

Coalition Ideas Corner: Sustainability—The Life of a Coalition (Part 1 of a 3-part series)

by: Shannon Weatherly, MA, CRC

Coalition sustainability requires creation of a strong organization that brings together a community to develop and carry out a comprehensive plan to achieve population-level change. Many coalitions do not plan for sustainability until a grant or other funding nears an end and this can derail their otherwise effective efforts.

From the start, coalition leaders must ask themselves if they are willing to be responsible for the group's longevity. It is essential that coalition leadership see sustaining the effort as a significant part of their role. The responsibility does not lie with them alone, but the leaders must drive sustainability.

Has the coalition leadership organized the coalition's structure to plan for sustainability? Is a Sustainability Committee at work? Is leadership focused on sustainability from Day One or because funding is nearing its end? Is the coalition and its leadership capable of adapting to changing needs of the community? Do you know what must be sustained? These are all valuable questions and must be answered for sustainability to occur.

There are six steps involved in sustainability planning:

1. Identify what must be sustained;
2. Identify what resources are required;
3. Create case statements;
4. Determine funding strategies;
5. Identify potential partners; and
6. Action plan to contact and present to potential partners.

When planning for sustainability, ask: "What must be sustained?" The answer should come out of assessing what the coalition is capable of doing and what the community needs it to do. Explore a variety of strategies to reduce the substance abuse issues identified in your assessment. No single strategy will achieve population-level change, so implement multiple strategies over time. Evaluate what is important, what is working and what the emerging trends indicate are vital to planning for sustainability.

When identifying resources for sustainability, remember that it is not just about money. Coalitions that spend much of their time and energy chase dollars will tire out. Not knowing your long-term resources affects credibility within the community and creates distrust with partners. With this in mind, sustainability must be an initial and constant process within a coalition. When assessing resources, if all you find is what you do not have then you stand with nothing. If a coalition is capable of investigating and securing the wide resources its community offers, it can then move beyond local to state and national resources. Then sustainability is definitely possible. Consider EVERYTHING—space, time, personnel, communications, technology, technical assistance, training, information, and money. Be realistic about sustainability and, most importantly, be positive about it. Do not let sustainability be an enemy. Instead, see it as the life of your coalition.

Because we realize the challenge of sustainability planning, this year's Mid-Year Training Institute will focus on this very subject. The content will provide information on resources (including fundraising and applying for Drug Free Communities Support Program grants), technology, developing non-profit status, substance abuse content (with emphasis on underserved populations) and advanced courses on Logic Models, Problem Analysis and Coalition Evaluation. To register go to <http://cadca.org/events/midyearinstitute/2007/schedule.asp>.

Coalitions Online will be back next week with steps three and four of the six steps for sustainability planning.

To access technical assistance on sustainability or other competencies important to your coalition go to the [Technical Assistance page](#) of the Coalition Institute's Web site.

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Sustainability: The Life of a Coalition, Part 2

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In last week's edition of *Coalitions Online*, we began a three-part series on sustainability planning. In this week's second part of the series, we will discuss steps three and four in the six steps of sustainability planning. To review, the six steps are:

1. Identify what must be sustained;
2. Identify what resources are required;
3. Create case statements;
4. Determine funding strategies;
5. Identify potential partners; and
6. Action plan to contact and present to potential partners.

After determining what must be sustained and required resources, coalitions should begin the process of creating case statements and determining what funding strategies they should explore. To obtain a copy of a case statement worksheet, go to www.coalitioninstitute.org/SPF_Elements/Sustainability/CreatingCaseStatements.doc. Case statements are used to explain why a particular focus or initiative is important to the community. It details its benefits and the consequences if it were removed from the community. Case statements should also include the resources needed to sustain what your coalition has determined must be sustained. Creating case statements is a useful process in getting coalition members to assist in determining why efforts should be sustained.

