

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Sustainability of Federal Programs Based on the Experiences of the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health's Multidisciplinary Health Models for Women



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Executive Summary

The Altarum Institute Team conducted a comprehensive review of the extant literature relevant to understanding how to define, conceptualize, and measure sustainability across health programs and initiatives. This review was conducted under contract no.

HHSP2332004504XI08TK02 between the U.S. Department of Health Services (HHS)'s Office on Women's Health (OWH) and the Altarum Institute. This report presents the findings of this review, as well as the conceptual frameworks, specific assessment methods, tools, and strategies used to increase the likelihood of achieving sustainability.

The review revealed a lack of consensus on the definition and conceptualization of sustainability. At its broadest, sustainability is defined as the continuation or maintenance of a set of activities and resources intended to achieve the original objectives of a program or initiative (Pluye et al., 2004a; Scheirer, 2005). However, a number of different terms and explanations have been used to operationalize sustainability. These definitions fall into four major categories, each emphasizing a distinct focal point as being at the heart of the sustainability process: (1) adherence to program principles and objectives, (2) organizational integration, (3) maintenance of health benefits, and (4) community capacity building (Goodman and Steckler, 1989; Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Weiss et al., 2002; Mancini and Marek, 2004; Pluye et al., 2004a, 2004b; Scheirer et al., 2008). Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) developed a widely cited scheme to summarize these definitions into three different components of sustainability, each operating at a different level:

- 1. Individual-level** – maintaining health benefits for individuals after initial program funding ends, particularly continuing to achieve beneficial outcomes for new clients (*Category 3: Maintenance of Health Benefits*);
- 2. Organizational-level** – continuing program activities within an organizational structure and ensuring that program goals, objectives, and approaches adapt to changing needs over time (*Category 1: Adherence to Program Principles and Objectives and Category 2: Organizational Integration*); and
- 3. Community-level** – building the capacity of the community to develop and deliver program activities, particularly when the program worked via a community coalition or other community capacity-developing process (*Category 4: Building Community Capacity*).

In addition, researchers have developed conceptual models that serve as roadmaps of the major concepts associated with sustainability and their interrelationships. These models start with the inputs and activities that have been shown to increase the likelihood of sustainability. Specific examples of these inputs and activities identified during the review are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of inputs and activities across the five major conceptual models identified as contributing to sustainability.

Conceptual Model	Examples of Input and Activities
<p>Community-based Program Sustainability Framework (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998)</p>	<p><u>Project Design and Implementation Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program negotiation process; • Program effectiveness; • Program duration; • Program financing; • Program type; and • Training. <p><u>Organizational Setting Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional strength; • Integrating with existing programs and services; and • Program champions and leadership. <p><u>Community Environment Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioeconomic and political considerations; and • Community participation.
<p>Sustainability Planning Model (Johnson et al., 2004)</p>	<p><u>Capacity-building Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of structure and formal linkages; • Presence of program champions; and • Effective leadership, resources, administrative policies and procedures, and expertise. <p><u>Innovation Attributes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Alignment of program with community’s needs; ♦ Positive relationships among key implementers; ♦ Successful implementation and effectiveness in the target prevention system(s); and ♦ Ownership by prevention system stakeholders.
<p>Community-Based Program Sustainability Model (Mancini and Marek, 2004)</p>	<p><u>Sustainability Elements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Leadership competence; ♦ Effective collaboration; ♦ Understanding the community; ♦ Demonstrating program results; ♦ Strategic funding; ♦ Staff involvement and integration; and ♦ Program responsiveness.

Conceptual Model	Examples of Input and Activities
<p>Program Institutionalization Model (Goodman and Steckler, 1989)</p>	<p><u>Institutionalization Elements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Program implementers have frequent interactions with program through standard operating procedures; ◆ A chain of critical precursor conditions (e.g., awareness of a problem, concern for the problem, availability of solutions, and adequacy of program resources), when met, increase the likelihood that staff perceive the program’s benefits as outweighing its costs; ◆ Program constituents become predisposed to advocating for the program and building broader coalitions to reinforce each other’s program aspirations; and ◆ Program champions emerge that effectively cultivate, unify, and link divergent aspirations in the interest of the program.
<p>Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework (Beery et al., 2005)</p>	<p><u>Transition Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identifying elements of the initiative to be sustained; ◆ Finding resources; ◆ Creating new models of staffing; ◆ Defining a role for the partnership or organization overseeing the initiative; and ◆ Devising ways of ensuring continuation of policy and systems changes. <p><u>Influencing Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Funder policies and practices; ◆ Factors within the organizational setting; and ◆ Factors in the broader community environment.

Research findings (see Table 1) indicate that finding new sources of funding to replace exhausted initial seed funds is but one of many factors that contribute to the sustainability of health programs and initiatives. A number of factors common across the conceptual models suggest that it is critical for programs to prove that they warrant sustainability. Goodman and Steckler (1989) elaborate on this view by describing a worthy program as one that is “based on established theory, is well-implemented, is cost effective, is desired both by a client constituency and a host organization, and is producing desired outcomes” (p. 64–65). Other frequently identified factors across models include fostering ownership of programs and system changes by organization staff and community partners; recruitment of champions to publicly advocate on the behalf of the changes; and engaging in purposeful, strategic planning for sustainability beginning at inception and throughout the life of the initiative (Goodman and Steckler, 1989; Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Johnson et al., 2004; Mancini and Marek, 2004; Beery et al., 2005).

Researchers also recognized that health programs and initiatives do not operate in a vacuum, but rather are influenced by a range of external factors that may affect the sustainability process. Contextual factors, such as the availability of resources, political climate, and changing health needs of the community, may either act as facilitators or barriers to sustainability (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Beery et al., 2005).

In reviewing existing guidance from funders to help programs plan for sustainability, it was found that in general both Federal agencies and foundations increasingly emphasize the importance of sustainability and provide applicants with information on how to develop more sustainable initiatives (Akerlund, 2000; Scheirer, 2005). However, the availability and content of this guidance varies widely across programs and funders.

Chapter I: Introduction

Funding agencies and organizations faced with the challenge of allocating scarce resources are thinking critically about the long-term viability of their investments in public and private health and human service initiatives. Increasingly, they are requesting funding recipients to think about sustainability early on and to identify strategies for achieving self-sufficiency after funding ends. The Federal government and private foundations typically support grantees/contractors for 3- to 5 years and then expect them to secure other funding to continue project activities (Scheirer, 2005). Some grants and contracts provide funding to transform systems of care within a limited period of time (Brittle and Bird, 2007). However, many of these initiatives provide little guidance on what programs should do to plan for long term sustainability. While there is a growing body of research on sustainability, the findings have not been translated into practice.

In recognition of an increasing call for recipients of Federal funds to sustain their programs after initial funding ends and the need to fill a substantial gap in knowledge regarding strategies for identifying and measuring the key components of sustainability, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health (OWH) contracted with Altarum Institute to conduct an assessment to conceptualize and define Federal program sustainability. This assessment examines OWH's Multidisciplinary Health Models for Women (MHMW) initiative to determine what factors have contributed to sites sustaining or not sustaining particular elements of the initiative's core five component model. Findings will be used to make recommendations to Federal agencies on actions to increase the likelihood of grantees'/contractors' sustainability. OWH expects to use the results of this study to develop new guidelines that can be included in future Federal grant and contract announcements. Such guidance may represent a significant advancement in the field of program development by helping health program managers translate research findings on sustainability into practice.

A. Study Overview

From 1996 to 2007, OWH funded five innovative women’s health programs as part of its MHMW initiative to expand upon promising models of care delivery. The 48 MHMW sites are located in urban and rural areas and housed in academic medical centers, community health centers, area health education centers, community-based organizations, hospitals, and community health center look-alikes. Evaluations of individual programs found that most sites had successfully implemented key aspects of the MHMW initiative’s core five component model, provided services to a diverse and underserved population, had high-rates of client satisfaction, and were more likely to have screened their patients for a number of common health conditions compared to a community comparison sample (Office on Women’s Health, 2002; Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, 2004; Navigant Consulting, 2008).

The goal of this assessment is to examine the MHMW initiative approximately 2 years after funding has ended to determine which aspects of the core model have been sustained and to identify the factors that contributed to sustainability. Data for the study will be collected through several key, interrelated tasks (Figure 1).

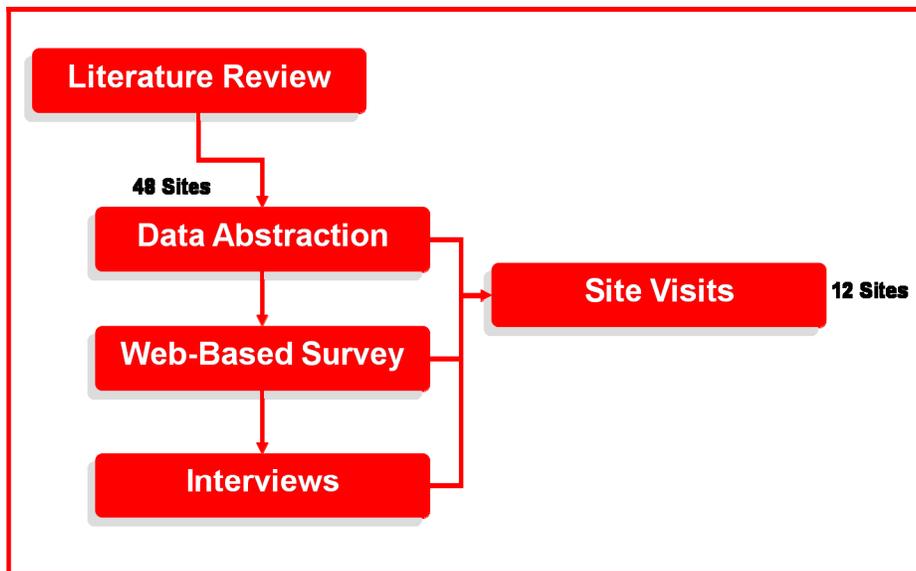


Figure 1: A depiction of key project tasks and their interrelationships.

First, a comprehensive literature review, the results of which are described in this report, was conducted to inform the research questions and the development of the overall research design.

The next step is to abstract data from MHMW Program proposals and annual reports to assess the level of implementation and integration of the five components of the core model across sites, the status of each site two years after funding from OWH has ended, and factors that contributed to the sustainability of the core model. Key administrative staff at the MHMW sites will be invited to complete a Web-based survey to assess the degree to which sites have sustained their programs and to better understand the factors that have acted as facilitators and barriers to program sustainability. Finally, a series of telephone and in-person interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with a broad range of program staff, community partners, and consumers to collect more in-depth information about how programs have been implemented and sustained.

B. Objectives of the Literature Review

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive review of the extant literature and policy documents on program sustainability. In addition, it describes past efforts to measure: (1) overall level of sustainability and (2) the factors that affect sustainability.

More specifically, the literature review addresses the following research questions:

- ◆ How is sustainability defined in the public health literature? (Chapter II)
- ◆ What is the current status of funders' expectations for planning for sustainability across public and private health and human service initiatives? (Chapter III)
- ◆ How has sustainability been measured? (Chapter IV)
- ◆ What are key strategies for ensuring sustainability from initial planning throughout implementation? (Chapter V).

This review also describes the conceptual frameworks, specific assessment methods, and tools that have been used to measure levels of sustainability, as well as strategies to increase the likelihood that initiatives will achieve sustained change.

The final chapter summarizes major conclusions from the review, identifies important gaps in the literature regarding sustainability, and discusses the implication of these findings for the next phases of this assessment.

C. Methodology

Literature Search

A comprehensive search was conducted of the published literature to identify peer reviewed articles, reports, white papers, and guidelines. Databases used included PubMed, Academic Search, WilsonWeb, and Sociological Abstracts, as well as the generic Internet search engine Google. A combination of keywords was used for the search, as identified in Table 1.

Table 1. Keywords Used in the Literature Review

◦ Sustainability/ sustainable	◦ Program implementation
◦ Institutionalization	◦ Capacity-building
◦ Routinization	◦ Resources
◦ Maintenance	◦ Funding
◦ Measurement	◦ Champions
◦ Evaluation	◦ Definition
◦ Assessment	◦ Conceptual model/framework
◦ Health program	◦ Guidelines/guidance
◦ Program life cycle	◦ Federal
◦ Program design	◦ Foundation
◦ Program planning	◦ Public
	◦ Private

Inclusion Criteria

Relevant articles were selected regardless of publication date. While articles were limited to those written in the English language, those describing programs located outside the U.S. were also included.

