

## Sustainability Planning Workbook Implementation Guide For Lifespan Respite Grantees and Partners

### *Introduction*

Sustainability is a critical issue for Lifespan Respite Programs. While the Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging provides Lifespan Respite Care Program grant funding to develop statewide systems of coordinated, community-based respite for family caregivers caring for individuals with special needs of all ages, state agencies and state respite coalitions must work collaboratively to garner the resources needed to sustain these systems. Furthermore, Lifespan Respite Program grantees and their partners must often consider two levels of sustainability – one for the State Respite Coalition and the other for respite activities and services funded by the Lifespan Respite grant. Respite services are crucial supports for many community members, and Lifespan Respite grantees and partners are valued community resources. These programs and services must be sustained over the long term.

Sustainability depends on developing a clear, sensible, and convincing plan for putting, and keeping, in place the key elements that make an initiative successful. It inevitably requires finding adequate funding to keep going. But it also requires an array of other resources: political, technical and administrative. Figuring out what resources you need and how to marshal them is what sustainability planning is all about.<sup>1</sup>

At its heart, sustainability planning is a **strategic and business planning process** that has a strong focus on the **financing of strategies and activities** that will be implemented to meet a program or community goal. A well-written **sustainability plan** provides a clear explanation of the initiative's **niche in the community or state**. The plan includes details explaining how the initiative will meet its goals. A **strategic financing plan** lays out the full cost of the initiative and concrete steps for developing the resources needed to sustain it.

This **Implementation Guide** will provide Lifespan Respite grantees and their partners a road map through the sustainability planning process. The Guide serves as a process document that:

- Introduces the key elements of sustainability;
- Discusses considerations and conditions for a successful planning process;
- Provides planning resources to guide the sustainability planning process;
- Links grantees and partners to financing resources and strategies;
- Provides facilitation tips and strategies; and
- Details the components of a sound sustainability plan.

### **Key Elements and Activities of Sustainability Planning**

Over almost twenty years working with local, state and federal initiatives across the country, The Finance Project has identified **eight key elements of sustainability**. Building a sustainable system of coordinated, community-based respite for family caregivers is not just about finding

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainability Planning Workbook: Building a Sustainable Initiative. The Finance Project, 2003.

funds to pay coordination staff. A truly sustainable initiative will encompass these key elements and activities:

1. Vision
  - a. Articulate a concise statement that captures what you are trying to achieve in the community
  - b. Identify the results you are trying to achieve and the strategies and activities that will lead to those results
  - c. Analyze your “niche” or how you fit within your community or state
2. Results Orientation
  - a. Clearly define the results you want to achieve based on data and information about your target area and population
  - b. Identify and implement strategies you can reasonably expect to lead to your desired results, based on research, best practice and experience
  - c. Identify appropriate measures and collect data to determine the progress you are making towards the results you want
  - d. Use the information you gather to manage your work and to make adjustments in what you are doing so it can be more effective
3. Strategic Financing
  - a. Make the best use of existing cash and in-kind resources
  - b. Track and maximize funding available from public and private sources
  - c. Identify and pursue opportunities to create more flexibility in existing funding streams
  - d. Generate new resources by engaging public and private-sector partners
  - e. Advocate for new state and local revenue sources
4. Broad Base of Community Support
  - a. Identify the stakeholders in your community whose support is critical to achieving your vision
  - b. Consider how best to engage those stakeholders in your effort
  - c. Devise and undertake appropriate outreach efforts
5. Key Champions
  - a. Focus on key individuals in the community who show affinity for your work
  - b. Use Key Champions to attract additional interest
6. Adaptability to Changing Conditions
  - a. Monitor the environment for policy changes that could affect your initiative positively or negatively
  - b. Collect and disseminate best practices, research or evaluation of similar efforts to build a case for the initiative’s approach to its work
7. Strong Internal Systems
  - a. Assess the initiative’s fiscal, human resources, information/technology, and communication systems
  - b. Ensure these systems have the capacity to improve the quality of the initiative’s work, use resources efficiently and effectively, and meet accountability and monitoring demands

## 8. Sustainability Plan

- a. Create a written plan that clearly describes the initiative's future plans, the cost of those plans, and resources that will be tapped to pay for the work

### **Considerations and Conditions for a Successful Planning Process**

The old adage “*Fail to plan, plan to fail*” is very apt for the sustainability planning process. Careful attention must be paid to the timing and timeline of the process as well as the partners included on the planning team.

