Prevention Brief

Reaching a Bend in the Road—Sustaining Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) Programs

By Belinda Basca and Craig Bowman

Introduction

Using cutting-edge education and prevention strategies, the 43 California Governor's Program SDFSC grantees are responsible for reducing alcohol, tobacco and other drug use as well as the often accompanying violence among young people in the state.

Faced with recent funding cuts and difficult economic times, many prevention programs are struggling to identify and compete successfully for increasingly limited resources. Potential federal budget cuts make this particularly true for the Safe and Drug-Free School and Community grantees. In each of the 35 counties where funds have been awarded, there will still be a need for the program services supported by the grants. How will programs continue to do their critical work if this funding stream is no longer an option? How will they sustain the services for the youth in need?

To ensure the continuation of these critical youth services, it is essential to integrate proven sustainability strategies into the day-to-day of these programs now. It is critical to think about sustainability in a broader sense and with a longer-term vision, extending beyond just the next grant cycle. In order to remain viable, programs must develop competencies which include marketing the benefits of the program to the community, demonstrating that services result in improved outcomes for youth, and sharing and leveraging resources through partnership and collaboration, just to name a few.

Programs which are able to convey a clear sense of purpose when communicating with the public, program stakeholders, current and potential funders, and policy makers, will be the ones best prepared to weather tough times, surviving shifting priorities or

> *"Give a man a fish, you have fed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime."*
> - Author Unknown

reduced funding streams. These programs will last because they have taken the steps necessary to build a strong foundation.

Sustainability is a complex issue involving many aspects of an organization's overall management and operations: planning, finance, fundraising, human resources, programming, partnership building, etc. In this brief, we will focus on several of these components to help grantees in their sustainability efforts.

Why are Sustainability Efforts Essential to the California Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) Programs?

SDFSC programs are the backbone of youth drug prevention and intervention efforts in the United States. The Bush administration has proposed eliminating the state grants portion of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) Program for the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years. The administration asserted that the SDFSC state grants program "has not demonstrated effectiveness, and grant funds are spread too thinly to support quality interventions." Last year Congress restored $346.5 million to the program after the President recommended its elimination. However despite this, the program still sustained a 21% ($90.5 million) cut. The proposed Fiscal Year 2007 budget request again recommended zeroing out the entire $346.5 million for the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program. The FY 2007 budget request would add $52 million to the National Programs portion of SDFSC for competitive grants to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). This new program would make it a struggle for many programs to compete for these funds. The Administration's proposal would leave the vast majority of our nation's schools and students with no drug and violence prevention programming at all (Curley, 2006).

> *"Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Community dollars provide the backbone of the prevention effort in the United States...If schools do not receive SDFSC funding, no thought will be given to the negative impact alcohol and drugs could be causing, especially on the school learning environment. Without any voice encouraging kids to not use, those voices—and they are prevalent—that encourage use will have unchecked access to the minds of our children."*
>
> - Hope Taft, First Lady of Ohio
> Ohio Certified Prevention Specialist II

Given the instability of future funding, it is critical that SDFSC grantees begin to think about, plan, and implement strategies to sustain their programs long term. The 2004 Annual Report data submitted by each grantee to the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) showed that most grantees have not aggressively begun to identify sources of potential funding to sustain their program beyond the SDFSC funding period. Of the 43 grantees, only 22 of them (51%) have identified potential funding sources. And only half that number (12 grantees) have moved forward and applied for funding. This data also showed that only 4 grantees (9%) have secured funding to sustain their programs.

An online survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) and completed by 23 grantees reflected similar results. Only half of the grantees reported that they have identified potential funding sources, and only a small subset had moved forward to apply for additional funding. Of the 19 respondents to the survey, only 1 grantee noted that they have secured additional funding at this time.

Grantees were also asked to estimate the likelihood that their county will sustain programming in the same or comparable form beyond the SDFSC funding. Almost half (48%) of the grantees said they were likely to sustain programming. The results show that most grantees are optimistic that their programs will be sustained to some extent.

Does a Program Need to be Fully Sustained—Or are There Other Options?