Highlighting and Overcoming Limitations in the Review

Many of the articles uncovered during the literature search described narrowly focused health programs that delivered only a few services. These programs have a much more limited scope than OWH's MHMW Program, which focuses on implementing systems-level changes to transform the delivery of comprehensive care to women at participating sites. Although the factors contributing to the sustainability of small, limited service programs may be very different

from those affecting large, comprehensive services programs, the frameworks and tools to better understand the key drivers of sustainability can be tailored to apply to a multitude of public health and human service initiatives, regardless of their size and scope (Goodman and Steckler, 1989; Rudd et al., 1999; Mancini and Marek, 2004).

Chapter II: Defining Sustainability

A growing body of research has emerged to answer a number of critical questions about the potential for success and viability of programs and systems change initiatives after initial funding expires. This research indicates a lack of consensus on the conceptualization and definition of sustainability. This chapter summarizes the major definitions and frameworks used to better understand and assess sustainability.

A. The Role of Sustainability in the Program Life Cycle

While sustainability has been described in a multitude of ways throughout the literature, studies consistently present sustainability as an integral part of the overall life cycle of programs, rather than as an isolated concept. Program life cycle typically includes the following stages:

- ♦ **Initiation**—an idea for a program or initiative is conceived that addresses an important problem;
- ♦ **Development**—the idea is ‘fleshed out’ with details about its components and is tested;
- ♦ **Implementation**—the idea is put into full practice within the target organization or community;
- ♦ **Evaluation**—progress and performance are measured;
- ♦ **Sustainability (or discontinuation)**—the program or initiative is (or is not) sustained after the initial funding or impetus is removed; and
- ♦ **Dissemination**. The program or initiative is replicated or the lessons learned are used to develop a modified initiative (Sheirer, 2005).

Although these stages are often treated as if they occur in succession and isolation from each other, it is critical to recognize – for the sake of comprehensively planning for, measuring, and ensuring sustainability – that the stages often overlap. The process of achieving sustainability begins during the early stages, particularly during development and implementation. The activities occurring during this early period strongly shape a program’s future trajectory. For example, sustainability may be more difficult for programs with incomplete implementation prior to the termination of initial funding. The nature of the initial funding arrangement can also exert a strong influence on the potential for sustainability. An initiative that is generated as a result of a strong internal commitment within an organization may be more likely to be sustained

than one that is carried out merely in response to pressure to take advantage of newly available funding from an outside agency (Scheirer, 2005).

Sustainability can also be thought of as part of a larger “change process” in which a series of action steps help strengthen system infrastructure and innovative attributes that in turn help ensure sustainability of an initiative. This process relies on an organization’s infrastructure being flexible and receptive to change (Johnson et al., 2004). This characteristic plays a particularly important role in an organization’s ability to conduct effective and savvy outreach to secure additional resources that will enable it to adapt and maintain positive changes once initial funding has ended.

It is important to note that while there is some agreement on useful methods for planning for sustainability, there is no single unifying model or set of assumptions from which to draw upon, and there is often disagreement on terminology (Lefebvre, 1992; Shediak-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Pluye et al., 2004a; Pluye et al., 2004b; Scheirer, 2005).

B. Operational Definitions of Sustainability

A number of different terms and explanations have been used to operationalize the process that programs undergo after initial funding ceases. These definitions fall into four major categories, each emphasizing a distinct focal point as being at the heart of the sustainability process:

(1) adherence to program principles and objectives, (2) organizational integration, (3) maintenance of health benefits, and (4) community capacity building. Following are definitions of sustainability found in the literature review organized by the four categories:

1. Adherence to Program Principles and Objectives

- ♦ A continued commitment to the interests, ideas, principles, or beliefs supported by the program or initiative (Weiss et al., 2002);
- ♦ The continuation or maintenance of a set of activities and resources intended to achieve the original objectives of a program or initiative (Pluye et al., 2004a); and
- ♦ The capacity of programs to maintain a focus consonant with its original goals and objectives, including the individuals, families, and communities it was originally intended to serve (Mancini and Marek, 2004).

2. Organizational Integration

- ♦ The institutionalization of a program into its host organization as an integrated component. This process occurs through mutual adaptation by both the program and organization, enabling a program to become a valued, ongoing practice within the organization and one that receives support from other aspects of the system (Goodman and Steckler, 1989).
- ♦ The establishment of organizational routines, or collective procedural actions, that lead to program activities becoming a stable and regular part of organizational procedures and behavior, as well as the mobilization of resources to support that program. The characteristics of routinized activities include: (1) integration into organizational structures by the *memory* of actions shared by the actors, (2) *adaptation* to suit the specific context, (3) reflecting the organizational *values*, beliefs, codes, or cultures, and (4) conforming to a set of *rules* that govern action and decision-making (Pluye et al., 2004a and 2004b).

3. Maintenance of Program Benefits

- ♦ The capacity to maintain service coverage at a level that will provide continuing control of a health problem (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998); and
- ♦ The capacity to deliver an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time after major resources from an external donor is terminated (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998).

4. Building Community Capacity

- ♦ Development of the surrounding community's capacity (i.e., access to knowledge, skills, and resources) to support program activities (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998); and
- ♦ Maintaining the capacity of a collaborative structure, such as a coalition or partnership, that has been developed to address broad program objectives that are not feasible for the host organization to address on its own (Scheirer et al., 2008).

A key debate in the literature is which of the above categories represent the most important element in the sustainability process. For example, researchers offering the first category of definitions stress the importance of maintaining a set of activities or services that either remain in their original form or reflect the initial goals and intent of a program (Pluye et al., 2004a; Mancini and Marek, 2004). Others contend that it is necessary for changes to not only be long-standing and adhere to the initial goals and principles, but also to become a part of organizational procedures, policies, and structures through the processes of institutionalization or routinization (Goodman and Steckler, 1989; Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Pluye et al., 2004a).

Some researchers, however, raise concerns that institutionalization or routinization can easily come to mean activities perpetuated for their own sake and due to organizational habit, regardless of whether the intended outcomes are achieved. These researchers assert that sustainability should encompass more than just persistence and integration into the organization of activities and processes; they emphasize the importance of maintaining positive outcomes for clients and enabling the broader community to play a key role in supporting programs over time (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Scheirer, 2005; Scheirer et al., 2008).

In their comprehensive review of literature on program sustainability, Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) concluded that the various definitions of sustainability suggest that it is a complex, multidimensional concept. All four of the major elements likely play a role in achieving sustainability. Furthermore, they recognized that the relative contribution of each element to the attainment of sustainability likely depends upon the unique nature of a program. A broader definition of sustainability may be, therefore, a more accurate and useful way of characterizing and assessing the sustainability process across diverse programs. The authors developed a scheme to categorize the definitions into three different perspectives on sustainability, each operating at a different level. These perspectives include:

1. **Individual-level**—maintaining health benefits for individuals after initial program funding ends, particularly continuing to achieve beneficial outcomes for new clients (*Category 3: Maintenance of Program Benefits*);
2. **Organizational-level**—continuing program activities within an organizational structure and ensuring that program goals, objectives, and approaches adapt to changing needs over time (*Category 1: Adherence to Program Principles and Objectives¹* and *Category 2: Organizational Integration*); and
3. **Community-level**—building the capacity of the community to develop and deliver program activities, particularly when the program worked via a community coalition or other community capacity-developing process (*Category 4: Building Community Capacity*); (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Scheirer, 2005).

¹ It is important to note that Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone offer a different viewpoint on this category of definitions. They assert that conditions and needs of clients, community, and settings often change over time so it is more important for programs to adapt a program's principles and objectives over time. Adhering to a program's principles and objectives in their original form when they no longer match changing needs, they contend, may jeopardize the sustainability of a program.

Although Shediac-Rizkallah and Bones's (1998) scheme was developed specifically for community-based health promotion programs, it can be applied to a number of different program types and has become one of the most frequently cited operational definition of sustainability. One of the major benefits of this definition is that it allows for the identification and measurement of sustainability across three different units of analysis: (1) individual-level client outcomes, (2) organizational-level program implementation, and (3) community-level capacity.

C. Conceptual Models of Sustainability

Researchers have developed conceptual models or frameworks to map out the stages associated with the sustainability process. This literature review identified nearly as many frameworks for understanding sustainability as there are definitions of sustainability. Several of these models appear to be useful for accessing sustainability at multiple levels. Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) have developed a model that represents one of the earliest attempts to translate operational definition of sustainability into a framework that depicts of how these hypothesized determinants interact with each other and ultimately lead to sustainability (Figure 2).

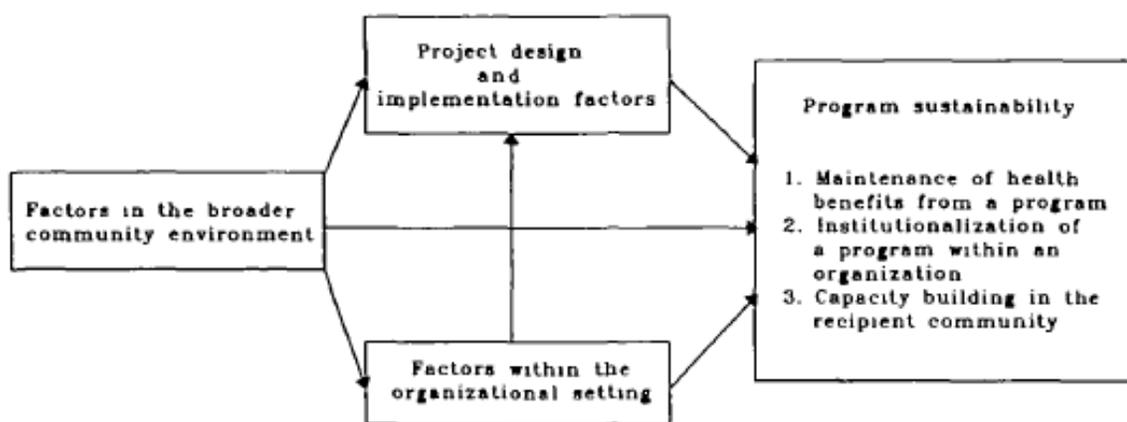


Figure 2: Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (2002)'s framework for conceptualizing program sustainability.

Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone's (1998) model presents a very basic picture of the sustainability process and does not provide many details about the specific steps involved. Several additional, more comprehensive models have emerged that can assist the health and human services field in planning for and evaluating sustainability at multiple levels.

Sustainability Planning Model

Background

In response to a critical need in the substance abuse prevention field, Johnson et al. (2004) developed a model to help Federal agencies and their grantees plan for sustainability (Figure 3). This model is based on the authors' definition of sustainability as "the process of ensuring an adaptive prevention system and a sustainable innovation that can be integrated into ongoing operations to benefit diverse stakeholders (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 137)". This approach assumes that the systems in which new programs operate must be receptive to change. However, the organizational culture may be resistant to change. The model, therefore, emphasizes the importance of creating an environment in which programs are able to adapt to the realities of the current situation.

