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PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

REVIEW FOR THE NORTH WELLINGTON COALITION FOR YOUTH RESILIENCY

APRIL 2016

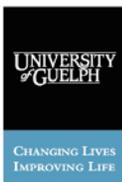
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INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared for the North Wellington Coalition for Youth Resiliency (NWCYR; northern Wellington County, Ontario), a coalition that aims to assist in the positive development of rural youth, improve youth resiliency, and increase youth engagement in community life. The NWCYR meets these goals by improving youth access to social resources and employment prospects, and by establishing savings in transportation. Its core belief is that youth can thrive under the right conditions.

In the past several decades, there has been a rapid rise in youth programs (Deich & Hayes, 2007); yet many report challenges such as acquiring funding and sustainability resources needed to provide programs and services over the long-term (Keller, 2010). The NWCYR faces similar concerns related to program sustainability. Thus, the goal of this report is to help inform how the NWCYR might be sustained when its funding for the paid coordinator position ends in 2017. To this end, we review the academic and grey literature regarding program sustainability practices and strategies, with a focus on youth-based initiatives where possible.

This report contains three sections. First, we provide a brief summary of sustainability planning and key elements or characteristics that are recommended for program/initiative sustainability efforts. Second, we review various practices and strategies for program sustainability, providing some brief real-world examples where possible. Third, we briefly review one study that reported on various case studies to provide additional information on which strategies may be most common and which have been used in a rural location. We also provide some recommendations on which strategies might be most suited or useful for the NWCYR, given its rural and small-scale context and limited funding.

ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Sustainability can be influenced by three factors: (a) program design and implementation (i.e., resources available to the program and the implementation activities determining the use of these resources); (b) factors within the organizational setting (i.e., organizational and managerial structures and processes); and (c) factors in the broader community environment (i.e., socioeconomic and political factors; Shediac-Rizkallah et al., 1998). Identifying and thinking through these factors may be a necessary first step in beginning to address the sustainability issues of a program/initiative.



In addition to identifying the factors that influence sustainability, 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, including strategies and activities that will lead to achieving it.
2. A specific and well-developed written plan that the program/initiative can use to manage and market its work and to plan for sustainability.
3. A focus on results, whereby "success" for the program/initiative is clearly defined, progress is measured, and the work is adjusted based on this progress.
4. Environmental assessment, including community readiness, local demographics (e.g., financial and political environments), existing youth programs, and internal organizational environment (i.e., leadership, staffing, and infrastructure).
5. A leadership team, whether internal and/or external, that exercises considerable initiative, ingenuity, and flexibility to promote program continuation. A leadership team can fulfill key functions including engaging stakeholders, finding funders, communicating the program/initiative's mission, and developing new strategies in the face of changing environments.
6. A focus on strategic financing, whereby the resources that the program/initiative will need are estimated and financing strategies and funding sources are developed to provide a stable base of resources over time.
7. Adaptability to changing social, economic, and political trends in the community. Programs that undergo changes and make modifications throughout implementation are more likely to be sustained than those that stick to their original course of action (Scheirer, 2005).
8. Broad-based community support, which may require outreach efforts and vehicles for community involvement in the program/initiative.

These elements and characteristics offer programs and initiatives a foundation to start building sustainability plans. It has been recommended that some or all should be incorporated into any sustainability effort (Office of Adolescent Health, 2014).



Developing a Sustainability Plan

As per the second key characteristic noted above, a clearly written sustainability plan is essential to any initiative with the goal of becoming a permanent part of a community and is particularly useful in cases where grant funding ends, political contexts change, or an important staff member leaves (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Having a set sustainability plan can: (a) help highlight the steps needed to achieve an initiative's goals and, therefore, help make sustainability efforts more efficient and effective (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015); and (b) keep staff members informed as to their roles and responsibilities in the months and years to come (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). In the following section we review the key features of developing a sustainability plan.