What can grantees do to increase their likelihood of program sustainability in the same or comparable form? Although funding is critical, there are other vital components needed to sustain a prevention program over time. Sustainability involves much more than fiscal resources.
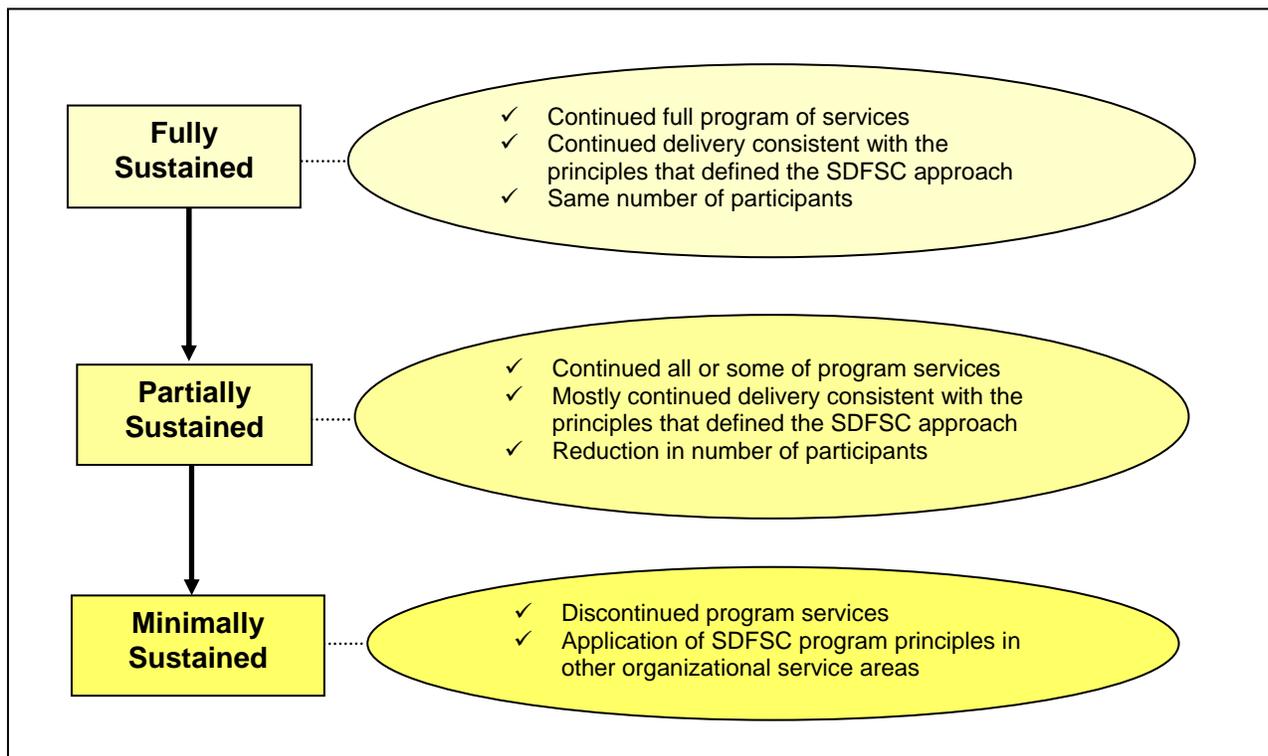
At the bottom line, sustainability means continuing the benefits (enhanced outcomes) that a demonstration or program innovation brings to program participants (Scheirer, 2005:324). For SDFSC this means sustaining those services and service delivery innovations that SDFSC outcome evaluations demonstrated to be key components of program success.

For many SDFSC grantees however, this may be a far-reaching goal. Most programs are sustained on a range of levels, from minimally to fully sustained. The graphic below details the continuum of sustainability that prevention staff may find their programs align with over time. A *fully sustained program* has a full program of services that is continued to be delivered with the consistency of the SDFSC principles that initially defined the program. In addition, program participation, intensity, and evaluation efforts remain at a consistent level.

A *partially sustained program* modifies its program components, approaches and services. These changes may be directly related to the quantity or intensity of services or participants, including reducing program intensity (hours of service per participant), reducing the number of participants, reducing program data collection and performance monitoring, reducing the number of locations for service provision, or reducing staff. For example, a grantee that provided program services to at-risk youth and families may modify the program structure to only target youth and discontinue services to families.

A *minimally sustained program* discontinues the program components, approaches, and services. The grantee agency and their school partners instead take the SDFSC principles learned during the grant period and apply them in other organizational service areas. For example, a grantee might take the evaluation methodology learned throughout SDFSC and integrate it into other services within its organization.

The Continuum of Sustainability

Fully Sustained	✓ Continued full program of services ✓ Continued delivery consistent with the principles that defined the SDFSC approach ✓ Same number of participants
Partially Sustained	✓ Continued all or some of program services ✓ Mostly continued delivery consistent with the principles that defined the SDFSC approach ✓ Reduction in number of participants
Minimally Sustained	✓ Discontinued program services ✓ Application of SDFSC program principles in other organizational service areas

How can grantees fully maintain their program services over time? It is not an easy task. Before we delve into the research, let us first step back and highlight why it is so challenging to sustain prevention programs.