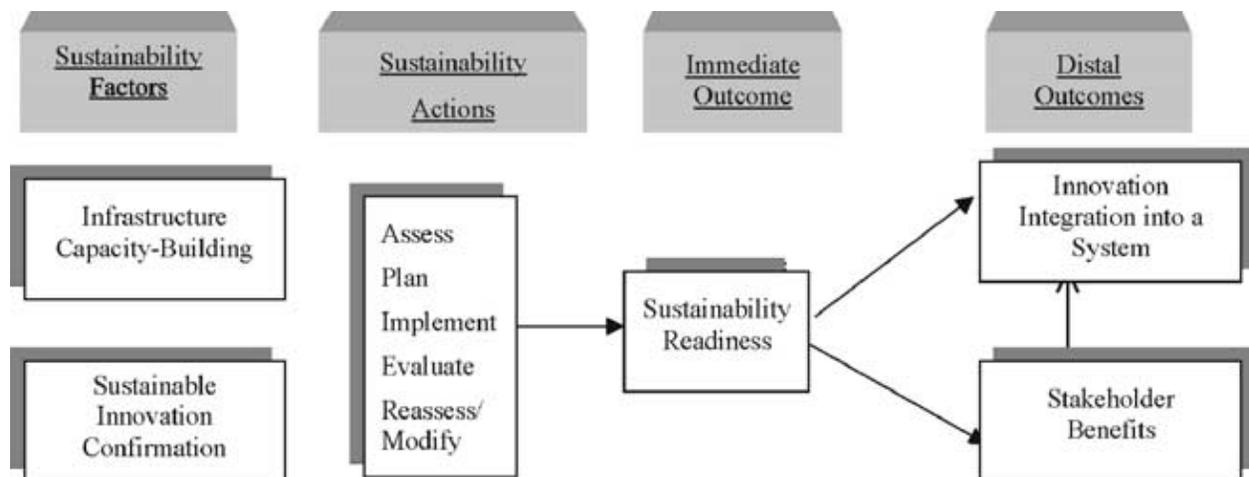


Figure 3: A conceptual view of the sustainability planning model (Johnson et al., 2004).

Overview of Key Concepts and Stages

The sustainability planning model begins with two types of factors that are assumed to be associated with sustainability: (1) infrastructure **capacity-building factors** (i.e., type of structure and formal linkages, presence of champions, resources, policies, and expertise) and (2) **sustainable innovation confirmation attributes** (i.e., aligning programs with community needs, positive relationships among key implementers, successful and effective program implementation, and ownership by stakeholders).

Next, a series of action steps are carried out by program implementers that strengthen and improve capacity-building and innovation through a five-step cyclical process, including: assessment, development, implementation, evaluation, and reassessment and modification. If the action proves successful it will produce an immediate outcome referred to as sustainability readiness, or having sufficient infrastructure in place and confirmation that the innovation is sustainable. An adequate level of sustainability will ultimately lead to the attainment of two major distal outcomes, integration of innovations into operations of the target system and the production of benefits for key stakeholders such as decision-makers and consumers.

Strengths and Limitations of the Model

The Sustainability Planning Model emphasizes the importance of the host organization's receptivity to change and acknowledges that even the best planned and effective programs may not achieve longevity if the organizational climate is not ready to embrace and integrate the program into on-going operations. Also, it considers sustainability across multiple levels – including the organizational, community, and State and Federal-levels. However, there are several limitations to the usefulness of the model for this project. Although it incorporates all four major categories of sustainability definitions, it does not explicitly address the role that building community capacity plays in sustainability. It refers only to the role of ill defined “structures and formal linkages”. Also the model provides only limited guidance on assessing sustainability within programs. Perhaps most importantly, Johnson et al. provide little guidance for actually measuring the indicators said to affect sustainability. While an accompanying table provides some general topic areas under each of the major model components that can serve as indicators for measuring sustainability, it lacks a significant level of detail for practical application.

Community-Based Program Sustainability Model

Background

Mancini and Marek (2004) developed a model (Figure 4) to outline the sustainability process for community-based programs. This model identifies seven major elements of sustainability, which the authors define as the ability to provide “continued benefits, regardless of particular activities delivered or the format (Mancini and Marek, 2004, p. 339)”. They used the model to develop and

test the validity and reliability of a sustainability assessment tool, the Program Sustainability Index (PSI), which includes 53 measures of the seven sustainability elements.

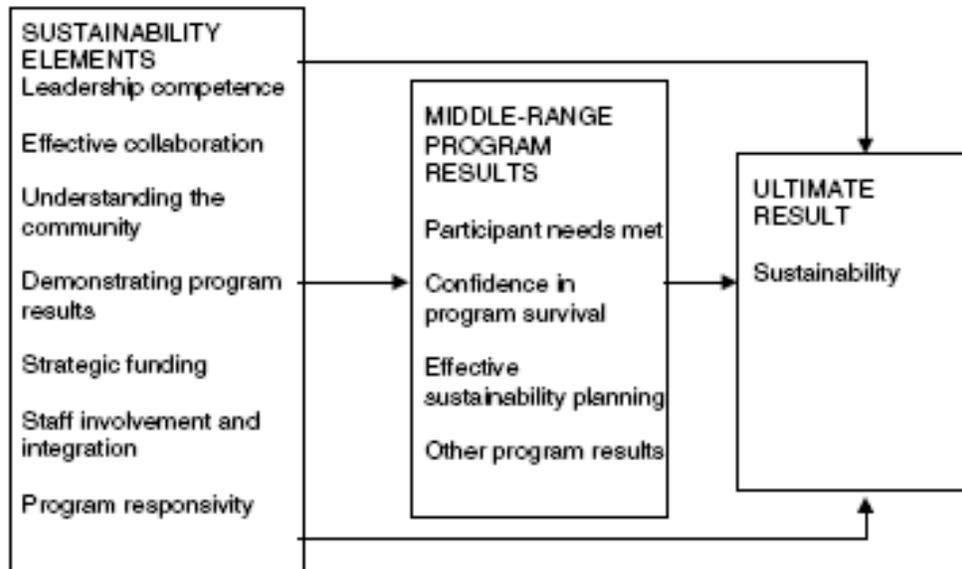


Figure 4: Model of community-based program sustainability (Mancini and Marek, 2004).

Overview of Key Concepts and Stages

The Community-Based Program Sustainability Model begins with **seven elements** that are thought to be associated with sustainability:

1. **Leadership competence**—the ability of leaders to clearly articulate a program’s vision and objectives, perform regular needs assessments, engage in ongoing program planning and adaptation, conduct evaluations, secure and manage funding, support and supervise staff, and provide staff training;
2. **Effective collaboration**—the identification of and engagement with relevant stakeholders who actively support program goals and who have clearly identified responsibilities;
3. **Understanding the community**—having knowledge of community needs and resources, having respect for community members, and involving key community members in programs;
4. **Demonstrating program results**—the evaluation of program process and outcomes using rigorous research methods and informing stakeholders of evaluation results;
5. **Strategic funding**—having plans and resources in place to support current and prospective program requirements;

6. **Staff integration**—the inclusion of committed, qualified staff in program design, implementation, evaluation, and decision making; and
7. **Program responsivity** – the ability of a project to adapt to programming to meet changes in community needs (Mancini and Marek, 2004).

The second component of the model is middle-range program results, which are intermediate points along the causal pathway leading towards the end point of sustainability. Figure 3 presents a short list of viable middle-range program results, including meeting the needs of clients, effective planning for sustainability, and having confidence in project survival. The authors indicate that other intermediate results are closely related to ultimate sustainability, such as the degree to which the organization perceives a program as permanent and the number of years that funding is in place to support a program. The ultimate result is a sustained program. Again, the authors contend that the more important indicator of sustainability is whether the program is maintaining benefits to clients and communities, rather than the maintenance of specific program activities (Mancini and Marek, 2004).

Strengths and Limitations of the Model

Community-based Program Sustainability Model underscores the importance of early planning and being intentional about sustainability. The seven sustainability elements lead to the development, implementation, and monitoring of a comprehensive sustainability plan. The accompanying PSI can be used to help programs through this process. A drawback of the PSI is its sole focus on the sustainability elements. Measures to assess middle range program results, which are presented in the model as a critical next step along the causal pathway to sustainability, are not included. This deficiency is heightened by the relatively short list and vague descriptions of examples of middle range program results presented by the authors. Also, in contrast to the Sustainability Planning Model (Mancini and Marek, 2004), the Community-based Program Sustainability Model presents a linear process leading from the seven elements to sustainability without acknowledging the importance of on-going refinement and adaptation to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

Program Institutionalization Model

Background

Goodman and Steckler (1989) created a model (Figure 5) in line with their focus on institutionalization as the key to long-term program survival, which they define as the process by which program innovations “settle” into their host organizations as integrated components. The authors also describe institutionalization as a neglected area of research. Their model assumes that some programs are more worthy of institutionalization than others and, therefore, are more likely to achieve it. The authors describe the characteristics of programs meriting institutionalization as: based on established theory, desired by both the host organization and clients, and producing desired outcomes. This model is based on findings from a multiple case study that explored how selected elements of sustainability, which were frequently highlighted in the literature, contributed to the institutionalization of a sample of health promotion programs funded by the Virginia State Health Department.

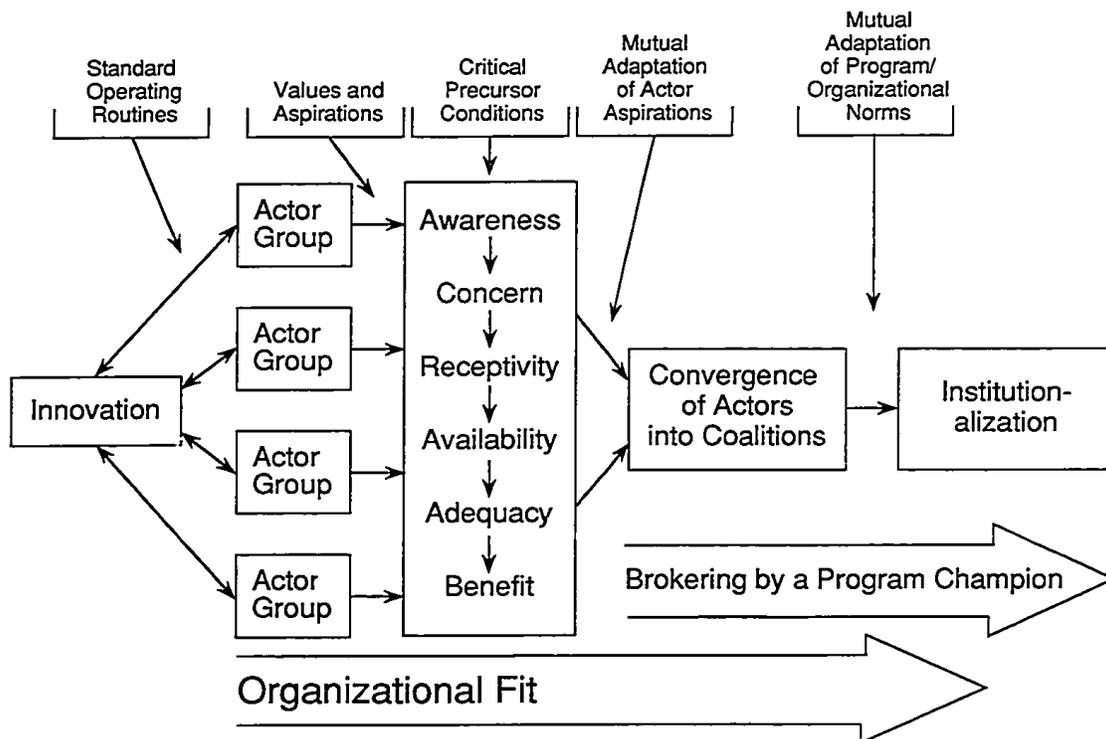


Figure 5: A model for program institutionalization (Goodman and Steckler, 1989).

Overview of Key Concepts and Stages

The model includes four key stages:

- ◆ During program implementation, individuals in the organization (**actor groups**) have frequent interactions with a program (**innovation**) through **standard operating routines**, such as through regular staff meetings and periodic progress reports. Over time these individuals will begin to develop their own **values and aspirations** for the program.
- ◆ Once individuals have enough information about and experience with a program, they will make an assessment about its costs and benefits. During this process, individuals will assess the presence of a **chain of critical precursor conditions** (e.g., awareness of a problem, concern for the problem, availability of solutions, and adequacy of program resources). When individuals decide that a program meets each of these conditions, there is a high likelihood that individuals will perceive that the program's benefits outweigh its costs.
- ◆ Individuals will become predisposed to working together to advocate on behalf of the program when they simultaneously reach a positive benefit-to-cost assessment (**mutual adaptation of actor aspirations**). Such advocacy leads to the building of coalitions to help reinforce each other's aspirations for the program (**convergence of actors into coalitions**). During this process **program champions** emerge to act as a powerful catalyst for coalitions building.
- ◆ After coalitions form, adjustments such as accommodations between program and organizational structures, functions, beliefs, and behaviors occur (**mutual adaption of program/organizational norms**). These adjustments enhance the program's **organizational fit**, or compatibility with the organization's mission and core operations, and ultimately lead to **institutionalization**.