Programs/initiatives should actively plan for sustainability early on (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Shediak-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998); however, such planning is not a linear process or a one-time event. Instead, it should be a continuous process in which numerous activities may take place simultaneously (Office of Adolescent Health, 2014). Some suggest integrating sustainability plans into every stage of the program (e.g., Lyon et al., 2011). 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. Consider: (a) which efforts of the program/initiative need to be sustained in order to reach its goals, (b) whether any of the goals can be changed, (c) the current structure of the program/initiative, (d) current funding and resources, (e) potential obstacles to sustainability, and (f) the public's awareness of the program/initiative.
3. Create a business plan to identify the resources that will be needed to sustain the program/initiative. Consider: (a) products/services offered by the program/initiative, (b) the target audience and how they will be reached, and (c) an annual budget and the financial resources needed to sustain the program/initiative.
4. Identify specific tactics to be used to sustain the program/initiative and how they will be used (a number of tactics are reviewed in the section on strategies and practices for program stability, below).



5. Develop a marketing plan to secure resources for the program/initiative.
6. Develop a specific action plan for each identified sustainability tactic (from step 4), including: (a) activities needed and who will carry them out, (b) a timeline, (c) needed resources, and (d) who needs to be made aware of this plan.

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 from developing the program/initiative's vision to actively participating in strategies and practices for sustainability (Gaughen et al., 2009):

- Youth voices are critical to the initial articulation of a youth program/initiative's vision (including desired results). Gaughen et al. (2009) suggest partnering with youth media engagement initiatives in order to convey the vision to youth in the wider community. Similarly, youth should be involved in developing a sustainability plan.
- Youth can be involved in research and evaluation of a program/initiative's results. They may be particularly valuable in collecting and documenting anecdotal success stories from other program participants or community members. Program leaders must support youth by providing the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively carry out these duties.
- Youth can be involved in financial strategizing and attainment. For example, youth from the program/initiative or from local schools can volunteer or work as interns in various fundraising efforts, in-kind supports, and grant-making.
- Youth can offer important perspectives on—and can help in the tracking and documenting of—changing conditions in the community and changing needs of youth. Gaughen et al. (2009) further suggest that youth programs/initiatives “have a unique opportunity to package youth responses to policy proposals in persuasive formats” (p. 14).
- Youth may be particularly helpful in garnering broad-based community support through social networking websites and other communication technologies.

Engaging youth in sustainability efforts is useful to youth programs/initiatives because it adds their unique perspectives and demonstrates (to funders, for example) the



program/initiative's commitment to youth-engagement and how it "formulates youth-driven responses to youth-driven needs" (Gaughen et al., 2009, p. 6). It also benefits youth in a number of ways. For example, many of the activities noted above can (a) provide youth with valuable learning experiences, (b) help enhance personal development, and (c) provide an opportunity for youth to express themselves and have their voices heard by program leaders and/or policymakers (Gaughen et al., 2009). Being involved in volunteer work can also teach youth about the responsibility of all citizens to help improve their communities (Gaughen et al., 2009).

STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES FOR PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

In this section, we review a number of strategies that can be used to help sustain a program/initiative (as per step 4 above). The strategies we review overlap in some cases and are not mutually exclusive. For the purposes of this review, we divide them into two broad categories: (a) Organizational/Structural Strategies and (b) Strategies related to Funding and Resources. This is not an exhaustive list of strategies but rather a review of those that we believe may be relevant and useful for NWCYR. While we provide some recommendations later, we have included a range of strategies in this section so that NWCYR can choose which may be most helpful. We also include in a few cases some brief real-world examples of where certain strategies have been used successfully; however, we must note that not all strategies are necessarily empirically supported.

Identifying strategies for effective program continuation before funding ends is cited by many organizations and initiatives as a considerable challenge (Office of Adolescent Health, 2014). Although there are both financial and organizational strategies for program sustainability, financial sustainability is often stated as the most important and largest obstacle (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). This is reflected in the literature (and our review), as most strategies pertain to obtaining financial resources. Table 1 provides a brief overview of the strategies and each are described in more detail in the sections that follow.



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Table 1. Sustainability Strategies

Sustainability Strategies	Brief Description
Organizational/Structural Strategies	
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).
Strategies Related to Funding and Resources	
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).



PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

Sustainability Strategies	Brief Description
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).



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Organizational/Structural Strategies

1. Make Changes to the Program/Initiative

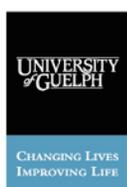
The first strategy involves making changes to the program/initiative to minimize costs (Keller, 2010; Lapelle et al., 2006; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000). Such changes could include discontinuing or reducing certain efforts that are not integral to the program/initiative's mission (Keller, 2010; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000). In redefining the scope of a program/initiative, it may be important to consider: (a) the most affordable options; (b) the options that best fit the needs of clients (and particularly at-risk clients); and (c) the options that best fit with the mission of the program/initiative (Lapelle et al., 2006).

Redefining the scope of services offered was identified by Lapelle et al. (2006) as one of two key strategies (in addition to creative use of resources) that determined whether some programs/initiatives were able to sustain services after funding was discontinued. Some programs have also altered their mission to include broader issues (e.g., broader child, youth, and family development issues and expanded target age ranges; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000). Expanding the mission can help secure funding from a wider array of sources (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000). An obvious drawback to this strategy, however, is that it may not be feasible or appropriate to make such changes to some programs/initiatives.

2. Share Positions and Resources

This strategy involves collaborating with other organizations (usually with similar goals) by sharing: (a) tasks (e.g., collaborating on grant writing); (b) staff positions (e.g., clerical support); (c) space; (d) equipment (e.g., copier, phone system, office supplies) and other resources (e.g., resource libraries, supplies, mailing lists, computer listservs, conference facilities, information, referral networks, and newsletters); (e) costs; and (f) grants and donations (Keller, 2010; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

Sharing positions and resources often allows programs/initiatives to fill needs and provide services it otherwise could not oversee on its own (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Merging the skills and functions of different programs through coordination, cooperation, or collaboration can lead to improved services and a stronger initiative, financial stability, and even positive



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changes in the community (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). In some cases, it can also reduce the financial burden of each program/initiative. As one example, the Providence After School Alliance—an organization that supports afterschool programs in Providence, Rhode Island—has helped programs to collaborate on seeking grants and to pool their resources and jointly provide services that no one program could provide on its own (e.g., full-day summer programs; Keller, 2010).

In choosing partners with whom to collaborate, it is important to consider whether there are enough similarities between the programs/initiatives in terms of social and political goals to successfully work side by side (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). It is also important to consider the program/initiative's needs, and whether and why sharing positions or resources would be beneficial (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). While the sharing of resources can be one valuable reason to collaborate, it is often not sufficient if it is the only thing both programs have in common (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Moreover, there can also be barriers to sharing positions and resources such as territory issues, lack of communication, and non-performance (i.e., when one partner fails to uphold their part of the agreement; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). If these barriers are not identified and subdued, collaboration can be very difficult and even harmful to participating parties (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Ultimately, each partner should benefit from the collaboration (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

3. Incorporate Activities or Services into another Organization

A similar strategy to that noted above is to find another organization with a similar mission that is willing to adopt the work of the program/initiative (Lapelle et al., 2006; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Although there are many different ways an organization can take over the functions of another, here we discuss two common variations. First, another organization can absorb the program/initiative as a subsidiary, thus taking over the overall funding and management (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). In this case, there will be a change of administration but, overall, the program/initiative will stay as is. This type of arrangement can take several forms (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):





- Some or all of the staff will become part of the new organization, but they will continue to do the same work.
- The director may leave or receive a new title and join the new organization's management team.
- In most instances, the Board will likely dissolve. However, some or all members may join the new organization's Board.

Second, another organization can take over some or all of the program/initiative's services and activities (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). In this case, the program/initiative will cease to exist in its current form, and its services and activities, or only some of them, will be taken over by the new organization. In this type of arrangement (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- The name and structure of the original program/initiative may disappear. Importantly, however, it is sometimes useful to keep the original program/initiative name because it is familiar to the community and can help with recruitment, funding, and community support.
- Some, all, or none of the staff may be hired by the new organization.
- There will be slight or complete change in the way tasks are performed.
- The activities and/or services will persist, but there will be almost no evidence of the original initiative.