Why Is It So Challenging to Sustain Prevention Programs Over Time?

Typically, some level of sustainability is achievable for prevention programs. The challenge is having the foresight to adequately plan and acquire funding to fully sustain a prevention program once the "seed" funds have ended. In general there are three broad areas that are most challenging when planning for sustainability: funding, environmental change, and organizational change. Let's take a brief look at each of these challenges in more detail.

> *"Nobody wants to fund what already exists ... How do we continue the good work we are doing without completely changing our program or adding entire projects onto what we do?"*
> - SDFSC Grantee

Funding

Funding is clearly a major barrier to achieving sustainability objectives. Funding issues are also the key reasons that service types, amounts, or principles are eroded in partially sustained programs. Instability during funding transitions and gaps can cause newly established collaborative arrangements to unravel. As stated by one respondent in a recent longitudinal study of CSAP-funded grantees about their sustainability efforts (Springer, 2006)*, "the program at the primary health setting was not sustained because we lost funding to support our clinician's position. Once we lost that position due to a glitch in the loss of funding, it was difficult to rebuild the trusting relationship after we found new funding."*

Funding issues are a primary concern for most SDFSC grantees. The SDFSC Grantee Statewide Planning 2006 online survey highlighted this in the following responses from grantees:

"Potential funding sources, potential SDFSC opportunities with new state funding, etc."

"How do we sustain programs that have been funded for the past 5-6 years and face disappearing if SDFSC goes away? How do you get the community and agencies to buy into the prevention model, especially if we are constantly told that you cannot measure prevention?"

"More ideas about where to seek continuation funding."

Environmental Change

A second barrier to sustainability is instability in the program environment. Changes in the federal, state or local policy environment, or in the community, are a potential challenge to achieving sustainability. For example, if a school gets a new principal who does not buy into the program, or there is a turnover in school staff, the sustainability of the program may be at risk if there is no "champion" at the school to support it.

Changes in funding priorities can also relate to the areas in which funds are targeted. Much of this depends on what the prevalent prevention areas are at the moment. For example in recent years, more funds in the prevention field have been diverted towards mentoring programs. There have also been recent shifts in funding by the Department of Education (DOE) towards programs that foster character development. This resurgence of character development can be traced back

to three recent trends—(1) the decline of the family; (2) troubling trends in youth behavior; and (3) an overall negative environment due to violence in media, poor role models, a decline in the work ethic, and the self-centeredness of the "me" generation (Morris and Wells, 2000).

When changes in funding priorities such as these occur, the degree of flexibility to which grantees can tweak their services can impact sustainability. Another example of this is with population perspective. A program may have funds to provide mentoring programs in schools, but new funding acquired targets youth in incarcerated environments. A program would need to be flexible to meet the needs of these special populations in order to sustain the program.

Organizational Change

Change in the lead organization can also present serious challenges because it can interrupt important internal supports. Organizational instability can be an important contributor to setbacks in achieving sustainability objectives. For example, a transition period due to staff turnover may result in loss of trained staff crucial to providing continuity in program principles. Or if the sub-contracting, direct-service organizations have a change in staff, this may disrupt the organization and flow of the program, which in turn may limit its success long term.

What Does Research Say About Sustaining Prevention Programs Over Time?

The U.S. Department of Education (2006) noted three important reasons why prevention initiatives should be sustained over time:

To maximize resources. Launching a program entails significant start-up costs in terms of human, fiscal, and technical resources. Unfortunately, these resources may be wasted if program activities are stopped before they can be fully evaluated. Prevention activities that are sustained over time are more likely to achieve a high level of implementation, providing evaluators with the opportunity to measure their true impact. In addition, sustaining a program over time enables providers to capitalize on their learnings and refine the program appropriately. Prevention programs adapt over time as grantees meet the continuing needs of the community—it is a long-term process.