During the case studies, the researchers identified a number of key characteristics of program champions: (1) being in a strategic position that enables coalition building, (2) possessing sophisticated analytical and intuitive skills that enable them to understand and build upon what individual advocates are seeking, and (3) having well-honed interpersonal and negotiating skills that enable them to foster the formation of coalitions by reconciling divergent views among supporters of the change or program (Goodman and Steckler, 1989).

Strengths and Limitations of the Model

Similar to the Sustainability Planning Model (Johnson et al., 2004), the Program Institutionalization Model emphasizes the role of receptivity to change in attaining sustainability. However, the Program Institutionalization Model goes a step further to assert that receptivity is linked to a complex assessment of a program's benefits relative to its costs. Once individuals in the organization perceive the benefits of the program to outweigh the cost, they make a strong

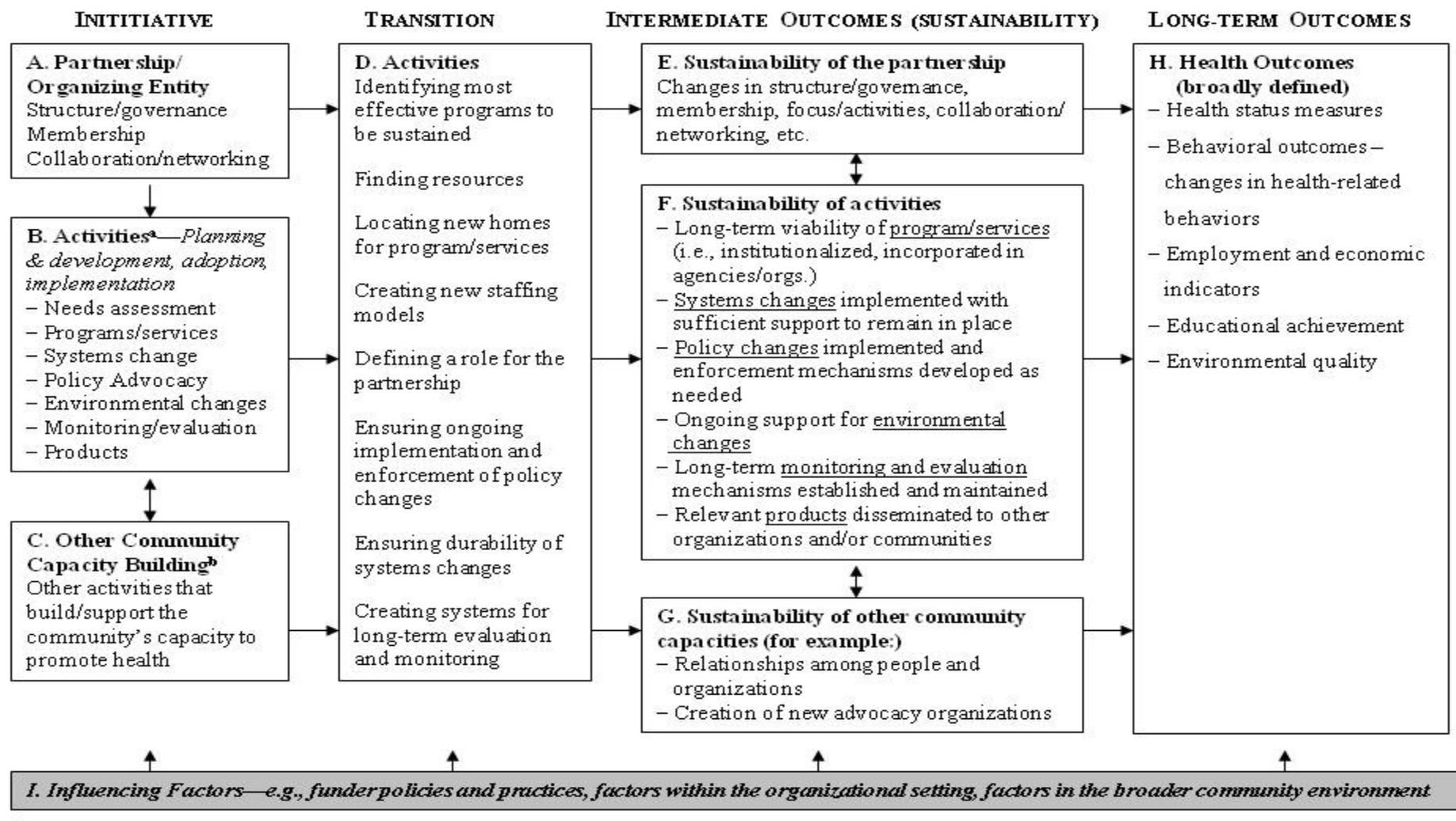
case externally for the program's survival through advocacy and coalition building efforts. This model also highlights the need for programs to prove that they are worthy of sustainability. In addition to producing positive outcomes for clients and the community, the model suggests that programs must demonstrate that they are a good fit for their host organization and closely aligned with its mission and functions.

However, this model is much more complex and difficult to follow than other sustainability models and therefore poses a challenge to creating adequate indicators for its many components. In addition, the authors do not provide much in the way of specific examples of potential indicators.

Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework

Background

In contrast to other models geared toward the sustainability process of relatively small-scale programs and innovations, Beery et al. (2005) created a sustainability model targeted specifically to broad, community health initiatives (Figure 6). The logic model delineates the key steps an organization or partnership undergoes as its community health initiative transitions to sustainability. In addition, Beery et al. intended for this model to serve as a tool for evaluating sustainability following the end of initial funding, formulating key evaluation questions, and guiding data collection. The model defines sustainability as the “continuation of health or quality-of-life benefits over time (Beery et al., 2005, p. 151)” and assumes that a wide range of benefits may be sustained within initiatives. The authors subsequently used this model in evaluating the California Wellness Foundation's five-year Health Improvement Initiative (HII). (The findings are presented in Chapter IV.)



- a. For example, integrated services, data sharing or integrated data systems, results-based budgeting.
b. For example, health literacy, resident leadership training, organizational development.

Figure 6: Conceptual model for evaluating the sustainability of community health initiatives (Beery et al., 2005).

Overview of Key Concepts and Stages

The key components of this model include:

- ◆ **Initiative.** The community health initiative is comprised of a partnership or other type of entity responsible for carrying out activities associated with planning, adopting, and implementing the initiative. Nearly all of these activities help build the surrounding community's capacity to promote health, such as through health systems changes, developing stronger relationships, and increasing skills.
- ◆ **Transition.** The partnership also engages in a number of different activities to sustain the efforts of the initiative, which should begin early on prior to the end of the initial funding period. Activities include identifying programs to be sustained, finding resources, creating new models of staffing, defining a role for the partnership, and devising ways of ensuring continuation of policy and systems changes.
- ◆ **Intermediate Outcomes (Sustainability).** Over time a set of elements from the initiative will be sustained, including the partnership, major activities, and community capacities. Each of these elements can be sustained in whole or in part and with either the same or a modified structure.
- ◆ **Health Outcomes.** The continuation of key elements from the initiative is expected to improve an array of health outcomes, from individual-level measures such as health status to community-level measures such as employment and economic indicators.
- ◆ **Influencing Factors.** The final component of the model accounts for the fact that throughout an initiative's lifecycle, many contextual factors within the community can impact the process of achieving sustainability, such as the availability of resources or changes to funders' practices.

Strengths and Limitations of the Model

The Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework is particularly relevant to the current study because of its focus on the continuation of broad community health initiatives after the end of the initial funding period. The model views sustainability as an intermediary and necessary condition for an initiative's long-term impact on community health, recognizing the lag time between system changes and the realization of positive outcomes. Sustaining an initiative during this lag time will ensure that efforts continue to reach a point at which improvements in community health status are measurable and recognized by stakeholders. Lastly, the model explicitly acknowledges that environmental factors affect an initiative's prospects for sustainability over its lifespan.

The Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework has a limitation similar to one identified for the Community-Based Program Sustainability Model (Mancini and Marek, 2004): both approaches view sustainability as a linear process and do not incorporate feedback loops that allow for the refinement of transition activities to accommodate changing priorities or in response to influencing factors.

D. The Implications of Sustainability

The numerous operational definitions and conceptual models that have appeared in the literature, particularly within the past decade, indicate a growing interest in better understanding the sustainability process and ensuring that effective programs and initiatives endure over time. The pressure to achieve these goals is particularly high for community health initiatives, such as the MHMW initiative, which tend to serve large populations, implement comprehensive multilevel interventions, and involve a long-term perspective on health outcome improvement (Beery et al., 2005). Achieving (or failing to achieve) sustainability can have important and potentially far reaching implications for community health initiatives, and subsequently on the health of a community.

Research findings indicate that a major benefit of sustainability is to maintain the positive outcomes of a program or initiative over a long period of time (Pluye et al., 2004b). Moreover, extending the life of a program provides sufficient time for the ‘latency’ period that typically occurs during the time a program begins and when its effect become apparent. When effective programs are not sustained, the resources that went into their planning and implementation are lost (Goodman and Steckler, 1989; Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998). In addition, the discontinuation of beneficial programs run the risk of disillusioning community members and reducing the likelihood that they will support future initiatives (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998).

E. Chapter Summary

Table 2: Summary of the major characteristics of the five major conceptual models of program sustainability.

Conceptual Model	Purpose	Definition of Program Sustainability	Major Factors Highlighted as Contributing to Program Sustainability	Strengths and Weaknesses
Community-based Program Sustainability Framework (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998)	Help community-based health programs plan for sustainability	A multidimensional process of program continuation that may take three forms: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> maintaining health benefits achieved through the initial program; continuing program activities within an organizational structure; and building the capacity of the recipient community. 	<p><u>Project Design and Implementation Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program negotiation process; Program effectiveness; Program duration; Program financing; Program type; and Training. <p><u>Organizational Setting Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional strength; Integrating with existing programs and services; and Program champions and leadership. <p><u>Community Environment Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socioeconomic and political considerations; Community participation. 	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents sustainability as a multidimensional process that may take several different forms; Widely cited in the literature. <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide many details about specific steps involved in the sustainability process.

Conceptual Model	Purpose	Definition of Program Sustainability	Major Factors Highlighted as Contributing to Program Sustainability	Strengths and Weaknesses
Sustainability Planning Model (Johnson et al., 2004)	Help Federal agencies supporting substance abuse prevention programs and their grantee plan for sustainability	The process of ensuring an adaptive prevention system and a sustainable innovation that can be integrated into ongoing operations to benefit diverse stakeholders	<p><u>Capacity-building Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Type of structure and formal linkages; ◆ Presence of program champions; and ◆ Effective leadership, resources, administrative policies and procedures, and expertise. <p><u>Innovation Attributes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Alignment of program with community's needs; ◆ Positive relationships among key implementers; ◆ Successful implementation and effectiveness in the target prevention system(s); and ◆ Ownership by prevention system stakeholders. 	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Emphasizes importance of host organization's receptivity to change; ◆ Considers sustainability across multiple levels: organizational, State, and Federal <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does not explicitly address role of community capacity building in sustainability; ◆ Provides limited guidance on measuring sustainability indicators.

Conceptual Model	Purpose	Definition of Program Sustainability	Major Factors Highlighted as Contributing to Program Sustainability	Strengths and Weaknesses
<p>Community-Based Program Sustainability Model (Mancini and Marek, 2004)</p>	<p>Outline the sustainability process for community-based programs</p>	<p>Continued benefits, regardless of particular activities delivered or the format</p>	<p><u>Sustainability Elements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Leadership competence; ◆ Effective collaboration; ◆ Understanding the community; ◆ Demonstrating program results; ◆ Strategic funding; ◆ Staff involvement and integration; and ◆ Program responsiveness. 	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights importance of early planning for and being intentional about sustainability; • Seven elements are designed to develop, implement, and monitor a sustainability plan; and • Accompanying Program Sustainability Index (PSI) can assist in monitoring. <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSI does not include indicators for all aspects of the model; • Presents sustainability as a linear, rather than dynamic process with feedback loops.