In choosing an organization to absorb the program/initiative, it may be useful to choose one: (a) with similar philosophies, missions, and values; (b) that is familiar, trustworthy, and competent; (c) that has the resources necessary to maintain the work of the program/initiative; (d) that can profit from adopting the program/initiative; and (e) that is passionate about doing the work that the program/initiative has been doing and that is dedicated to improving and sustaining its (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). While this strategy may be useful and necessary for some programs/initiatives, it may be difficult for directors and employees to see the program change or cease to exist (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).



Strategies Related to Funding and Resources

4. Implement Program Fees

The first strategy related to funding is to develop a structure that requires clients who receive services to pay for them (Freeman, 2011; Keller, 2010; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Riggs, 2012). This can take two forms: (a) a flat fee that all clients are required to pay for certain services, or (b) a sliding-scale fee based on clients' ability to pay (Keller, 2010; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Riggs, 2012). Many programs/initiatives using this approach implement sliding-scale fees that produce some payments from families based on their financial ability to contribute (Keller, 2010). Various afterschool programs in the Connecticut After School Network, for example, have used program fees to help offset some of their costs and generate revenue (Keller, 2010). For instance, one rural afterschool program implemented a small sliding-scale transportation fee to help offset high transportation costs. This enabled the program to collect some additional revenue and also encouraged some parents to carpool, thus reducing the number of children the program had to transport.

In addition to creating funds, Keller (2010) suggests that this strategy can have non-monetary benefits, for example, engaging parents in covering service costs and increasing program or activity attendance rates. By charging a small fee for programs and services, the behaviour of parents and youth can change in terms of their commitment to the program. For instance, some have witnessed that parents who contribute even a small fee, become more committed to the program and guarantees that their children attend regularly (Keller, 2010).

There are several challenges and drawbacks to implementing program fees. For instance, implementing program fees can be challenging since many families struggle financially (Keller, 2010). Furthermore, some sources of funding may even prohibit implementing program fees for any activity that they support (Keller, 2010). They may also specify that program fees cannot hinder a family or youth's ability to participate in any program or activity due to financial constraints (Keller, 2010). Moreover, this strategy may not be appropriate for not-for-profit programs/initiatives (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000).



5. Become a Line Item in an Existing Budget

One approach to institutionalizing a program/initiative is to become a line item 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). In this way, the program/initiative becomes an expense category attached to a formal budget (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). There are different forms of line items, including (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- The program/initiative is written into a line item as a particular expense appropriated from a larger amount.
- The program/initiative is written into a budget as a particular line item in its own right.
- The program/initiative becomes a line item in the budget of a public agency, one that is taken out of the public budget procedure.
- The program/initiative becomes a generic line item created by policy makers at the state or local level, which would be defined in a way that would make the program/initiative more competitive when applying for funding.
- A specific component of the program/initiative becomes a line item in the budget of a larger organization.

This strategy has a number of benefits, namely, it can: (a) lead to financial gains and stable funding; (b) boost recognition of the initiative's mission; (c) increase the credibility and respect for the program/initiative; and (d) contribute to the local government's understanding of its responsibility to fund certain services in the community (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Moreover, becoming a line item can lead to creating a collaborative relationship that benefits both parties involved (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

Despite these benefits, this strategy also bears some possible drawbacks and risks. For example, at the county or community level, a line item could bring about jealousy and anger among colleagues (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). At the organizational level, a line item could put the mission of the program/initiative in jeopardy (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).



6. Tap into Available Personnel Resources

To address needs that cannot be met from within an initiative, one strategy can be to look outside the program/initiative to find available sources of personnel to carry out needed tasks or deliver services without being hired (Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). These sources can include: interns (paid or unpaid); staff from other organizations (e.g., shared, employed in a collaborative or joint program, loaned or negotiated contract); individuals who work directly for the program/initiative, but are paid by a different source; volunteers; participants in the program/initiative; and other sources like consultants or temporary workers (Freeman, 2011; Hauser et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Youth themselves, as participants in the program/initiative, may be useful sources of help. This could include, for example, soliciting help from youth volunteers in carrying out various activities for the program/initiative, including administrative tasks, community outreach, or running fundraisers and other sustainability efforts (e.g., Gaughen et al., 2009).