There are four areas within funding strategies that coalitions can explore. Those four areas are:

1. Share
2. Charge
3. Ask
4. Earn

When coalitions inquire about fundraising at the National Coalition Institute, we ask if they have a Sustainability Committee and if someone in the coalition is an experienced fundraiser, or at least not afraid to ask others for resources. These are two important elements within coalition structure essential to sustainability. Sharing includes asset sharing, in-kind donations and leveraging shared positions. Charging includes "fee for service", routing penalty fines back to prevention efforts (i.e., the fine for underage drinking violations comes back to prevention through local coffers), and getting your coalition as a line item in the budget of state and/or local government. Asking includes the writing of grants, fundraisers in the community, asking people to donate to your coalition through individual, planned and payroll giving (i.e., United Way). Coalitions should also consider creating a business plan. The business of a coalition is population-level change, so earning resources through entrepreneurial activities or ownership in a for-profit venture are options to consider.

At the National Coalition Institute, we find that coalitions simply dread the thought of having to develop a sustainability plan and once they begin the process of creating one they only consider how to save people's

jobs and how to get money. Solidify in your mind that your coalition is going to be around no matter what, because the work you are committing to and implementing is vital to your community. Make it impossible for your coalition to go away because you have dedicated people with passionate ideas that must come to fruition. From there, begin to consider what it will take to sustain the initiatives important to your community and see sustainability as a process to healthy longevity for your coalition. Sustainability is not the enemy. It is the life of your coalition.

This is Part II of a three-part series on sustainability. Next week's issue of Coalitions Online will discuss steps five and six of the six steps for sustainability planning. To access technical assistance for your coalition on sustainability or any other issue, contact Shannon Weatherly at 800.542.2322, ext. 240 or via e-mail at sweatherly@cadca.org.

Sustainability: The Life of a Coalition (Part 3 of a 3-part series)

by: Shannon Weatherly, MA, CRC

In previous editions of *Coalitions Online*, we began a three-part series on sustainability planning. This week's article finishes with steps five and six in the six steps of sustainability planning. To review, the six steps include:

1. Identify what must be sustained;
2. Identify what resources are required;
3. Create case statements;
4. Determine funding strategies;
5. Identify potential partners; and
6. Develop an action plan to contact and present to potential partners.

The final two steps of sustainability planning call for coalitions to identify potential partners and put them to work.

Begin by exploring which agencies or individual members can start to carrying out elements of the coalition's work. Agencies that have been active on a coalition for many years participate because their leadership believes the work of the coalition is valuable to the community, that it should be sustained and, in some way, that they should be a part of the sustaining efforts. Coalitions should actively seek out groups or individuals that can assist in sustaining the coalition's efforts.

When planning for sustainability, start local and then move into a more global point of view. Cultivate local support and then consider county/city, state and federal funding sources. Include private foundations as options, but understand that they may need more lead time to learn about your coalition's efforts. Plan for the additional time.

Coalitions often complete a "resource assessment" only to find they have developed a list of all the things they lack. Focus on what you do have and not only what you do not. Going back to the original intent of finding "resources" is a great place to start. Develop your list of positives—those things that are already near to you that can move you into sustaining what you have identified as necessary to your community.

Finally, create an action plan of whom to contact and who is going to do the contacting. It is valuable to have coalition members with experience in fundraising or fund development, but it is not absolutely necessary. You just have to be willing to ask. The worst that can happen is someone will say no, and chances are your coalition has faced many "no's" in its history. The action plan also should include development of talking points, the messaging that will be shared with potential partners and how the asking process will look for it to

be successful. Identify who will do what, by when and include what resources are required and who needs to know about the communication with potential partners. CADCA's National Coalition Institute recently released a toolkit to assist local coalitions with partnerships development. The toolkit, Strengthening Partnerships: Linking National Organizations and Local Coalitions, is available online at www.coalitioninstitute.org/StrengtheningPartnerships/StrengtheningPartnershipsHome.asp.

Consider, as we wrap up this series on sustainability planning, that sustainability is NOT hiring a grant writer or obtaining funding that is not consistent with your coalition's purpose. Coalitions that demonstrate sustainability beyond any funding source also include:

- A particular type of leadership
- Bench strength--partner organizations and private sector
- Involvement of community leaders
- Diversified funding base and in-kind support from inception
- Clarity and focus--produce tangible results
- Solve problems that the community cares about
- Bring "value added" to community effort

We hope that you have found this series on sustainability helpful. [Click here](#) for more resources.

This is Part III of a three-part series on sustainability published exclusively in Coalitions Online. To access technical assistance for your coalition on sustainability or any other issue, contact Shannon Weatherly at 800.542.2322, ext. 240 or via e-mail at sweatherly@cadca.org.