Conceptual Model	Purpose	Definition of Program Sustainability	Major Factors Highlighted as Contributing to Program Sustainability	Strengths and Weaknesses
<p>Program Institutionalization Model (Goodman and Steckler, 1989)</p>	<p>Demonstrate how health programs worthy of longevity may become institutionalized</p>	<p>The authors refers to “institutionalization” rather than sustainability, which they define as the process by which program innovations “settle” into their host organizations as integrated components</p>	<p><u>Institutionalization Elements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Program implementers have frequent interactions with program through standard operating procedures; ◆ A chain of critical precursor conditions (e.g., awareness of a problem, concern for the problem, availability of solutions, and adequacy of program resources), when met, increase the likelihood that staff perceive the program’s benefits as outweighing its costs; ◆ Program constituents become predisposed to advocating for the program and building broader coalitions to reinforce each other’s program aspirations; and ◆ Program champions emerge that effectively cultivate, unify, and link divergent aspirations in the interest of the program. 	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes role of receptivity to change in achieving sustainability; • Demonstrates how the perceived benefits of programs is linked to greater receptivity to change and support for sustainability; and • Highlights the importance of proving a program’s worthiness of sustainability. <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity of the model poses a challenge for practical use in designing, implementing, and monitoring plans for institutionalization; • No specific examples of indicators of institutionalization are presented.

Conceptual Model	Purpose	Definition of Program Sustainability	Major Factors Highlighted as Contributing to Program Sustainability	Strengths and Weaknesses
<p>Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework (Beery et al., 2005)</p>	<p>Serve as a tool for evaluating sustainability following the end of initial funding for community health initiatives</p>	<p>The continuation of health or quality-of-life benefits over time</p>	<p><u>Transition Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identifying elements of the initiative to be sustained; ◆ Finding resources; ◆ Creating new models of staffing; ◆ Defining a role for the partnership or organization overseeing the initiative; and ◆ Devising ways of ensuring continuation of policy and systems changes. <p><u>Influencing Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Funder policies and practices; ◆ Factors within the organizational setting; and ◆ Factors in the broader community environment. 	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicability to broad community health initiatives; • Specifically designed to conduct evaluations of sustainability and provide examples of key indicators; • Presents sustainability as a necessary intermediary for long-term impact on community health outcomes; and • Acknowledges role of environmental factors in the sustainability process. <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents sustainability as a linear process without incorporating feedback loops for refinement of activities designed to promote sustainability.

Key Findings on Defining and Conceptualizing Sustainability

- ◆ The large number of and great variability across definitions that have been offered to describe the sustainability process suggests that sustainability is a complex and multidimensional concept.
- ◆ Schediac-Rizkallah and Bone's (1998) scheme serves as a useful operational definition of sustainability for the current study because it:
 - Can be applied across a range of programs and initiatives;
 - Incorporates key elements across all major categories of sustainability definitions, including: maintenance of health benefits, continuing program activities, and building community capacity;
 - Lends itself to the measurement of sustainability elements across three levels of analysis: program, individual, and community.
- ◆ The models proposed to map out and measure the major concepts driving sustainability have been designed to address some, but not all, sustainability elements. It will be important to ensure that a framework is developed for the current study that incorporates the full spectrum of sustainability elements identified across multiple models.
- ◆ Existing models have largely been tailored to address the sustainability process of a specific type of health program or initiative. The framework developed for the current study will therefore need to both address the uniqueness of the MHMW initiative while also being broad enough to be readily applicable to a broad range of health innovations.
- ◆ The Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework (Mancini and Marek, 2004) does stand out as a particularly useful model for the current study due to its emphasis on community health initiatives and intention to serve as a tool for conducting evaluations of sustainability.

Chapter III: Funders' Expectations for Program Sustainability

While the world of academia has been the predominate contributor to the knowledge base on sustainability, some public and private funding entities instruct their grantees on its achievement in their funding announcements. Funders typically expect grantees and contractors to:

- ♦ Be service providers, evaluators, and fundraisers;
- ♦ Understand the intent and purpose of different funding streams;
- ♦ Achieve measurable and at least somewhat sustainable outcomes within the funding timeframe;
- ♦ Develop sustainability and evaluation plans early on, as opposed to waiting until the final year of funding, and establish and adhere to a clear set of responsibilities and timelines for implementing these plans;
- ♦ Provide funders with regular updates on activities, successes, and lessons learned as initiatives progress (Farrel, 1999; Akerlund, 2000; Scheirer, 2005).

To further illustrate how both government and private sponsors define sustainability and the expectations they have for programs in approaching and measuring sustainability, Altarum Institute staff examined a selection of guidance, toolkits, reviews, and workshop materials for government- and foundation-sponsored funding programs. The programs and initiatives were deliberately selected from a variety of agencies in order to understand different approaches to the issue. The guidance and other materials represent a range of publically and privately funded health and human services programs with a strong emphasis on those efforts directed toward systems and community change. This chapter summarizes findings from the review.

A. Sustainability Expectations for Federally Funded Programs

Federal funding announcements for innovative programs or initiatives routinely include requirements regarding sustainability. Altarum examined these requirements for three federally funded programs.

State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant Program

The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)'s ECCS Grant Program, launched in 2003, is intended to transform systems of care for young children across all sectors and types of services. Throughout the life of the grant program,

guidances have referred to the need to sustain the initiatives once funding ends. For example, during the first round of awards, applicants were required to describe their plans for addressing sustainability including specific strategies to secure financing and leverage additional resources to help carry out the implementation phase of the initiative. In addition, the proposal review criteria included such questions as: (1) are the strategies for future funding outlined?; (2) does the applicant provide evidence of their State and local communities' commitment to continuing to develop a comprehensive system of integrated early childhood services?; and (3) does the applicant demonstrate a clear understanding of bringing about change in these services? Program guidance for ECCS reiterated this focus during the second round of awards in 2005 and during the non-competing continuation awards in 2007 (Maternal and Child Health Bureau, 2003, 2005, 2007).

Despite stated requirements around sustainability, ECCS grantees have never been asked to submit a formal sustainability plan. Most grantees provide very limited information on their sustainability plans and this lack of response has not been raised as a major issue in assessments of the individual grantees' progress. The funding agency apparently recognizes that system building efforts need continued long-term support to survive; thus the grant program is slated to continue through 2011. Institutionalization of change is taking place in a number of states, but discussions about these changes are usually framed in terms of continued progress in system building rather than sustainability.

Children's Mental Health Initiative

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) has funded cooperative agreements for the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program Initiative, known as the Children's Mental Health Initiative (CMHI), since 1993. The goal is to develop systems for providing integrated services (i.e., systems of care) to children with mental health problems and their families that can be maintained after Federal funding is terminated. The 2008 CMHI Request for Applications (RFA) requires applicants to describe an initial plan for sustainability, which is defined as "the maintenance of systems of care over time, including the infrastructure, services and philosophy (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008, p. 9)". Grantees receive funding

for a period of six years. During the first year, grantees are expected to develop a strategic sustainability plan that specifies the following:

- ♦ How elements of the system of care infrastructure, services, and supports will be maintained;
- ♦ How the system of care will be infused into the broader system;
- ♦ How the system of care will work with State partners to ensure policy and funding mechanisms at the State-level; and
- ♦ How the system of care will link with partners in other child-serving systems for sustainability.

The 2008 CMHI RFA outlines a strategic framework for sustainability planning that includes 14 sustainability strategies and five financing strategies. But this outline does not provide a great level of detail and gives no specific guidance on how grantees can develop, implement, and monitor sustainability strategies. The RFA only states that grantees will receive technical assistance for developing the system of care, including for increasing the likelihood of sustaining the system of care beyond the Federal funding period (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008).

This review of the CMHI initiative uncovered a toolkit produced by SAMHSA that appears to be targeted at CMHI grantees and those of other federally funded systems of care initiatives. The *Sustainability Planning Tool Kit*² was released in 2003 to help communities assess their efforts to sustain critical elements and objectives of systems of care, complete sustainability strategic plans, and raise matching funds to sustain their programs. The toolkit contains detailed guidance, self-assessments, and planning templates. In addition, more recent materials suggest that SAMHSA is increasing its emphasis on sustainability. In 2008, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment produced a toolkit called *Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs* (Appendix A). The toolkit targets grassroots community and faith-based organizations and covers a variety of topics including strategic planning, organizational assessment, marketing, finance, and evaluation (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008).

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a national service program that promotes community service by providing grants and supports to national and community organizations that administer service programs. The

² We were only able to locate a draft version of this toolkit online. Links to each of the tool kit's materials can be found here: <http://www.tapartnership.org/resources/sustainability/toolkit.asp>.

grants assist these programs in recruiting, training, and placing AmeriCorps members in direct service and capacity-building jobs to address community needs. The Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS), which administers Americorps, views sustainability of its grantees as critical to meeting the needs of the communities they serve. AmeriCorps and CNCS, in cooperation with Campaign Consultation, Inc. and Aguirre International, produced a *Toolkit for Program Sustainability, Capacity Building, and Volunteer Recruitment/Management* (Appendix B). This toolkit was designed to help AmeriCorps-funded service organizations build organizational and local capacity, produce outcomes beyond those required as a condition of funding, and ultimately develop a sustainable program. The toolkit combines a thorough discussion of CNCS requirements for program performance and applications reviews, and describes strategies for continuing work after AmeriCorps funding ends. In addition, it presents nine steps toward a program sustainability plan, including:

- ◆ Step 1: Build your “Case for Support”;
- ◆ Step 2: Continually build and sustain relationships;
- ◆ Step 3: Develop a diverse program advisory committee;
- ◆ Step 4: Draft the plan. Including actions for outreach and marketing, among other strategies;
- ◆ Step 5: Review, revise, and endorse your case statement and plan;
- ◆ Step 6: Monitor program progress regularly, and revise plan and strategies accordingly;
- ◆ Step 7: Explain how you will use the results of your program assessment to make better use of resources;
- ◆ Step 8: Address marketing of the program and its outcomes to build reputation;
- ◆ Step 9: Explain how you plan to use partnerships to leverage resources.

The toolkit also includes an example of each step with corresponding specific action steps and a timeline for achieving major milestones (Corporation for National & Community Service, n.d.).

B. Sustainability Expectations for Foundation Funded Programs

Foundations also struggle with the sustainability of their initiatives and the requirements to impose on their grantees. This chapter explores some of these issues by looking at examples from three large, national foundations.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Funded Review of Sustainability Issues for Foundation Initiatives

As a result of experience with comprehensive community initiatives, the Annie E. Casey Foundation saw a need to explore the issue of sustainability in foundation-funded programs. A commissioned report found that “there is a great deal more advice available to foundations and grantees about how to start a comprehensive community-based initiative than there is about how to successfully end one” (Cornerstone Consulting Group 2002, p 5). Based largely on key informant interviews, the report notes that foundations have not emphasized sustainability in their initiatives and have frequently been criticized for making short-term commitments to deep-rooted problems and then moving on to other issues. As a potential solution, the report promotes the use of a “theory of sustainability” as a tool to ensure that sustainability considerations are explicitly addressed by both foundations and grantees. Specifically, using a theory of sustainability would call for foundations to:

- ♦ State whether there is an expectation that the effort will be continued after foundation funds end;
- ♦ Propose a generalized theory of sustainability for the initiatives;
- ♦ Require a localized sustainability plan from applicant sites;
- ♦ Aid potential grant applicants in tailoring the model to local circumstances; and
- ♦ Participate in bringing the sustainability plan to a successful conclusion (Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2002).

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation’s Theory of Change Workshops

David Hunter (2006), then Director of Evaluation at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (EMCF), argues that it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive theory of change in order to build organizational capacity and achieve program sustainability. In addition, he says that a comprehensive theory of change is made up of not just a single theory, but several—a program theory, an organizational theory, and a financial theory. Together these three “legs” of the theory of change will support an organization with a growth strategy, maintain quality during the growth period, and promote long-term sustainability. To help grantees apply this concept evaluation staff at EMCF began hosting a series of three-day workshops with key program staff. A major portion of these workshops is devoted to developing program indicators and outcomes to help grantees monitor and manage their operations and the performance of their programs.

