



PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES: REVIEW FOR THE NORTH WELLINGTON COALITION FOR YOUTH RESILIENCY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By: Alexandra Therien & Nicole Jeffrey, The Research Shop (2016)

This summary presents key highlights from a larger literature review written to inform how the North Wellington Coalition for Youth Resiliency (NWCYR; northern Wellington County, Ontario) might be sustained when its funding for the paid coordinator position ends in 2017.

Addressing Sustainability Issues

Several key elements and characteristics are recommended for program/initiative sustainability efforts (Gaughen et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2004; Lapelle et al. 2006; Office of Adolescent Health, 2014; Scheirer, 2005), including:

1. A clear articulation of the program/initiative's vision.
2. A specific and well-developed written sustainability plan.
3. A focus on results, whereby progress is measured and the work is adjusted.
4. Environmental assessment.
5. A leadership team that promotes program continuation.
6. A focus on strategic financing.
7. Adaptability to changing social, economic, and political trends in the community.
8. Broad-based community support.

As per the second key characteristic noted above, the Work Group for Community Health and Development (2015) recommends the following 6 steps in sustainability planning:

1. Decide whether the program/initiative needs to be sustained and for how long.
2. Clarify the goals and context for sustaining the program/initiative.
3. Create a business plan to identify the resources that will be needed.



COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP INSTITUTE

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1
519.824.4120 Ext. 53829 | cesi@uoguelph.ca
www.cesinstitute.ca



4. Identify specific tactics to be used to sustain the program/initiative.
5. Develop a marketing plan to secure resources for the program/initiative.
6. Develop a specific action plan for each identified sustainability tactic.

Engaging Youth in Sustainability Efforts

Programs/initiatives that support youth engagement are uniquely positioned to involve youth in sustainability efforts (Gaughen et al., 2009). This can involve a number of activities including (Gaughen et al., 2009):

- Helping articulate the program/initiative's vision and develop a sustainability plan.
- Participation in research and evaluation.
- Involvement in financial strategizing and attainment.
- Helping track and document changing conditions in the community and changing needs of youth.
- Garnering broad-based community support through communication technologies.

Strategies and Practices for Program Sustainability

The following are some strategies that can be used to help sustain a program/initiative:

1. **Make changes to the program/initiative:** Make changes to the program/initiative to minimize costs (Keller, 2010; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000).
2. **Share positions and resources:** Share tasks, staff positions, space, equipment, or other resources with organizations with similar goals (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
3. **Incorporate activities or services into another organization:** Find another organization that is willing to adopt the work of the program/initiative by either taking over the overall funding and management or by taking over some or all of the program/initiative's services and activities (Lapelle et al., 2006; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
4. **Implement program fees:** Develop a structure that requires clients who receive services to pay for them (Freeman, 2011; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Riggs, 2012).



5. **Become a line item in an existing budget:** Become an expense category in an existing organization's long-term budget (Lapelle et al., 2006; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
6. **Tap into available personnel resources:** Recruit people or positions that can carry out needed tasks without being hired (e.g., interns, staff from other organizations; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
7. **Obtain corporate and private resources:** Seek resources (e.g., financial support, goods, services) from corporate or private sources (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Canadian Active After School Partnership, n.d.; Dobbins-Harper & Bhat, 2007; Freeman, 2011; Hauser et al., 2008; Keller, 2010; Riggs, 2012; Slesnick et al., 2008).
8. **Obtain public funding:** Obtain funding from federal, provincial, or local agencies that allocate money for health, environmental, and human services, and community development (Canadian Active After School Partnership, n.d.; Freeman, 2011; Hauser et al., 2008; Riggs, 2012; Sherman et al., 2007; Silloway et al., 2009; Slesnick et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
9. **Solicit in-kind support:** Seek donations of non-monetary resources (goods, services, personnel) from other organizations, businesses, or individuals (Hauser et al., 2008; Silloway et al., 2009; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
10. **Develop and implement a fundraiser:** Offer products, services, or events to raise money for the program/initiative (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Keller, 2010; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Riggs, 2012; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
11. **Pursue third party funding:** Solicit third parties not involved with the program/initiative, and not directly benefiting from it, to compensate (with resources or payment) for the services the program/initiative provides (Silloway et al., 2009; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).
12. **Establish a donor or membership base:** Establish a membership program whereby members provide some form of contribution to the program/initiative in return for affiliation with that program/initiative, as well as certain privileges associated with it (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Riggs, 2012; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).



Choosing Strategies

It has been recommended that programs/initiatives incorporate a variety of strategies into their sustainability efforts (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000) and/or that they have multiple, alternative plans and strategies for sustainability (Shediak-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998). The Work Group for Community Health and Development (2015) recommends the following steps in choosing which strategies to incorporate:

- Brainstorm possible strategies considering which will not work, which would need modification, and whether there are other alternatives unique to the program.
- Gather input from key stakeholders (e.g., funders, staff, volunteers, clients).
- Choose the strategies that make the most sense for the program/initiative.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on our review of the benefits and challenges associated with each strategy, we believe that the following 7 strategies may be most feasible for the NWCYR:

- Strategy 1: Make changes to the program/initiative (including reducing certain efforts and redefining the scope).
- Strategy 2: Share positions and resources, for example, with other child, youth, and/or family programs and organizations.
- Strategy 3: Incorporate activities or services into another organization, such as a family health unit.
- Strategy 6: Tap into available personnel resources, such as staff shared with other similar organizations and youth/client volunteers.
- Strategy 7: Obtain corporate and private resources, and particularly grants from regional or national foundations.
- Strategy 8: Obtain public funding like grants and tax revenues.
- Strategy 10: Develop and implement a fundraiser, particularly with the help of youth/client volunteers.

We make these recommendations with caution, however, as strategies work differently in different contexts. Furthermore, a clear vision and commitment by project leadership to build healthy communities and sustain the program/initiative may be more important than any one strategy.