in part, on prioritizing this work and assuring that those involved have sufficient, protected time to support the creation and implementation of the plan.

- **Ready partners, ready organizations**

Taking steps to ascertain the readiness and health of the participating organizations is relevant to the work to support both planning and implementation. Individuals who participate in planning and implementation typically represent organizations, and organizational readiness to support and engage in the planning process is necessary. The commitment and engagement of the individuals, and the organizations that employ them, to the overall goals and strategies of the sustainability plan and its implementation contribute to a successful strategy. Federal technical assistance is available to assist stakeholders in gauging and supporting readiness.

- **The role of “champions” in propelling sustainability planning and implementation**

Champions can be an effective part of a strategy for both planning and making the case for sustainability. Champions may include business leaders; local and state elected officials; and leaders from communities of faith, foundations, law enforcement, the military, and unions, to name just a few.

Champions often play a singular role in the planning and implementation process. Champions may uniquely contribute to the sustainability planning and implementation process through political understanding and influence, monetary and leadership resources, access to multiple networks, and recognition by the broader community.

As with all stakeholders involved in sustainability planning and implementation, champions require cultivation, support, and engagement. Champions representing nontraditional early childhood stakeholders may need opportunities to learn the issues, including the goals and impact of the work, as well as proactive opportunities to indicate effective messaging from their perspective.

- **The role of advocacy and professional associations in supporting sustainability planning and implementation**

Advocacy and professional associations may be included on a planning team for sustainability. Depending on the context of your State, they may be best situated to convene and lead the sustainability planning or implementation effort. The individuals affiliated with these organizations can often contribute an important voice to planning and executing the sustainability plan. Keeping these groups informed and engaged can be instrumental in getting their support and buy-in for the sustainability plan. They can work with their networks to ensure they have accurate information about the plan, confirm that it reflects their experiences and commitments, and conduct invaluable outreach and marketing of the plan to their constituents.

- **The role of philanthropy and businesses partners in sustainability planning and implementation**

Foundations and businesses can play a critical role in sustainability planning and implementation. Those roles may include convening or financing the planning process, participating in the planning and implementation process, or providing matching or other funds to support sustainability.

**State Examples of Foundation and Business Involvement in Sustainability**  
**Foundations and businesses have a rich history of involvement.**

- North Carolina – Foundation and business financing is built into [North Carolina's local Smart Start partnerships](#), which are themselves public-private partnerships, and are required by state law to provide ongoing, sustaining resources; including a 10 percent match requirement, half in-kind and half-cash.
- Pennsylvania – Foundations and businesses have participated in the sustainability planning and implementation process in Pennsylvania as public policy advocates during a gubernatorial leadership transition. The work was done through the State's [Early Learning Investment Commission](#) appointed by the Governor.
- Washington State – Likewise, in Washington State, a public-private partnership, [Thrive by Five](#), plays an essential role in leveraging public and private resources to support the State's home visiting programming.

In addition to providing financing partnerships and public policy education and advocacy, foundations and businesses may also support sustaining planning and implementation through marketing and communication, by cultivating other businesses and foundations to get involved, or by hosting focus groups or other meetings to inform and drive the early childhood agenda.

## Policy, Legislation, and Regulation

Legislation, as well as rulemaking, can be used to codify and sustain programs, policies, organizations, and early learning systems. A frequently cited strength of legislation and rulemaking is durability, which is one of the reasons to pursue this option as part of sustainability planning and implementation. At the same time, when considering the use of legislation and regulation as methods to achieve sustainability, there are potential downsides. Legislation and regulations may limit or slow down the ability to modify program design, policy, organization, and the early learning system in the future.

Depending on the State and its context, legislation or regulation may or may not be achievable even when the critical stakeholders are in support of changes that would be beneficial. There are many stakeholders who impact both the process and results during the course of passing legislation and finalizing rulemaking. Carefully thought through plans for codification may be impacted by other interests and plans, and may lead to different results, for better or for worse. As this strategy is evaluated for its role in sustainability, it is important to consider the full range of potential positive and negative consequences of a legislative or regulatory approach.

If authorizing legislation or regulation is selected as part of the implementation plan, a thorough approach to drafting is essential. Be certain to determine the most effective strategy for the drafting (i.e., breadth versus depth in the legislation and regulations), ensuring that critical issues are not overlooked. Take the time to identify the potential consequences from the options selected for a legislative approach.