This process includes identifying ways to improve program effectiveness and efficiency, such as by tapping into new revenue streams, which ultimately will lead to strong and sustainable programs. Throughout the article, Hunter highlights the importance of tracking performance measures as the key to program success. He notes that the development or enhancement of data management systems and the creation of user-friendly reports is a critical, but often overlooked aspect of performance tracking.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Covering Kids and Families Initiative

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)'s Covering Kids and Families Initiative (CKF), which was launched in 2000 to reduce the number of eligible but uninsured children and adults through enrollment in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The initiative stresses the importance of sustainability from inception and has produced several issue papers addressing the topic (Ellis, 2003; Woolridge et al., 2005; Stevens and Hoag, 2005). The CKF National Program Office convened a working group to define sustainability and has provided technical assistance to help grantees achieve sustainability (Stevens et al., 2005). Technical assistance has included the development of a fundraising toolkit, workshops at annual grantee meetings, and one-on-one assistance from a consultant.

Despite these efforts, an evaluation of CKF conducted approximately a year and a half after grant funding had ended found that only about a third of the original CKF intervention projects were thriving (Needleman, 2008). Some projects had been temporarily suspended due to external pressures, while others had adapted and changed to the point that they no longer closely adhere to their original goals and objectives. Among the programs that had been able to achieve important outcomes, such as more frequent contact between grantees and state partners or policy changes such as the formal adoption of best practices by managed care organizations, these positive effects were in danger of receding due to lack of reinforcement over time. However, the evaluation also concluded that most grantees were able to use the prestige of their RWJF grant to successfully leverage additional funds. Also, according to foundation officials, the experience with the CKF initiative yielded valuable information to help improve RWJF's future grant making and sustainability planning.

C. Chapter Summary

Table 3: Summary of the sustainability expectations for selected Federally and foundation funded programs.

Program Name	Purpose of of Program or Initiative	Expectations for Sustainability	Resources and Guidance Provided to Support Sustainability Efforts
Federally Funded Programs			
State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant Program (Maternal and Child Health Bureau, 2003, 2005, 2007)	Transform systems of care for young children across all sectors and types of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Grantees required to describe plans for sustainability in their application for funding; ◆ Application review criteria checked to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding strategies were outlined • Evidence was provided of communities' commitment to integrated system of early childhood services • A clear understanding of executing changes to existing services was demonstrated; ◆ Despite sustainability requirements in application guidance, grantees not required to submit formal sustainability plans; and ◆ Discussions about state-level institutionalization have focused on systems-building efforts, rather than sustainability. 	No resources specifically provided to grantees to support sustainability efforts

Program Name	Purpose of of Program or Initiative	Expectations for Sustainability	Resources and Guidance Provided to Support Sustainability Efforts
<p>Children’s Mental Health Initiative (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008)</p>	<p>Develop systems for providing integrated services to children with mental health problems and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop strategic sustainability plan during first year that specifies how: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of infrastructure, services, and supports will be maintained • System of care will be infused into broader system • System of care will work with State partners to ensure policy and funding mechanisms at State-level • System of care will link with partners in other child-serving systems; ◆ 2008 RFA outlines strategic framework for sustainability planning, but lacks details and specific guidance for planning an implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Sustainability Planning Toolkit</i> developed to help communities assess and refine efforts to achieve sustainability, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance • Self-assessments • Planning templates; ◆ <i>Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs</i>, a toolkit that addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning for sustainability • Organizational assessment • Marketing • Financing • Evaluation.

Program Name	Purpose of of Program or Initiative	Expectations for Sustainability	Resources and Guidance Provided to Support Sustainability Efforts
<p>Americorps (Corporation for National & Community Service, n.d.)</p>	<p>Promote community service by providing grants and supports to national and community organizations that administer service programs</p>	<p>Describes sustainability of grantees’ efforts as critical to meeting the needs of communities it serves</p>	<p><i>Toolkit for Program Sustainability, Capacity Building, and Volunteer Recruitment/Management</i>, which presents the following steps for developing a program sustainability plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a “Case for Support”; • Continually build and sustain relationships; • Develop a diverse program advisory committee; • Draft the plan, including actions for outreach and marketing; • Review, revise, and endorse your case statement and plan; • Monitor program progress regularly, and revise plan and strategies accordingly; • Explain how you will use the results of your program assessment to make better use of resources; • Address marketing of the program and its outcomes to build reputation; and • Explain how you plan to use partnerships to leverage resources.

Program Name	Purpose of of Program or Initiative	Expectations for Sustainability	Resources and Guidance Provided to Support Sustainability Efforts
Foundation Funded Programs			
<p>Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Funded Review of Sustainability Issues for Foundation Initiatives (Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2005).</p>	<p>Commission a report to explore sustainability efforts across foundation-funded programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Foundations typically provide much more guidance to grantees on how to start community-based programs than they to continue them after initial seed funding ends; ◆ Foundations have often not emphasized sustainability in funded programs and have been criticized for making only short-term commitments to solving problems and then moving on. 	<p>Report recommended promotion of a “theory of sustainability” as a tool to ensure foundations and grantees explicitly address sustainability. This theory calls for foundations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State whether there is an expectation that efforts will continue after initial funds end; • Propose a generalized theory of sustainability for programs; • Require a localized sustainability plan from applicant sites; • Aid potential grant applicants in tailoring the model to local communities; and • Participate in bringing sustainability plan to a successful conclusion.

Program Name	Purpose of of Program or Initiative	Expectations for Sustainability	Resources and Guidance Provided to Support Sustainability Efforts
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Theory of Change Workshops (Hunter, 2006)	Host a series of workshops to help a range of grantees adopt a comprehensive theory of change in order to build capacity and achieve sustainability	The theory of change is made up of several different theories (program, organizational, and financial) that support an organization with a growth strategy, maintain quality during growth theory, and promote long-term sustainability	Hosted series of three-day workshops with key program staff , which addressed the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of program indicators and outcomes to track performance; • Identification of ways to improve program effectiveness and efficiency; • Enhancement of data management systems; and • Creation of user-friendly reports.
Robert Wood Johnson's Covering Kids and Families Initiative (Ellis, 2003; Stevens et al., 2005; Woolridge et al., 2005; Needleman, 2008).	Reduce the number of eligible but uninsured children and adults through enrollment in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Produced several issue papers addressing the importance of sustainability across grantees; ◆ Convened a national working group to define sustainability for the program; ◆ Despite these efforts, an evaluation of the program found that only a third of grantees were thriving a year and a half after termination of grant funds; and ◆ One sustainability strategy was found to be particularly successful, using the prestige of a grantee's association with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to leverage additional funds. 	Provided grantees with technical assistance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a fundraising toolkit; • Workshops at grantee meetings; and • One-on-one assistance from consults.

Key Findings on Funders' Expectations for Program Sustainability

- ◆ In general, both public and private funders are concerned about sustainability and have an overarching expectation for programs to achieve sustainability after initial funding has ended.
- ◆ Specific expectations for what should be sustained and how to achieve sustainability are not consistent across programs. Federal agencies appear more likely than foundations to have specific, formal requirements for sustainability, such as developing and implementing strategic sustainability plans.
- ◆ The level of support provided to grantees/contractors is also inconsistent across programs. Some programs have developed detailed guidance, toolkits, self-assessments, and other tools to help grantees/contractors achieve sustainability, while others have not.
- ◆ In the current study, existing sustainability planning tools can serve as a useful foundation for the development of new Federal guidance on sustainability. However, it will be important to fill gaps in these materials and to address the need for comprehensive, uniform guidance.

Chapter IV: Measuring Program Sustainability

The results of the review of the literature on sustainability confirm many of the expected difficulties in its measurement. As described in Chapter III, the approaches to the conceptualization and understanding of sustainability vary greatly. Therefore, it is not surprising that operationalization and measurement are challenging. Very few assessments have been conducted following termination of initial funding that measure types of program activities that have been sustained and the factors associated with sustainability. In addition, many existing assessments have not used rigorous research designs and have not investigated the reliability and validity of included measures and indicators (Mancini and Marek, 2004; Beery et al., 2005; Padgett et al., 2005). Based on findings from a comprehensive review of empirical literature on sustainability measurement, Scheirer (2005) concluded that the literature does not yet support a single research paradigm or set of measures to conduct sustainability assessments.

While approaches differ, Scheirer (2005) noted that sustainability has often been described in the context of a program life cycle—initiation, development, implementation, sustainability, and dissemination—where stages often overlap and take place over a period of several years. Other researchers, such as Pluye (2004b) question the concept of stages and suggest that sustainability is more likely a continuous process that runs parallel to the implementation of program. In an attempt to quantify and measure sustainability, existing frameworks tend to measure degrees or levels of sustainability, rather than a simple dichotomy of sustained versus not sustained.

A. Key Issues in Measuring Sustainability

In addition to disagreement on whether sustainability is a continuous or a dichotomous variable, the literature on measuring sustainability also highlights different perspectives on how to answer two important questions: (1) what outcomes can be measured?; and (2) how can the determinants of these outcomes be measured? Researchers have proposed a number of outcomes and types of measures that may be useful in evaluating the extent to which programs have sustained beyond their initial funding.

Determining Appropriate Outcomes for Sustainability Measurement

All but one of the models described in this report consider the achievement of sustainability itself as the key outcome of interest (Goodman and Steckler, 1989; Shediack-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Johnson et al., 2004; Mancini and Marek, 2004). These models suggest that four major perspectives on sustainability—adherence to program principles and objectives, organizational integration, maintenance of health benefits, and community capacity building—likely represent a set of four potential sustainability outcomes of programs (Sheirer et al., 2008). From this standpoint, the extent and types of sustainability outcomes can be viewed as dependent variables in sustainability assessments. Some researchers have provided examples of indicators of each type of sustainability outcome that can be incorporated into data collection protocols:

1. Adherence to program principles and objectives

- ◆ Continuing specific programs and activities begun during the initial funding period;
- ◆ Maintaining the lead organization or staffed coalition charged with implementing the program; and
- ◆ Supporting different types of services than those provided during the initial funding period, but that still reflect the central ideas and objectives of the program.

2. Organizational integration

- ◆ Assimilating the programs goals and objectives into the organization's mission statement; and
- ◆ Incorporating policies and procedures initially developed for a program throughout the organization's entire system of programs and services

3. Maintenance of health benefits

- ◆ Changes in the circumstances of program clients (e.g., lower rates of homelessness);
- ◆ Changes in the behaviors of program clients (e.g., maintaining drug-free status); and
- ◆ Monitoring activities to ensure long-term control of community health problems.

4. Community capacity building

- ◆ Establishing coalitions and other formal partnerships;
- ◆ Maintaining informal connections to individuals and institutions within the community;
- ◆ Enacting longstanding policies to improve community health outcomes;

- ◆ Enhancing a community’s physical and social environment, which may eventually result in positive changes in behaviors and health outcomes; and
- ◆ Survival of skills and capabilities by community members, particularly for collaboration (Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2002; Beery et al., 2005; Stevens and Peikes, 2006).

The Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework (Beery et al., 2005) stands apart from the other models by presenting the elements of an initiative that are to be sustained as an intermediary outcome on the path leading to long-term health outcomes, which this model distinguishes as the main outcome of interest in sustainability assessments. This divergent view of health status as the ultimate outcome over sustainability may stem in part from the model’s focus on community health initiatives, which are under greater pressure than smaller scale programs to produce long-standing improvements in community health. This perspective will have important implications for the current study regarding the identification of the most appropriate outcomes to measure sustainability in comprehensive federally funded community health initiatives such as MHMW. It may be important to try to measure the impact that MHMW sites that have achieved sustainability have had on community-level health outcomes. However, the relatively short time period for the assessment will likely pose a significant challenge to establishing a link between high sustainability and improved community health outcomes.

Determining Appropriate Research Methods for Measuring Determinants of Sustainability Outcomes

As noted earlier, few rigorous studies on program sustainability have been conducted that have investigated issues related to measurement. Based on her review of the literature, Scheirer (2005) concluded that many existing sustainability assessments did not provide a definition of “sustained” programs, nor did they measure the proportion of the original activities that had been sustained or the level of intensity. The evaluation of program sustainability also encounters the same limitations experienced in other evaluation efforts—the reliance on data collected from phone interviews or surveys reflecting subjective opinions from respondents. Some studies did not include data from other types of sources, such as program data or on-site observations by evaluators, to try and confirm opinions and perceptions reported in qualitative primary data.