- *Begin at the Beginning*: A key first step in Sustainability Planning is to determine **Sustainability for What?** This step is especially critical for Lifespan Respite Programs and grantees. Planning teams must clearly understand the parameters of the sustainability planning process. Will the team focus on sustaining the State Respite Coalition, the respite activities funded by the Lifespan Respite grant or both? Depending on the state, the infrastructure developed by the initial Lifespan Respite grant, and the specific role of the State Respite Coalition in the Lifespan Respite system, sustaining the coalition may be inextricably linked to ensuring that all or some of the Lifespan Respite system components are sustained. Even if the State Respite Coalition had a minor role in implementing any of the Lifespan Respite grantee activities, their future role in protecting or advancing the Lifespan Respite system through advocacy or fundraising could be extremely important. In other states where a State Respite Coalition may never have evolved fully, the grantee agency can still undertake important action to develop a sustainability plan with the right partners. Determining these parameters up front will lead to a successful planning process.
- *Tips for Sustainability Planning*
  - Align the sustainability planning process to existing planning efforts and schedules. It is not uncommon for leaders, particularly those engaged in collaborative efforts, to have planning fatigue. Consider including sustainability planning discussions as part of an existing series of meetings.
  - Create a workplan and timeline to guide the process. It is helpful for planning team members to have a definite start and end point, as well as benchmarks to guide progress when undertaking a long-term project.
  - Orient planning team members to both the key elements of sustainability and the planning process. Conversations and meetings will be more productive when all participants have a clear idea of the scale and scope of the sustainability planning process. A best practice is to provide agendas and meeting minutes to participants prior to each planning session.
  - Use a facilitator to guide the process. Some conversations during the sustainability planning process can be delicate in nature. Using a facilitator to frame meeting objectives and guide conversations can increase meeting productivity.
- *Issues to Consider When Building Sustainability Planning Teams*: Sustaining a grant administered by a single entity or agency is a bit different than sustaining a coalition or a collaborative effort. In both cases, the sustainability planning process benefits from a diverse planning team of stakeholders as well as current and potential funders and partners. However, when undertaking this work as a coalition, it is important to distinguish the initiative's leaders up front—does the grantee agency provide coalition leadership or is there a steering committee comprised of partners leading the initiative's work? Is the

coalition completely independent of the state grantee agency? Specific tips and considerations for coalitions and grantees include:

- *State Respite Coalitions*
  - Planning team is convened by the grantee agency or “backbone” private organization.
  - Include representatives from the coalition’s partners on the sustainability planning committee.
  - Committee members must have the authority to make decisions regarding its agency’s participation in the coalition.
  - Be conscious of the potential of “competing” for sustainability funds.
  
- *State Lifespan Respite Grantees*
  - Planning team is convened by grantee’s leader—the lead governmental agency managing the grant.
  - Include representatives from stakeholder agencies and organizations of the initiative (e.g., the State Respite Coalition, other partnering private agencies, state respite advisory committee, and/or the Aging and Disability Resource Center).
  - Include a member of the agency’s finance staff.
  - Invite current funders, including other state agencies and initiatives that fund respite, to the planning team.

## **Toolkit Resources**

A collection of tools and resources are provided to help direct sustainability planning work. These include:

**Sustainability Planning Workbook:** The Workbook accompanying this guide provides step-by-step guidance to a sustainability planning team. The workbook contains a boxed set of five modules and a CD-Rom containing power point presentations, tools, and worksheets to frame and guide sustainability planning meetings. The modules provide a logical sequence for critical discussions. However, it is not our intent that a sustainability planning team will spend time using all the tools and worksheets in each module. Planning teams should use existing materials and resources wherever possible in place of workbook tools.

The five modules in the Sustainability Planning Workbook are designed to lead teams through an analysis of The Finance Project’s Sustainability Framework. Each module provides talking points, tools, and resources to facilitate teams’ thinking. Listed below are the goals for each module and key questions to be answered.

**Module I: *Building a Sustainable Initiative*** -- Presents a framework for thinking about sustainability and a “taking stock” process that uses a sustainability self-assessment tool. Teams answer the questions:

- What are the key elements of sustainability?
- What are your initiative’s strengths and weaknesses?

**Module II: *Developing a Vision and Results Orientation*** -- Helps you define what it is that you want to sustain, the results you are trying to achieve, what strategies and activities will

help you make progress toward your results, and how you will measure progress toward those results. Teams answer the questions:

- What do you want to sustain?
- What do you mean by sustainability?
- How will you measure progress toward those results?

**Module III: *Creating a Strategic Financing Plan*** -- Takes you through the process of developing a strategic financing plan, beginning with estimating the fiscal resources needed to sustain your initiative and then analyzing a range of funding sources and financing strategies to identify those that are most appropriate for your initiative. Teams answer the questions:

- How much will it cost to accomplish my sustainability goals?
- What resources do I currently have?
- What additional resources do I need?
- How do I access those funding sources?

**Module IV: *Building Organizational Capacity and Community Support*** -- In addition to financing strategies, your initiatives will need to develop other types of strategies to sustain your work, such as mobilizing community support, cultivating leadership, and building organizational capacity. Using the results of the self-assessment and an environmental scan, this module helps you determine and prioritize the range of strategies you will need to sustain your work. Teams answer the question:

- What resources related to community support, key champions, and organizational capacity do I need to accomplish my sustainability goals?

**Module V: *Developing and Writing the Plan*** -- Provides practical instructions on how to translate all of the information generated in the first four modules into a clear written plan, the final element of sustainability. Teams will answer the questions:

- Over what timeframe will I implement my plan?
- How can I best present all of my analysis in a convincing written plan?