## Examples of Legislation at the Program, Organizational, and Systems Level

### At the Program Level

- Florida's Voluntary Pre-K program was established through legislation:
  - [Florida Statutes and Administrative Rules Related to Early Learning](#)
  - [HB 1A – Early Learning](#)
- Nebraska's Early Childhood Education Endowment Program, Sixpence, was authorized by legislation:
  - [Sixpence Early Learning Fund: Biennial Report to the Legislature: 2012-2013](#)

### At the Organizational Level

The following relatively new state early learning agencies were established through legislation to help sustain and grow early learning efforts:

- Connecticut Office of Early Childhood
  - [Substitute for H.B. No. 5562](#)
- Georgia Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning
  - ["Title 20 – Education, Chapter 1A – Early Care and Learning, Article 1 – General Provisions" in 2010 Georgia Code](#)
- Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
  - ["Chapter 215 An Act Relative to Early Education and Care" in Session Laws: Acts of 2008](#)
- Washington Department of Early Learning
  - ["Chapter 43.215, Department of Early Learning" in Revised Code of Washington](#)

### At the System Level

Legislation has been used for quality systems development and sustainability, as indicated by the following examples:

- Washington passed the Early Start Act in 2015, comprehensive legislation based on the State's strategic plan and its Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge work.
  - [HB 1491 – 2015-16. Improving Quality In the Early Care and Education System](#)
  - [The Early Start Act](#)
- Oregon passed a series of bills in 2015 that work together to advance the early learning system, sustaining gains introduced through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and furthering work in child care assistance (HB 3380), mixed delivery preschool (SB 213), as well as home visiting and kindergarten.
  - [Early Learning – Legislative Update](#)



## Overcoming Challenges

Sustainability planning and implementation is complex, challenging work. Anticipating challenges may facilitate forward momentum for sustainability planning and implementation. Some common challenges during both planning and implementation are noted below.

- **Disagreement**

Stakeholders do not always agree on what should be sustained. This challenge is more common than not. Seek to build commitment to common principles and goals, using data to inform the goals and to track progress towards them. Facilitate a common understanding of how or if policies and programs support those goals, widely communicating the issues and gaps, introducing options and building consensus around a specific course of action to build sustainability.

This part of the process may be time-consuming and could benefit from the involvement of a neutral or trusted facilitator to ensure that all stakeholders feel heard and represented. Using data is essential in helping to bring stakeholders closer together. Key data components to consider are: collecting and analyzing baseline data (e.g., issues, gaps, etc.); establishing shared metrics; and collecting, tracking, and reporting progress to help inform decisions. Finally, part of sustainability success is demonstrating and communicating what is working but also lifting up key issues or gaps, which may help to unify stakeholders.

- **System-wide sustainability versus policy sustainability**

Supporting system-wide sustainability planning and implementation is often beneficial in realizing the state's overall goals for young children, families, and the community. However, it may not always be possible, due to time or state context, to tackle system-wide sustainability planning. Project, program, initiative, or policy sustainability planning may be more manageable and feasible than tackling the whole system. Stakeholders should come together to determine what will reap the greatest benefit for all those involved against the overall goals, and evaluate the near and longer term impacts.

- **State climate not conducive to sustaining early childhood systems and policies**

There are times in a State's climate when there may not be an appetite for sustaining current programs, policies, systems, or organizations. This may contradict data that provide objective information about progress, and cause challenges for those who believe it is in the best interest of the State's citizens to continue the work.

In this case, consider the following strategies:

- First, test the assumptions about the external environment and make sure that they are accurate.
- Second, in these circumstances, evaluate the best leadership to convene and facilitate the sustainability planning and implementation process. For example, it may not be appropriate for the State to play a convening or leadership role in developing a sustainability plan under these circumstances. This work may strategically need to be led and managed primarily by nonpublic sector stakeholders, such as the Early Learning Council, a foundation or consortium of foundations, a professional association, the United Way, a business consortium, a child advocacy and policy organization, etc. The messenger matters and strong leaders will focus on the most effective way to reach their goals, which may involve having others lead.
- Third, determine whether a public engagement and awareness campaign may be needed. If that is the case, external stakeholders may come together to help foster a more conducive climate.

### State Example

[Florida's prekindergarten program](#) was created after Florida's stakeholders engaged in a public awareness campaign to get voters to approve a constitutional amendment to establish free, voluntary, and universal prekindergarten.