While this strategy is useful for saving costs, other benefits include: (a) developing new perspectives and ideas for more comprehensive projects and programs; (b) extending the reach of the program/initiative; (c) creating opportunities for collaboration; (d) developing community support; and (e) offering new information and skills to new personnel (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Youth engagement in particular can help acquire community recognition, attract funders, and increase people's participation in activities due to improved program quality and youth-adult connections (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health & Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, n.d.; Walker, 2006). Participation is critically important because, in order to sustain funding, programs/initiatives need to demonstrate strong and consistent participation to potential funders (Walker, 2006). In addition to the use of this strategy for sustainability purposes, engaging youth has shown to help community organizations and initiatives develop better services, opportunities, programs, and policies, and provide the support that young people need to develop in a healthy way (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health & Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, n.d.).

Nevertheless, there are certain challenges and drawbacks that need to be considered. A program/initiative may not want to partner with another if its structure and methods are considerably different (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).



These differences could make working together uncomfortable for personnel (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Problems could also arise from using services from an organization or program with a conflicting mission or vision (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Moreover, these resources may not all be free. For instance, part of a shared staff's salary may need to be paid, or an intern may need to be provided with a payment for their services (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

7. Obtain Corporate and Private Resources

Another strategy to help programs/initiatives maintain financial stability is to seek resources that would otherwise need to be paid for from corporate or private sources (Canadian Active After School Partnership, n.d.; Dobbins-Harper & Bhat, 2007; Freeman, 2011; Keller, 2010; Riggs, 2012; Slesnick et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Corporate giving can be defined as any type of support for a non-profit organization or cause, which can stem from large national or international corporations, local businesses of all sizes (e.g., grocery stores and retail shops), and foundations (e.g., independent foundations, corporate foundations, community foundations; Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Hauser et al., 2008; Slesnick et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Corporate giving does not only come in the form of financial support like grants, but also in-kind contributions of goods and/or services and technical expertise (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Hauser et al., 2008).

Some examples of corporate giving include (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- Cash-money;
- Employee volunteerism;
- Corporate sponsorship (a broader type of corporate giving that can cover many different costs and may consist of a large variety of resources);
- In-kind contributions (e.g., when a corporation gives the program/initiative needed products that they sell or produce themselves);
- Executives-on-loan (e.g., a member from a local accounting firm may offer to help the program/initiative apply for non-profit status);



- Matching programs (e.g., every dollar that is given to the program/initiative by an employee is matched by the corporation);
- Cause related marketing (e.g., when corporations give the program/initiative a certain percentage or sum of the profit from every product sold);

Corporate funding can help a program/initiative by leveraging additional funding and raising awareness of its work and mission (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008). In addition to the goal of making profit, corporations may also support programs/initiatives in order to: improve their corporate image and foster a strong brand identity; enhance the community where the corporation is situated in order to attract and retain a good work force; and support education and research that will result in a more qualified work force or new technology in the future (e.g., university grants, employment opportunities, access to internships; Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Additionally, businesses are able to receive tax benefits for any financial or in-kind contribution to non-profit organizations or initiatives in the community (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008). Therefore, to engage corporate and private sources, programs/initiatives should highlight the benefits that could result from collaboration (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008).

As one example of use of this strategy, a community-based mentoring program for Black male teens in the U.S. has obtained much of its financial revenue (and in-kind support) through private corporate sponsorships (Anuszkiewicz, et al., 2008). In order to garner such support and raise visibility of its programs, it ran various events to which key corporate officers were invited, such as an annual achievement event to recognize the achievements of the mentees and community leaders who have supported the initiative and galas to share initiative results and success stories.

The following criteria may be useful in deciding when to try to tap into corporate resources (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- The corporation has donated to similar programs/initiatives in the past or generally supports the same *type* of program/initiative (e.g., youth-based).
- A member of the program/initiative knows someone from the corporation who may be able to advocate for its cause from within.
- The area where the corporation is situated will receive direct benefits from the program/initiative.