To produce long-term effects. It can be counterproductive to end a program that has produced positive outcomes if the problem the program was meant to address still exists or recurs. While many school-based prevention programs are effective in the short term, studies often report diminishing effects in the long term. According to Gager and Elias (1997), *"Programs that are of short duration— whether due to financial constraints or districts' preferences or faddish, "revolving door" approaches to bringing programs into schools—are unlikely to have the breadth and depth of impact to [effect substantive change]."*

To establish a track record. If a prevention program is successful but not sustained, people will want to know why. Failing to sustain a program that is well-supported and effective may compromise a grantee's ability to garner support and/or funding for future initiatives. When working with a community effort, a one or two year program that is cut short due to an end in funding (often called "drive-by programming") may result in a bad reputation within the community. If a grantee gets new funding later and wishes to go back into the same community, the program may not be welcomed. This negative participant perspective can impact a grantee's recruitment and retention efforts, making it a challenge to successfully implement a program.

Scheirer (2005) reviewed 19 empirical studies of health-related programs and the extent of sustainability achieved. She identified five important factors that influenced the extent of sustainability:

- *A program can be modified over time*—the extent to which the program can be modified to adapt to the organization, in particular its mission and procedures.
- *A "champion" is present*—someone who is strategically placed within an organization to advocate effectively for the program.
- *A program "fits" with its organization's mission and procedures*—the overarching principles related to the organizational context and the people behind it, both within and outside the implementing agency, were found to heavily influence sustainability.
- *Benefits to staff members and/or clients are readily perceived*—a belief in the benefits provided by the program by both staff members and external stakeholders was cited more often than a positive influence from actual evaluation findings.
- *Stakeholders in other organizations provide support*—other organizations and community supporters played a key role in helping secure resources and mobilizing support for continuation.

From her findings, Scheirer (2005) provided the following recommendations for local program developers to increase the likelihood of program continuation:

- ✓ Choose programs and interventions that relate strongly to the agency's mission and culture, so that support from upper management will be likely, and tasks needed to implement the program will fit within the workloads of available staff members.
- ✓ If the program components have been developed elsewhere, engage in thoughtful modifications of components to fit the new organizational context, without destroying the core components contributing to the effectiveness of the original design.
- ✓ Identify and support a program champion to take a leadership role in both initial program development and planning for sustainability.
- ✓ When designing and publicizing the program, emphasize its benefits for various groups of stakeholders, including staff members and clients, as well as its fit with the major objectives of potential external funders.
- ✓ Consider the possible advantages of "routinizing" the program into the core operations of an existing agency rather than continuing it as a "stand-alone" program.

Given these research findings, how can grantees put the principles described above into practice? Let's now explore some strategies for sustaining SDFSC programs.

What are Some Strategies for Sustaining Your SDFSC Program?

What factors help increase the likelihood of sustainability? This issue is of central importance when planning for program sustainability, when it is helpful to know what processes and other influences need to be considered to extend the delivery of program activities. The key point to keep in mind is that a factor that may be crucially important to the longevity of one program may be an unimportant variable in another grantee's program implementation. There is no single set of guidelines on "how to do it." Program sustainability is a multi-faceted topic (Scheirer, 2005) with results contingent on the specific programs and contexts in which they are operating. The following strategies are mere suggestions as grantees begin to think about the longevity of their programs, they may not all fit with a grantee's program principles.

Find Alignment with Lead Agency's Priorities

As Scheirer (2005:339) found in her review of existing studies of sustainability, *"the 'fit' of a new program with the existing organizational mission and/or its standard operating procedures ... (was) a key influence on sustainability."* For SDFSC programs, this entails the degree to which County AOD offices continue to do school-based prevention services for at-risk youth. If the office has a long-term history with services such as these, the infrastructure is likely to be there to sustain program services. If this is not a priority, then sustainability may be an issue. The office's attitude may be "we tried it out and the money is no longer there, so cut it." For SDFSC programs, this may particularly be the case for programs with a parenting component, which were a struggle for programs to recruit and retain parents for program services.

SDFSC grantees need to assess the extent of buy-in by the County AOD office with respect to the services, age group, and science-based curriculum that their program offers. This assessment will provide insights into how well their program "fits" with the organization's mission and principles. If the fit is not there, grantees may need to reassess their program to ensure a good fit for continuation of program services.

> Compatibility with the organizational setting of the grantee organization was identified as the strongest contributor to program sustainability among ten key program activities and organizational characteristics in a recent longitudinal study of CSAP-funded grantees. Respondents noted that the fact that *"the program fits well within the mission and procedures of the lead agency"* was a very important contributor to sustaining services and principles.
> - Springer (2006)

Finding alignment may also provide guidance for program changes in the future. If program adaptations need to be made to ensure sustainability (for example in terms of acquiring funding), identifying funding opportunities that relate to the Lead Agency's priorities may foster key connections that nurture sustainability.