- **Shifting political and financial landscapes**

Governors can change frequently, as do the heads of the relevant state agencies; there can also be ongoing changes in the make-up of state senators and representatives. Within this fluid environment, use your sustainability plan to stay the course through different governors, agency heads, and governance changes. A sustainability plan with meaningful stakeholder commitment and engagement that is well grounded in data and progress measurement can help “weather” changes in state leadership. Sustainability planning and implementation builds staff and stakeholder commitment as well as knowledge and expertise that goes deeper than individual influencers in the executive and legislative branches. The work to establish a shared vision, goals, and strategies with stakeholders, and to prioritize mutual communication, partnerships, coalition building, and progress measurement is essential within the context of both expected and unanticipated changes in the elected and appointed officials in a State.

- **Status quo bias**

Sustainability planning and implementation is not about sustaining the status quo. Those involved in this process can establish a culture of continuous change and improvement. The vision for early childhood should guide the work, and a strong foundation for sustainability planning and implementation is based on that future vision. Next comes the work to analyze current programs, policies, and systems, and use of data and evidence to determine what to continue, modify, or eliminate. Data is a powerful tool in making decisions more objective. Use a well-balanced group to engage in sustainability planning and implementation.

Continuous quality improvement means being open to adaptation and modification, as well as continuation and discontinuation, of programs and policies. Ongoing use of data and information, in conjunction with the agreed upon vision and principles and the engagement of stakeholders, will help to continue and deepen progress on behalf of young children and their families and the broader community.

- **The perception that sustainability planning and implementation is a threat to the continuation of an individual or organization’s work**

First, communicate a deep understanding of the hard work and important accomplishments of all of those involved. Build commitment to a common set of goals and guiding principles that are grounded in the original goals of that work. Use as much data as possible to inform decisions, and work cooperatively with a well-balanced planning team to identify the goals, objectives, and criteria that are used to determine the options for the sustainability plan.

An ongoing commitment to communication and engagement is essential, along with engaging in discussion with individuals and organizations. Identifying the right individuals to engage in these relationships is an issue that the sustainability planning team should tackle when considering the differing perspectives that will impact the plan and its execution.

- **“Role” limitations of state staff in convening or facilitating the planning and implementation process**

Staff in state agencies may not be the best situated to convene or facilitate the sustainability planning process. State staff should be cognizant of and respect the limitations of their roles. State staff may need to take a backseat to others in the stakeholder community to enable the creation of a sound sustainability plan and implementation strategy. Strong leaders recognize when they do not have the authority or are not otherwise best situated for these efforts, and will turn to those who can be most effective in convening or facilitating the sustainability planning process and its implementation.

## Cross-Sector Resources

### Sustainability and Systems Building

[Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership: Sustainability Planning Framework](#) (2014), by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care.

This document was created to provide a sustainability framework that can help Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships grantees determine potential strategies to sustain their work together over time.

[For the Long Haul: Maintaining Systems of Care Beyond the Federal Investment \(2000\)](#), by **Chris Koyanagi and Darienne Feres-Merchant, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.**

This paper provides an in-depth description of sustainability strategies used by Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program sites. It examines the fundamental strategies that were used to sustain systems of care and maintain long-term financial stability beyond the end of the grant. This paper is based on a review of non-Federal funds secured by sites, and on conversations with site directors, policymakers, and others concerning the most successful strategies to ensure long-range stability for the sites.

[Frequently Asked Questions about Sustainability Planning and Implementation \(2015\)](#), by the **Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Program (ELC TA).**

This resource from ELC TA answers core questions and issues recently identified by state leaders regarding sustainability planning and implementation. It focuses on how early childhood leaders and coalitions are designing and implementing plans to sustain progress and achieve goals developed through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge as Federal funding ends. Although each State is unique, and state approaches will vary, many sustainability themes and processes identified in this document are relevant across all States.

## Tools and Guides

[Beyond Sustainability to Resilience for Community Action Agencies and Other Community Based Organizations \(2012\)](#), by **Julie Jakopic, iLead Strategies.**

iLead Strategies developed this tool to assist community-based organizations, specifically community action agencies, in understanding and assessing their capacity related to six elements of sustainability: vision and mission, results orientation, strategy, strategic resource development, resilience, and a sustainability plan. It provides an in-depth description of each element and its importance to sustainability and resilience overtime. A self-assessment worksheet is provided for each element.

[Network for a Healthy California – Sustainability for SNAP-Ed Programs \(2011\)](#), by the **Center for Civic Partnerships.**

The Center for Civic Partnerships, with support from the Network for a Healthy California, developed a set of sustainability planning tools and resources to support Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education intermediary organizations. The page is divided into three sections. “Where to Begin” offers a process for defining sustainability and a sustainability assessment tool. The next section, “Focus on Sustainability Factors,” provides resources on particular areas of organizational development that can help increase a program’s sustainability odds. The final section, “Creating a Sustainability Plan,” includes a planning tool to help guide the process of creating a sustainability plan.