In contrast, the program/initiative may want to avoid corporate resources when the following criteria apply (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- The program/initiative's work is very controversial.
- The program/initiative does not want to seem to endorse a specific company or product.
- Corporations in the community do not usually give donations or donate to the type of work that the program/initiative does.
- The work of the program/initiative will most likely not help the corporation make profit.
- The program/initiative's objectives for the resources are uncertain.

8. Obtain Public Funding

Another source of funding that can help sustain a program/initiative is public funding. Public funding is considered the largest and most accessible source of funding and is often allocated to health, environmental, human services, community development, and other public service programs (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Public funding comes from various levels including federal, provincial, or local agencies and each agency operates differently (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). For instance, federal funding stems from federal taxes; provincial funding stems from federal funds or provincial revenues; and local funding stems from federal or provincial sources, or local (e.g., county and municipality) taxes and fees (e.g., property taxes; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Federal funding is distributed through various mechanisms including contracts, formula or block grants, and discretionary or project grants (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Dobbins-Harper & Bhat, 2007). Acquiring tax revenues might be another option to gain greater financial stability. For example, Paine-Andrews et al. (2000) discuss how local tax dollars can be designated for initiatives related to substance abuse prevention. CharityVillage (2014) provides a list of Canadian corporate (as related to the strategy above) and government funding programs, including youth-specific funding programs, that may be useful to the NWCYR and other similar initiatives (see <https://charityvillage.com/directories/funders.aspx>).



Public funding can ease the process of attaining funding from other sources and is usually more reliable and long-term than private funding (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Other benefits include that public funding (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- Is often the largest sum of money available for programs/initiatives.
- Can lead to stable revenues and expanded resources, and can free up existing funds of other functions.
- Can lead to a diversified funding portfolio, which can give a program/initiative more credibility in the community.
- Is usually appropriated particularly for the work that the funded program/initiative does.
- Is subject to advocacy, and thus the program/initiative might be able to influence how much funding is available.

Despite these benefits, drawbacks of using public funding can include that (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- It demands a strict accounting and audit process.
- Its proposals can be very time-consuming and difficult to write.
- It might be accompanied with many attached conditions.
- It might not allow complete freedom and may contradict the mission and philosophy of the program/initiative.
- It might be administered by a bureaucracy that is rule-bound, unresponsive and/or difficult to deal with, and ignorant of the critical issues of the program/initiative.
- Its payments might take a long time to arrive either because the agencies are ineffective or because they are not receiving money from the government.
- It can run out or get cut when the economy is bad or when trends in funding change.



9. Solicit In-Kind Support

Another approach to meeting financial needs is to pursue in-kind support (Dobbins-Harper & Bhat, 2007; Keller, 2010; Paine-Andrews et al., 2008; Riggs, 2012; Silloway et al., 2009; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). In-kind support or contributions are donations of non-monetary resources from other organizations, businesses, or individuals or groups in the community (Silloway et al., 2009; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Three key forms of in-kind contributions involve: (a) goods (e.g., space, food, supplies, furniture, equipment), (b) services (e.g., transportation, printing, website hosting), and (c) people (e.g., volunteers; clerical help; legal, accounting, or other professional services; technical assistance; Hauser et al., 2008; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). For example, one youth mentoring program in the U.S., which was operating without any federal, state, or municipal grants, received much of its support from the community (U.S. Department of Education & Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2009). For instance, its mentor centres were almost completely furnished by donations from individuals; businesses and local restaurants and banks have offered and sponsored a number of fundraising events and auction items; and businesses (e.g., cinemas) have sponsored advertisements for mentors.

Soliciting in-kind support and contributions can be beneficial in a number of ways, including (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015):

- Obtaining goods that might not be accessible otherwise.
- Raising the number of overall resources available to the program/initiative.
- Gaining resources that require no obligations.
- Increasing local match. In order to be eligible for in-kind contributions, public and foundation funders often ask programs/initiatives to provide matching funds from the community or other sources, and in-kind contributions and cash donations can often be used to do this.
- Contributing to building support from the community. When organizations or people donate to the program/initiative, their connection to its work and mission grow stronger. This can also result in a greater desire to see the program/initiative succeed.