Sustainability assessments also face another obstacle especially relevant to measuring sustainability in community-based health initiatives—it is nearly impossible to identify a control or comparison project or site in order to compare the outcome of the intervention.

Limited access to resources to support post-funding sustainability evaluations can also serve as barriers, which, in turn, can limit the amount of data that can be collected and analyzed. Evaluators may also be hindered by the availability and quality of health data. In some cases, it is not possible to monitor long-term changes in program activities or health outcomes because the necessary data systems are not in place to support this (Beery, 2005 and Scheirer, 2005).

B. Examples of Sustainability Assessments

Despite the challenges described above, some studies provide critical insight into how operational definitions of and conceptual frameworks for sustainability can be used to develop research methods to measure the determinants of sustainability outcomes. The following section presents examples of key research questions, indicators, and data collection and analysis strategies that have been used in a sample of existing sustainability assessments.

Legacy Evaluation of the California Wellness Foundation’s Health Improvement Initiative (HII)

Nature of the Health Program

The California Wellness Foundation (CWF) launched HII in 1996 to:

- ◆ Identify successful models of collaboration;
- ◆ Promote greater use of population health measurement tools;
- ◆ Inform policy decisions;
- ◆ Improve resource allocation; and
- ◆ Foster the development of new integrated systems of action and service (Beery et al., 2005).

To accomplish these goals, CWF invested \$20 million to fund one planning year (1996-1997) and 4 years of implementation (1997-2001). HII grantees included nine community coalition sites charged with planning and implementing health improvements by building a formal health

partnership, providing direct preventive care, improving systems of care, and measuring population health.

Goals for the Evaluation

CWF commissioned an evaluation of HII's post-funding legacy to better understand the long-term impact of the initiative. Specifically, this evaluation was designed to:

- ◆ Provide a summary of major initiative outcomes;
- ◆ Identify and update lessons learned during the course of the project period;
- ◆ Document the frequency and nature of the partnership activities that were sustained; and
- ◆ Identify factors associated with post-initiative sustainability of HII activities.

Methods for Conducting the Evaluation

The Legacy of Community Health Initiatives Framework (Beery et al., 2005) previously presented in Figure 5 was used as a guide for data collection and indicator development. The evaluation team gathered primarily qualitative data from the nine case study communities and conducted cross-site analysis to identify factors associated with partnership success. For each case study, the evaluation team conducted key informant interviews (with current partnership staff, former staff members, community members); site visits to gain a more in-depth picture of the community context; and a review of program documents such as progress reports summarizing partnership accomplishments.

Information Collected for the HII Legacy Evaluation

- ◆ History of the initiative;
- ◆ Current structure, governance, and membership;
- ◆ Status of activities and systems changes;
- ◆ Factors associated with successful transition;
- ◆ Impact on community health;
- ◆ Capacities built across staff and community members;
- ◆ Status of relationships/collaboration and extent to which they were due to the initiative; and
- ◆ Lessons learned.

Key Findings from the Evaluation

The researchers found that a significant level of activities had been sustained in each of the nine communities. A year after funding ended, almost all of the accomplishments achieved during the

funding period (i.e. coalition-building, systems changes such as greater integration of services and adoption of new health promotion policies, provision of direct health services, and improvements in population health measurement) remained in place. Two-thirds of the programs had activities in place that were either comparable to or exceeded the level obtained during the funding period. They concluded that although no universal characteristics emerged to explain sustainability, there were a number of distinct factors that appeared to have impacted sustainability, including the extent to which:

- ◆ Partnerships implementing the initiative effectively prepared in advance;
- ◆ Partners' firmly established a commitment to the initiative's goals;
- ◆ Coalitions aggressively pursued grant writing or leveraging of other funding, and
- ◆ Partners or other organizations were willing to assimilate programs (Beery et al, 2005).

Assessment of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Turning Point Initiative

Nature of the Program

Turning Point is a national program designed to transform and strengthen the public health system through infrastructure improvements (Padgett et al., 2005). Twenty one states were funded to develop multi-sector partnerships in order to produce public health improvement plans and implement priority strategies. States received 2-year planning grants with the possibility of 4-year funding for implementation.

Goals for the Assessment

This assessment was designed to describe and analyze the strategies used by Turning Point state partnerships to continue their efforts beyond the period that grantees received initial foundation funds. A secondary goal of the study was to fill a gap in knowledge about measuring the results of grant-funded initiatives involving state and local government agencies.

Methods for Conducting the Assessment

A qualitative, descriptive study design was used to address the following research question: "What are the strategies used by Turning Point partnerships to sustain their innovations in changing public systems?" (Padgett et al., 2005, p. 110). Data were collected from the 21 Turning Point grantee states by:

- ◆ Reviewing existing site visit reports completed by National Program Office (NPO) staff and monthly descriptions of documented system changes reported by state partners through the program’s online documentation system;
- ◆ Conducting participant focus groups and panel discussions; and
- ◆ Conducting interviews with a sample of state coordinators and NPO staff.

Following data collection, preliminary coding and thematic analysis was used to identify key themes, recurring issues, and both common and uncommon strategies. An iterative process was then used to clarify the initial findings from thematic analysis with others knowledgeable about the initiative.

Key Findings of the Assessment

The researchers concluded that many of the strategies used by Turning Point partnerships to promote sustainability have been remarkably successful and identified five broad areas that contributed to sustainability of Turning Point state partnerships. The areas and specific types of strategies utilized under each include:

1. *Institutionalization* – converting activities previously supported by foundation dollars into continuing programs or offices with a state agency through:

- ◆ Establishing new or enhanced local and regional agencies;
- ◆ Creating State-level offices for local public health practice;
- ◆ Accrediting and/or developing agency standards;
- ◆ Multilevel agency coordination (state, local, county, regional);
- ◆ Workforce development (curriculum and training);
- ◆ Establishing new offices for addressing health disparities;
- ◆ Linking with other programs; and
- ◆ Incorporating Turning Point goals into agency mission.

2. *Developing external structures* – moving all or part of initiatives outside of government agencies by:

- ◆ Establishing new independent nonprofit entities, such as Public Health Institutes, to support systems change;
- ◆ Creating formal alliances with medical/hospital associations;

- ◆ Establishing statewide public health advisory groups; and
 - ◆ Transferring Turning Point projects to county-level or university systems.
- 3. *Leveraging other funds* – garnering additional funds for public health system improvement, such as:**
- ◆ Bioterrorism funding;
 - ◆ Tobacco settlement funding;
 - ◆ Additional grants from other private funders; and
 - ◆ Other state and Federal funding
- 4. *Fostering strategic relationships* – deliberately cultivating connections with significant, powerful allies by:**
- ◆ Finding internal champions;
 - ◆ Building inter-organizational connections;
 - ◆ Securing nontraditional partners from the community; and
 - ◆ Collaborative leadership
- 5. *Communication and visibility* – letting others know what Turning Point partnerships are doing and why they are doing it by:**
- ◆ Cultivating dialogue with community allies and partners;
 - ◆ “Telling the story of public health” in a manner that engages various audiences; and
 - ◆ Using the principles of social marketing to communicate messages (Padgett et al, 2005).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)’s Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Initiative Study

Nature of the Program

The USDA’s Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Services (CSREES) funded CYFAR to support 94 community-based projects from 1991 to 1998 (Mancini and Marek, 2004). This initiative provided a range of services that promote building resiliency and protective factors in at-risk youth, their families, and their communities.

Goals for the Sustainability Assessment

The main goal of the assessment was to use the CYFAR initiative (as well as other USDA funded programs) as a case study to test the construct validity of the 53-item Program Sustainability Index (PSI), which is based on the Community-Based Program Sustainability Model presented earlier in Figure 4. The PSI was developed to provide researchers with a valid and reliable assessment tool for planning and implementing programs.

Methods for Conducting the Evaluation

The following key research questions guided PSI construct validity testing:

- ♦ What is the current status of youth at risk projects originally funded by the USDA initiative 2.5 years after funding ended?
- ♦ What are the dominant ways that projects have continued?
- ♦ What are the past and present roles of the USDA's Cooperative Extension program in supporting community-based projects for at risk youth and families?

Elements of Sustainability Included in the PSI

- ♦ Leadership competence;
- ♦ Effective collaboration;
- ♦ Understanding the community;
- ♦ Demonstrating program results;
- ♦ Strategic funding;
- ♦ Staff involvement and integration; and
- ♦ Program responsiveness.

Key staff from CYFAR programs or New Communities and representatives from military and civilian family support programs were interviewed.

Key Findings of the Evaluation

The assessment concluded that the initial test of the full set of 54 items from the PSI did not effectively measure all seven sustainability elements. A much smaller group of items (29 in all) were shown to do a better job of measuring distinct aspects of the seven elements. However, only three of the elements were shown to be associated with sustainability. Table 4 identifies the key elements that were linked to sustainability and the items that were shown to be most effective at measuring those elements.

Table 4: Key elements of the Program Sustainability Index (PSI) associated with sustainability and their measures.

Sustainability Element	Items that Effectively Measure the Element
Leadership Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders clearly established the project’s mission and vision • Leaders planned within the first 2 years for sustaining the project • Leaders continue planning for sustainability • Leaders developed and followed a realistic project plan
Strategic Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current funding is sufficient for project operations • Funding is available on a long-term basis • There is adequate funding for hiring and retaining quality staff
Staff Involvement and Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are involved in program design • Staff are involved in project decision making • Staff are committed to the project mission, vision, and goals

The implication of these findings is that the PSI does provide program planners with some reliable and valid information on which to build their sustainability efforts. The authors also suggested that the PSI could serve as a useful monitoring tool to assess the strengths of and the gaps in the sustainability process.

Assessment of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)’s Local Initiative Funding Partners Program (LIFP)

Nature of the Program

First authorized in 1986, LIFP is designed to match RWJF grants with grants by local funders to support innovative community-based health promotion projects. Examples of projects include those funding mental health services for school children and improving case management for people with HIV/AIDS. Grants typically last from 36 to 48 months (Stevens and Peikes, 2006).

Goals for the Sustainability Evaluation

This study examined the ability of LIFP projects to survive beyond the period of RWJF funding. It explored which projects achieved sustainability, the factors influencing sustainability, and how lessons learned from transitioning from one set of funding to another can improve understanding about the capacity of health promotion programs to survive.

Methods for Conducting the Evaluation

The evaluation was guided by the following research questions:

- ◆ Which projects survived after the RWJF grant ended?
- ◆ Which factors affected this survival?
 - Did their goals, size, leadership, sponsorship, and/or strategies affect their survival?
 - Is survival a function of environmental pressures and opportunities?
- ◆ What did funders do to increase the likelihood of survival?
 - Does technical assistance on financial management or communications enhance the capacity of projects to sustain themselves?

Data collection was conducted in the following phases:

- ◆ Phase I: Surveys were administered to key staff and partners of 112 LIFP grantees.
- ◆ Phase II: Case studies were conducted with 10 LIFP project to gather in-depth information about the process of project sustainability.

The maximum follow-up period was 13 years and averaged just under 5 years.

Key Findings of the Evaluation

91 percent of projects had continued for at least 1 year after the grant funding period. To continue activities, projects pursued a range of strategies, including: secured new funding from Federal, state, local, and other foundation sources; developed new revenue-generating activities; and developed a base of donors. In additions, most projects utilized the technical assistance provided by local foundations on fundraising and financial management (Stevens and Peikes, 2006).

Information Collected for the LIFP Assessment

- ◆ Status and condition of project operation after funding ceased.
- ◆ Characteristics of projects and their host organization:
 - Type and age of projects and host organizations; and
 - Scale of operations.
- ◆ Factors related to project survival:
 - External support;
 - Intentional actions to promote sustainability;
 - Receipt of technical assistance; and
 - Funder involvement in the project during and after the grant.