[Program Sustainability Assessment Tool \(2012\)](#), by the **Washington University in St. Louis Center for Public Health Systems Science.**

This sustainability framework and assessment tool was developed at the Center for Public Health Systems Science (CPHSS). The work began in 2003 with Project LEaP, a rigorous process evaluation examining the effects of funding reductions on eight state tobacco control programs. Recognizing that sustainability is a significant challenge for not only public health, but also social service and clinical care programs, in 2010 CPHSS began work on developing, refining, and disseminating the sustainability framework and assessment tool. The final tool has been reliability tested and can be used by programs in various levels and settings to better understand and plan for their sustainability. The tool walks programs through a four-step process: understanding sustainability, assessing sustainability, reviewing results, and developing an action plan to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

[The Road to Sustainability \(2002\)](#), by the **National Center for Community Education and the Afterschool Alliance.**

This workbook was designed to assist afterschool programs in understanding and planning for the three major components of sustainability: building collaboration, advocating for support, and finding funding. It describes each

component and why it is critical to sustainability, outlines strategies, provides examples and case studies of successful programs, and includes various worksheets to apply the information and plan action steps.

**[A Sustainability Planning Guide for Healthy Communities \(2012\)](#), by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Communities Program's *Sustainability Planning Guide* is a synthesis of science- and practice-based evidence designed to help coalitions, public health professionals, and other community stakeholders develop, implement, and evaluate a successful sustainability plan. The guide describes a 10-step sustainability planning process and outlines six sustainability approaches: policy, systems, and environmental change strategies; coalitions and partnerships; establishing a home for healthy communities work; building coalition members' skills; communication strategies; and social marketing strategies. A module is provided for each approach.

**[Sustainability Planning Toolkit for System of Care Communities \(2003\)](#), by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch.**

This *Sustainability Planning Toolkit* is intended to help communities funded through the Child Mental Health Initiative ensure that systems of care continue to be in place long after Federal funds are gone. The resources are designed to assist funded communities in assessing their current status in efforts to sustain critical elements and objectives of systems of care, facilitate the process of completing sustainability strategic plans, and guide communities in raising matching funds to sustain their programs.

**[Sustainability Planning Workbook \(2003\)](#), by Barbara Hanson Langford, Margaret Flynn, and the Finance Project.**

This workbook contains several worksheets and tools designed to help support and organize the sustainability planning process. It includes a sustainability self-assessment tool, a logic model template for developing and measuring sustainability efforts, and a workplan template. It also contains planning worksheets for key sustainability framework areas, such as financing strategically and leading change with others.

**[Sustainability Rubric and Sustainability Rubric for Local Educational Agencies \(2015\)](#), by the U.S. Department of Education's Reform Support Network.**

The Sustainability Rubrics were developed to help state and local education agencies assess the sustainability of a specific *priority reform*—a body of work that an education agency is undertaking to achieve priority goals for student outcomes. The rubric covers 19 elements of sustainability and what characterizes “inadequate” to “exemplary” for each element.

**[Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool, Sustainability Planning Guide, and Sustainability Toolkit \(2013\)](#), by the Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant Program State Support Team.**

This set of resources was designed to help States as they plan to sustain their state longitudinal data systems. Each resource is built upon a four-part framework for sustainability: stakeholder support, ensuring widespread use, financial support, and return on investment. The *Self-Assessment Tool* is meant to provide states with a reflective process for identifying areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, as well as short- and long-term goals. The *Sustainability Planning Guide* offers practical suggestions and resources for each step in the process of maintaining a sustainable SLDS. The *Sustainability Toolkit* offers additional resources and best practices.

**[Sustainability Self-Assessment Workbook and Sustainability Self-Assessment Workbook for Local Educational Agencies \(2015\)](#), by the U.S. Department of Education's Reform Support Network.**

The Sustainability Self-Assessment Workbooks were designed to support the use of the Sustainability Rubrics (above). They outline five exercises that will help state and local education agencies conduct an initial self-assessment of the sustainability of their reforms.

**[Sustainability Toolkit \(2009\)](#), by the Office of Workforce Investment.**

This toolkit was developed by the Office of Workforce Investment to support grantees awarded under the High Growth Job Training Initiative and Community-Based Job Training Grants. It includes a sustainability planning guide, tips for sustainability, and a case study. The tools are based on a nine-element framework for sustainability: vision, results, strategic financing and stewardship, adaptability, collaboration, champions, internal systems, external systems, and a sustainability plan.



*The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with State and Territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.*

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