- Discovering other potential sources of support. Sometimes it is possible to find new sources of support through the existing supporter's network and connections.

The challenge for those who adopt this strategy will be to determine how to most effectively use people and the best combination to do so (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Furthermore, the act of soliciting contributions necessitates preparation and requires a certain amount of work (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

10. Develop and Implement a Fundraiser

Another strategy to address financial instability and generate revenue is to hold a fundraiser; that is, an event 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). When a program/initiative hosts a fundraiser it usually entails offering a service, product, or event, and requests that users/attendees donate money. There are several different community fundraising strategies and activities that a program/initiative can employ to meet their funding needs. Some examples include (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008):

- Capital campaigns to raise money for a particular project (e.g., purchasing or renovating a building).
- Shared revenue appeals, which involve partnering with another entity like a local business to conduct shared fundraising appeals that benefit both parties.
- Annual giving appeals, which are comprehensive efforts to raise funds during the year to support general operating expenses and programming.
- Unrelated business income that can be earned through a wide range of activities like renting and leasing office space, selling merchandise, and entering into business ventures.
- Planned giving, which consists of activities concentrated on acquiring gifts to sustain a program/initiative in the long term.
- Special events held to raise funds for a program/initiative, increase program visibility, and improve community support.



When developing a fundraising event, several steps should be taken, for instance: generating the interest of board members and their commitment to the fundraising goals; developing and taking care of relationships with current and potential donors; improving staff and administrative capacity; establishing a volunteer base; and coordinating fundraising tactics with organizational resources that are available (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008).

In addition to increasing financial support, fundraisers offer other benefits, including: (a) spreading public awareness about the program/initiative and its positive impacts; (b) developing stronger community commitment to the program/initiative's mission; (c) demonstrating to corporations and foundations that the program/initiative has the support of the community; (d) granting the program/initiative financial and programming independence; and (e) attracting new members, volunteers, community partners, and board members (Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Canadian Active After School Partnership, n.d.; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

Despite the wide range of benefits, there are also some barriers to hosting fundraisers. Depending on the type and size of the fundraiser hosted, it can impose considerable costs. Fundraisers can also be quite challenging, time consuming, and may require particular organizational capacity or expertise (e.g., training and supervising; Anuszkiewicz et al., 2008; Keller, 2010).

11. Pursue Third Party Funding

The next strategy is to solicit third parties not involved with the program/initiative—and not directly benefiting from it—to compensate you for the services that the program/initiative provides to individuals (Canadian Active After School Partnership, n.d.; Freeman, 2011; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Thus, the third party (e.g., a health organization, a state agency, an insurance company, a school system) provides compensation (resources or payment) rather than the staff members of the initiative or the individuals receiving the services (Silloway et al., 2009; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). The programs/initiatives that tend to use this strategy often provide medical, psychological, rehabilitative, and educational related services (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). The payment given for these services are usually determined or negotiated by the payer ahead of time and the rate is generally based on an approximation of a typical and fair rate for a specific professional working



the number of hours that the service usually takes (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

There are distinct advantages to pursuing third party funding, including: (a) expanding the program/initiative's income; (b) increasing the number of people the program/initiative can serve; (c) acquiring credibility and respect for the initiative; and (d) stabilizing funding. However, disadvantages should also be considered and can include: (a) problems dealing with a bureaucratic system; (b) growing responsibilities in administrative and record-keeping duties; and (c) losing track of the program/initiative's mission due to the influence of the payer (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

12. Establish a Donor or Membership Base

A membership program is when people provide a form of contribution (e.g., time, money, their names, their presence, specific actions) to a program/initiative in exchange for being affiliated with it for a certain period of time (often a year; Paine-Andrews et al., 2000; Riggs, 2012; Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Due to their contribution, members often receive certain privileges, products, or other benefits. Members might also have to meet certain requirements or have particular credentials in order to join a program/initiative.

