

Emerging Issues: Planning for Program Sustainability

The issue: Over the past two years, community-based organizations (CBOs) have worked tirelessly to ensure their communities were kept informed, safe and protected from the effects of the pandemic. From vaccines and boosters to education, outreach and integrating access to essential resources like mental health support and food security assistance, CBOs' unwavering efforts were crucial to effective COVID response and to supporting the well-being of our communities. In some cases, CBO efforts have reshaped long-term local collaborations and public health outcomes—improving policies, resourcing and other strategies. But many of these COVID-19 response efforts were funded and supported only temporarily, and now CBOs are seeking ways to continue their COVID-19 programming.

Why it matters: Program sustainability has traditionally been defined as reducing dependence on a single funding stream to gain a broader base of financial support. But it's now considered a more complex issue, with many factors at play. Building a solid plan based on an analysis and understanding of those variables can greatly increase a CBO's chances of securing resources to continue their program initiatives.

An important resource: The [Program Sustainability Assessment Tool](#) (PSAT) is a guided process that both program staff and stakeholders can use to evaluate capacity. The Center for Public Health Systems Science (CPHSS) at Washington University in St. Louis developed PSAT to address the lack of reliable sustainability measurement tools. Through a literature review, concept mapping and expert input, CPHSS identified eight domains affecting the ability of a public health program to continue to operate effectively. Responses to the assessment can identify strengths and challenges that may be used to guide action planning.

The Sustainability Framework and the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT) can be found [here](#).

The ever-evolving response to COVID-19 and other public health issues means CBOs must continue to require and seek financial support in service of their constituents and neighborhoods. The PSAT can help your organization understand, assess, review and plan your next steps for successful program sustainability.



The Assessment Tool's Eight Domains of Sustainability:

1. **Funding Stability**—establishing a consistent financial base for your program.
2. **Partnerships**—cultivating connections between your program and its stakeholders.
3. **Organizational Capacity**— having the internal support and resources needed to effectively manage your program.
4. **Program Evaluation**—assessing your program to inform planning and document results.
5. **Program Adaptation**—taking actions that adapt your program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.
6. **Communications**—strategic communication with stakeholders and the public about your program.
7. **Environmental Support**— having a supportive internal and external climate for your program.
8. **Strategic Planning**—using processes that guide your program's directions, goals and strategies.

For more information:

The CDC Foundation is actively seeking funding partners to support the Foundation's vital work in support of community-based organizations. Join us. To learn more, contact our Advancement team at advancement@cdcfoundation.org or 404.623.0790. We look forward to connecting with you.

About Us:

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