C. Chapter Summary

Key Findings on Measuring Sustainability

- ◆ Relatively few studies have assessed sustainability after initial funds have ended. Among existing studies, many have not utilized rigorous study designs.
- ◆ A key question for sustainability assessments is to determine the most appropriate outcomes to measure. There is disagreement in the literature regarding whether the achievement of sustainability should be viewed either as the ultimate outcome of interest or as an intermediary outcome on the causal pathway leading to long-term health improvements.
- ◆ The current study will need to address this lack of consensus by identifying outcomes that are appropriate to accurate measurement of sustainability in community health initiatives such as MHMW.
- ◆ Another major question concerns how to best measure determinants of sustainability. The literature identifies a number of challenges to developing approach research methods.
- ◆ The current study will also have to identify and propose solutions for addressing these challenges, particularly the need to gather data across multiple sources as a way of confirming the existence of patterns that may emerge.
- ◆ The selected examples of existing sustainability studies can serve as useful models for the current study because they also involve large-scale community health initiatives and provide insight into how proposed research questions, indicators of sustainability, and data collection and analysis methods can be refined further.

Chapter V: Guidance on Planning and Implementing Strategies to Ensure Program Sustainability

Grantee/contractor staff view themselves as service providers, not as evaluators or fundraisers, and often are so focused on getting started with a new grant award that they do not plan for sustainability. (Akerlund, 2000).

Despite the limited breadth of studies to assess sustainability in health and human services programs and the tendency for these studies to examine program continuation within a relatively short timeframe after termination of initial funding, the literature review identified several findings regarding activities that increase the likelihood of a projects' long-term success. This chapter summarizes the findings on planning and implementing four of the most commonly reported strategies to ensure program sustainability: (1) self-assessment, (2) strategic development, (3) managing and leveraging resources, and (4) marketing strategies.

A. Self-Assessment

Self-assessments can provide important information about a host organization's internal capacity to sustain its program (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008). A self-assessment process involves systematically gathering information about how an organization is performing, its strengths and weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Over time, frequent self-assessments can prevent difficult challenges from emerging or identify them early on so they can be resolved quickly. Self-assessments are also an important first step in developing a strategic plan for sustainability (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008).

The recently released *Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs* toolkit (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008) identifies the following functional areas and related research questions to include in a self-assessment:

1. Mission Statements

- ♦ Is there mutual consensus for how the mission is carried out across the organization?
- ♦ Is the mission reflective of the current environment and political climate?

2. Board Governance

- ♦ How well do board leaders make decisions?
- ♦ Are leaders able to put aside personal interests to act in the best interests of the organization?
- ♦ Do leaders comply with appropriate laws in carrying out the mission?

3. Program Management

- ♦ Are program tasks completed on target, on time, and on budget?

4. Financial Management

- ♦ What is the status of the organization's financial condition and bookkeeping process?

5. Planning

- ♦ What are the organization's priorities for the future?
- ♦ Does the organization identify and actively go after new funding streams and opportunities for growth?

6. Human Resources Management

- ♦ Is the staff appropriate and well-qualified across all positions to carry out mission?
- ♦ Are practices and policies in place to ensure staff are treated fairly, performance expectations are clear, and staff are held accountable to those expectations?

Self-assessments also examine the external environments in which programs operate. This type of information can be collected through the following means:

- ♦ Needs assessments to identify service, research, professional development, or advocacy needs that should be fulfilled in order to achieve sustainability;
- ♦ Environmental scans of existing efforts within the community to support and improve similar types of programs; and
- ♦ Analysis of funding trends on the program's innovation focus to determine the likelihood that external funders will be interested in providing additional support to the program (Weiss et al., 2002).

B. Strategic Planning

The results of self-assessments can provide valuable information that can be used to develop a sustainability strategic plan. These plans can serve different purposes for different audiences. The host organization can use the plan to clarify priorities and as a roadmap for achieving and monitoring progress on reaching sustainability. Strategic plans can help policymakers and

potential investors make more informed decisions about support the program. Also, the plans help other key stakeholders in the community understand what the program is and why it is needed (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008). Several authors emphasize the importance of developing the strategic plan as early as possible, such as part of the grant application process or during the first year of funding (Akerlund, 2000; Pluye et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2004; Beery et al., 2005; Mancini and Marek, 2004; Stevens and Peikes, 2006).

Examples of key components of a strategic plan for sustainability include:

- ◆ Needs assessments to identify service, research, professional development, or advocacy needs that should be fulfilled in order to achieve sustainability;
- ◆ Environmental scans of existing efforts within the community to support and improve similar types of programs;
- ◆ Mission and vision statement—the driving purpose of the organization;
- ◆ Goals—the anticipated results;
- ◆ Objectives—measurable outcomes to accomplish goals;
- ◆ Strategies—action steps and timelines to reach objectives;
- ◆ Budget—revenue and expenditures;
- ◆ Operating plan—the goals and objectives to be met during the coming year; and
- ◆ Financial reports—for example, the financial statement from the previous year (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008).

The Center for Mental Health Services (2008) recently released a template that grantees can use to develop sustainability strategic plans. The template stresses the importance of regular monitoring of the progress in implementing the plan and on holding key actors accountable throughout implementation. The main elements of this template are:

- ◆ Sustainability objectives—where do we want to be? What do we want to sustain?
- ◆ Key indicators of success—how will we know when we have gotten there?
- ◆ Strategies or action steps—how do we get where we want to go?
- ◆ Responsibility—who will make it happen?
- ◆ Timeframe —when will we get there? (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008).

C. Managing and Leveraging Resources

Given the scarcity of resources often available for health and human services initiatives, funders expect organizations to manage these resources well, comply with all legal financial requirements, and adhere to sound accounting principles. Demonstrating good financial management skills is also a key prerequisite for obtaining additional funds from other sources (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008). The literature provides a number of best practices for effectively managing resources, such as:

- ◆ Keeping good records and making sure that financial data are kept up to date and use generally accepted accounting principles;
- ◆ Meeting reporting requirements of funders;
- ◆ Establishing and maintaining effective communication with funders, such as regarding assistance with budget preparation or when there is a chance that some budgeted funds cannot be spent;
- ◆ Ensuring that the budget is driven by the mission and objectives and supports operations and evaluation; and
- ◆ Ensuring that the annual budget is tied to outcomes (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008).

In addition, the achievement of financial sustainability also requires leveraging additional funds to support programs after the initial funding period ends. The creation of a fund development plan can help prescribe a course of action for systematically identifying and pursuing funding. The *Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs* toolkit (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008) highlights four major strategies that can be addressed in the fund development plan:

- ◆ **Diversifying funding sources**—use a combination of different funding options such as donations, grants, and contracts;
- ◆ **Developing sustainable relationships and partnerships**—build capacity to successfully attract, nurture, and sustain relationships with funders;
- ◆ **Pursuing business ventures (or social enterprises)** —engaging in entrepreneurial and earned-income strategies and activities, such as through the sale of goods and products; and
- ◆ **Tapping into tax credits as a funding option**—using tax credits to help reduce taxes owed to meet social needs.

D. Marketing Strategies

Organizations must have a visible profile and proactively try to engage new audiences as a means of attracting funders, serving more clients, and advancing the mission of the organization (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2008). The development of a marketing plan can help establish a strategic process for communicating messages in manner that resonates with various audiences and motivates them to take action (Akerlund, 2000; Weiss et al., 2002).

The *Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs* toolkit (Center for Mental Health Services, 2008) identifies the following type of essential strategies that marketing plans can address:

- ◆ Identify target audiences the organization wants to reach;
- ◆ Develop a communications strategy and timeline for marketing efforts;
- ◆ Create a visual identity through the creation of logos, marketing slogans, and a consistent style to all marketing materials;
- ◆ Use a variety of communications vehicles and tailor messages to different target audiences;
- ◆ Use media that is best suited to reach each target audience;
- ◆ Develop a strong, well-known identity over time;
- ◆ Build relationships with community leaders, policymakers, and potential funders;
- ◆ Educate stakeholders about the organization's mission and benefits to the community;
- ◆ Develop a Web site to keep stakeholders informed and to receive charitable donations;
- ◆ Write articles and press releases; and
- ◆ Use testimonials to advertise positive feedback on client and partner satisfaction.

E. Chapter Summary

Key Findings on Frequently Cited Guidance on Achieving Sustainability

- ◆ The literature offers important guidance, and in some cases toolkits, to help programs plan and implement strategies to achieve sustainability.
- ◆ Four major types of strategies were frequently highlighted: (1) self-assessment, (2) strategic development, (3) managing and leveraging resources, and (4) marketing strategies.
- ◆ Together, these strategies acknowledge the importance of assessing capacity to achieve sustainability, systematically plan and carry out sustainability action steps, use existing resources efficiently and tap into new funding streams, and promote the program as a way of attracting funders and stakeholders.
- ◆ Guidance on these strategies can act as a starting point for developing new guidance that can be included in Federal funding announcements in the current study.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

A. Summary of Major Findings from the Review

Defining and Conceptualizing Program Sustainability

The literature review suggests that sustainability is not an isolated characteristic of a program, but rather an integral part of the life cycle of initiatives. Much of the research also highlights that sustainability is considered to be a very complex, multifaceted process that has led to the development of a wide array of different terms and definitions to describe this process. A scheme developed by Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) provides a useful way of incorporating these diverse definitions into three major components of sustainability: (1) maintaining health benefits for individuals, (2) continuing activities within an organizational structure, and (3) building the capacity of communities to develop and deliver health programs. This scheme has frequently been used to develop more elaborate frameworks to identify the key concepts and steps involved in transitioning from an initial funding period to achieving sustainability over time. No one model has emerged as the definitive framework for illustrating the sustainability process.

Funders' Expectations for Program Sustainability

Both Federal agencies and foundations have made efforts to promote sustainability among their funded initiatives. Federal agencies appear to more consistently stress sustainability, although the level of guidance they give on how to achieve it varies. Recently, both public and private funders have given this issue more attention and provided grantees with information on how to develop a sustainable initiative. Additionally, there is general consensus that funded projects should be required to plan for sustainability, can benefit from the development of additional guidance on sustainability, and should look to funders to develop information that can help them become more proactive in their attempts to plan for long-term sustainability (Akerlund, 2000; Johnson et al., 2004).

Measuring Program Sustainability

While this review identified some studies that had assessed sustainability and described the factors associated with it, the results of the literature review demonstrate the need for improved methods and models for measuring and monitoring sustainability (Mancini and Marek, 2004).

Researchers have recommended additional and more rigorous research on sustainability, especially studies to track long-term health outcomes, and conduct follow-up activities with organizations long after funding has ended. There is also a potential benefit to organizations in the field to share experiences and ‘lessons learned’ with others that are facing similar sustainability challenges (Padgett et al., 2005).

Guidance on Planning and Implementing Strategies that Help Ensure Program Sustainability

The review uncovered four frequently cited strategies to help plan and implement strategies to achieve sustainability: (1) self-assessment, (2) strategic development, (3) managing and leveraging resources, and (4) marketing strategies. Much of the guidance and many of the tools addressing these strategies have been tailored to the specific needs of publicly-funded community health initiatives, which makes them very applicable to the current study.

B. Future Directions for the Current Study

The next phase of the current study presents an opportunity to use the findings of this review to inform future tasks of the assessment. This review identified several operational definitions and conceptual frameworks that may be useful in developing overall study design for the assessment. Shediak-Rizkallah and Bone’s (1998) scheme holds particular promise given its recognition of the multiple dimensions of sustainability that act at various levels—individual, organizational, and community. This comprehensive conceptualization of sustainability will likely prove more applicable to broad public health systems change initiatives like OWH’s MHMW as opposed to more program-focused conceptions of sustainability.

In addition, the review has uncovered several studies to assess sustainability issues in a range of public health programs and initiatives. Some of these studies utilize similar data collection and analytic strategies as proposed for the assessment of MHMW programs. The Altarum Research Team will be able to draw upon the specific types of measures, scales, and questions used to explore the level of sustainability attained across MHMW programs and the nature of factors associated with sustainability outcomes. Instruments with discrete quantitative scales, such as

those employed by the PSI, will be particularly helpful in developing a scheme to help categorize and compare the level of sustainability achieved across MHMW programs.

Finally, the literature has identified a number of researchers who are appropriate candidates for content experts or the informal Technical Advisory Group that will be formed for the evaluation.

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