The purpose of having a membership program is often to improve the political, operational, and/or financial stability of a program/initiative (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). There are several benefits to establishing and maintaining a membership program. For instance, members often feel a sense of belonging and commitment to the program/initiative, meaning they may provide financial contributions and support year after year (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Furthermore, members will be more likely to support the program/initiative and act on its behalf, whether that means offering money, advocating, or attending events (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Therefore, membership programs can lead to financial resources and the growth of community support.

However, membership programs might not be suitable for programs/initiatives that do not have privileges, products, or other benefits to offer in return. Furthermore, the tasks needed to build a membership base (e.g., establishing a membership list, contacting and maintaining memberships, and learning to manage and expand the list) can be time



consuming (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). A yearly membership drive requires a lot of coordination and labour, and sustaining a membership list demands checking it and updating it nearly every day (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). This strategy also necessitates considerable organization, vigilance, and attention to detail (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Therefore, it is very important to ensure that the program/initiative has the needed resources (e.g., organized and committed personnel) to start and maintain a membership base over time before choosing this strategy (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

Choosing Strategies

While each strategy that we have reviewed can be used on its own, it has been recommended that programs/initiatives incorporate a variety of strategies into their sustainability efforts (e.g., Paine-Andrews et al., 2000) and/or that they have multiple, alternative plans and strategies for sustainability (e.g., Shediac-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998). Having multiple sources of funding, for example, can help protect the program/initiative if one source ends (Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015). Indeed, one study identified multiple sources of funding as one distinguishing feature between programs that survived after initial funding ended and those that did not (Savaya, Spiro, & Elran-Barak, 2008). Choosing among the strategies, however, can be difficult. The Work Group for Community Health and Development (2015) recommends the following steps in choosing which strategies to incorporate:

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

They also recommend developing a financial sustainability committee to make these decisions as well as keeping the program/initiative's vision and objectives in mind throughout this process.



Case Studies

We now briefly discuss the findings of one study that examined relevant case studies of where some of the strategies noted above have been used. This section provides additional information on which strategies may be most common and which have been used in a rural location and to what avail.

Paine-Andrews et al. (2000) examined the sustainability efforts of six adolescent programs in Kansas (three for adolescent pregnancy prevention and three for adolescent substance abuse prevention). Each site reported using at least 7 sustainability strategies. All of the sites shared positions and resources (Strategy 2), incorporated activities into another organization (Strategy 3), tapped into available personnel resources (Strategy 6), wrote grants (Strategies 7 and 8), and solicited donations and in-kind support (Strategy 9). In contrast, none implemented program fees (Strategy 4) or established a membership base (Strategy 12). Four of the sites altered their mission to include broader issues and an expanded age range (e.g., from adolescent substance abuse prevention to health and development for children and youth), which allowed funding to be sought from broader sources.

At one of the sites—Franklin County (a rural location that might be most comparable to northern Wellington County despite its considerably larger population)—the adolescent pregnancy prevention program was absorbed by the county health department after termination of the program’s grant. The program’s scope was broadened to child health and families. The health department covered 75% of the director’s salary and no additional staff was supported. While some efforts were discontinued, the program was successful at maintaining others a year after the grant ended, despite operating at about one-third of its original budget. In addition to the strategies used, Paine-Andrews et al. (2000) suggest that, “the building and nurturing of the relationship between the health department and the Franklin County project likely contributed to the health department’s support of the project after grant termination” (p. 256). Thus, early and continued relationship building may be an important aspect of sustainability efforts.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth programs have been on the rise in recent years (Deich & Hayes, 2007) and are highly important for child and youth development. However, many such programs and initiatives report long-term sustainability challenges (Keller, 2010). We have provided a review of twelve sustainability strategies that have been used and recommended by



others working in the area of program sustainability. While they do not all come from work in the area of youth programming, we have included those that we believe may be most relevant or useful for the NWCYR to choose from.

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. The “human factor”, that is, the program leadership and its commitment to keep the program/initiative alive has been identified as key to program sustainability (Savaya et al., 2008). This includes appreciating the chief importance of funding and actively marketing the program/initiative and raising funds (Savaya et al., 2008).



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