As a reminder, all of the worksheets in the planning workbook modules are available as downloadable Microsoft Word documents on the enclosed CD-Rom.

**Matrix of Modules, Tasks, Tools and Resources for Sustaining Lifespan Respite Systems:**

The matrix provides a crosswalk of specific tasks to be accomplished in each of the five modules of the Sustainability Planning Workbook to tools and resources to guide completion of each planning task. **Tools** are the worksheets, tools, and PowerPoint presentations provided in the Workbook toolbox. **Resources** are complementary briefs, worksheets, resources, and materials from The Finance Project, ARCH, and others. The cells in this matrix align to **Worksheet 1 – Workplan for Sustainability Planning**.

**Worksheet 1 – Workplan for Sustainability Planning:** This project planning worksheet provides an outline of Sustainability Planning tasks. This tool supports the creation of a timeline and assignment of responsibilities for completing Sustainability Planning tasks. The worksheet's cells align to those of the ***Matrix of Modules, Tasks, Tools and Resources***. Together these two documents serve as an interactive table of contents for the Sustainability Planning Workbook.

**Table of Financing Strategies for Lifespan Respite Programs and State Respite Coalitions:**

A strategic financing plan matches funding resources and financing strategies to the specific needs identified through the sustainability planning process. As discussed earlier, a robust strategic financing plan features a number of financing strategies. Just as you would not invest your retirement savings in a single account, relying on only one financing strategy can be foolhardy.

Lifespan Respite grantees and State Respite Coalitions have successfully employed all of the financing strategies and approaches detailed below. Strategies, approaches and state examples are summarized in the attached table, ***Financing Strategies for Lifespan Respite Programs and State Respite Coalitions***. The cells of this table align to the **five financing strategies** described here:

1. ***Make the best use of current and in-kind resources.*** Make sure you are maximizing the resources you already have. Use restricted funding for allowable activities and use more flexible funds to fill in gaps. The most important first step is identifying other public and private funding streams that are already funding respite services or infrastructure in your state, the agencies which administer these funds, and the appropriate contact people.
2. ***Maximize Federal and State Revenue.*** Track and review funding and grant opportunities regularly. Consider developing a grants calendar and tickler file to keep track of upcoming competitions.
3. ***Identify and pursue opportunities to create more flexibility in existing resources.*** Sometimes federal and state agencies will allow waivers exempting grantees from some conditions of current funding opportunities. Another avenue may be through block grant funds that may be more flexible and available to broader populations than other funding streams in the state.
4. ***Generate new resources through public-private partnerships.*** Public-private partnerships can generate in-kind and cash resources to support respite activities. Private foundations, local businesses, colleges and universities, managed care organizations, hospitals and health centers, and other public agencies are all potential partners for Lifespan Respite grantees and State Respite Coalitions.
5. ***Create new dedicated revenue streams.*** By advocating for new state and local revenue sources, some grantees and coalitions have successfully called for a line-item in their state budget to fund respite activities and services.

The ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center has useful resources to aid in brainstorming ideas to achieve long term sustainability and these are listed in the **Notes** section of this table and on the **Matrix of Modules, Tasks, Tools and Resources**.

**Sustainability Plan Outline:** This outline is provided to guide you through development and writing of your final plan. However, planning teams are encouraged to use a format suited to their organizational context and culture.

### ***Facilitation Tips and Strategies***

As discussed in the planning tips and strategies above, consider using an external facilitator to help lead the in-person meetings. An external facilitator can play the important role of critical friend during delicate discussions. While some grantees or coalitions may have skilled facilitators they can draw upon, others may need to hire a facilitator. Often local foundations or philanthropies award small, short-term grants to support strategic planning and capacity building efforts. There is also an increased focus on sustaining programs and innovation at the federal level. Review federal or state grant funds the grantee or coalition already has in hand--they may support hiring a facilitator to lead sustainability planning efforts. Graduate students in business school or community planning at local colleges or universities may be able to serve in this capacity for no or little cost.

It is likely the sustainability planning process will occur through a series of meetings held over several months. As discussed earlier, it is critical that all members of the planning team have a clear sense of the scope of the work in which they will engage. Be sure to create a workplan to guide the process. Share key points of the workplan with potential sustainability planning team members. Provide meeting agendas well in advance of planning meetings. Finally, ensure the project plan aligns to existing deadlines as well as grant and budget cycles.

As the planning team proceeds through the sustainability planning process, consult these resources frequently, but also feel free to amend and change the tools and resources to better meet the needs of your team. Sustainability planning is a highly contextualized process and the materials provided guide, not dictate, the planning process. Additionally, teams should work through the modules and tools in an order that makes sense for the coalition or agency and its sustainability strengths and weaknesses as determined through the Sustainability Self-Assessment tool. The ultimate goal of the Sustainability Planning process is to: clarify what the coalition/agency wants to sustain, identify how much it will cost to sustain these activities, identify the current resources on hand to support the work, create a plan to garner the fiscal and non-fiscal resources necessary, and create a written plan as a strategic guide towards long-term sustainability.

Good Luck!



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