Collaborate With Community (and Other Existing Resources)

Collaboration with the community is a second strategy for sustainability. SDFSC program services may be sustained within an identifiable separate program that is a continuation of SDFSC, or they may be "institutionalized" or "routinized" through blending into ongoing activities in the larger grantee of host organizations.

Springer (2006) distinguished between two types of collaborative activity—"systems or community level" collaboration or coalitions and "service collaborations" with other organizations integral to providing services in the program itself. Systems level coalitions bring together a variety of community institutions and interests to work in an ongoing way on issues of common concern. With greater or less focus, the systems level coalitions that the SDFSC programs may focus upon can include problem solving, collaboration and advocacy for prevention services, particularly related to at-risk youth, youth tobacco use, youth alcohol and drug use, or parenting skills. The strength of systems level coalitions is not in supporting specific principles of operation or services, but in sustaining funding. Springer found that with CSAP-funded grantees, the fully sustained programs had an established history of involvement in systems level coalitions, and this involvement was a strong support for their success in sustaining funding and services.

Springer also found that collaboration at the service level was not necessarily a support for sustaining funding. If collaborators have stable funding for the services they are providing, or

can institutionalize their participation in SDFSC services into their larger organization, this is a support to sustaining the larger SDFSC program. However, this may often not be the case, and collaboration at the service level is often a barrier to sustainability. For example, collaborators may withdraw from sustained services because there was not continued funding support. New funding sources may not be flexible enough to allow funding of multiple collaborators.

Involve Key Stakeholders

Strong project leadership is a very important factor in supporting sustainability. Identify a dynamic leader who has been with the project for a long period of time and has a history of commitment to SDFSC-like principles. These champions can be some of a grantee's strongest proponents for the program. If possible, identify and promote more than one champion. A program may flounder if its dynamic leader leaves for another position.

For many grantees, it is unlikely that they report to a board of directors (Bowman, 2005). A board of directors can play an essential role in many key functional areas, particularly when it comes to sustainability. Often board members have connections within the community that can lead to funding initiatives. However establishing and maintaining an effective board of directors requires a tremendous amount of time, energy, hard work, and commitment. It is not an easy task, but the rewards are well worth the investment.

The key is to become valuable to multiple partners and stakeholders, whether it be a few dynamic leaders or an entire board of directors. If the program provides a valuable service to a multitude of community members, the more "champions" to the program a grantee will have. These proponents can be key influences during funding initiatives, marketing opportunities, and building further connections within the community.

Utilize Evaluation Findings in Marketing Program to Others

There can be immense value in using evaluation as a resource for supporting sustainability strategies aimed at attracting funding. Evaluation results and outcome data can be valuable in writing grant applications. Evaluation findings can also be immensely useful as grantees market their program to potential funders.

Develop an executive summary with key findings and a logic model that demonstrates the program's components relative to the program's outcomes. Tools such as these let funders know what the program is about. It is often said that "a picture is worth a thousand words". Short and concise executive summaries and logic models can be very helpful marketing tools.

In addition, programs need to be able to define the need for the services in their community. A needs assessment can demonstrate the gap and quantitative need for services in the community with valid data. A needs assessment with a clear problem statement— why is this service needed in the community—can be a strong selling tool to funders. Show that the program is not a duplication of services, but that the community is at risk because of the factors detailed.

> Four out of nineteen empirical studies of health-related programs and the extent of sustainability achieved documented evaluation as a contributor to sustainability. While a potentially important resource for sustainability, the degree to which evaluation actually contributes to achieving sustainability goals depends on opportunities in the environment that are beyond a programs' direct control (e.g., funding opportunities in which evaluation is a valued input).
> -Scheirer (2005)

Diversify Funding

There is value in diversifying funding—combining resources from personal, private, state, and federal sources. Because some funding sources may be unstable, expanding the ways in which funding is acquired is critical. A strong and flexible funding infrastructure in the organizational environment of the lead agency is a support to sustainability.

Often prevention programs focus on acquiring federal and state grants to implement their programs. However there are several other resources that prevention programs should consider. These include direct corporate support, foundation funding, and individual giving.

Direct Corporate Support—Corporate support can come in the form of direct dollars or in-kind donations of materials and supplies. Both are valuable and grantees will need to decide which will be most useful to ask for from corporate partners (Weinberger, 2005).

Some companies are interested in exploring how they might allocate a gift to a specific aspect of a program. This might include such things as contributing to after-school activities for youth in the program, arranging transportation to and from various program functions, funding summer programs, or sponsoring group activities for parent participants.

Even if they can't give direct dollars, corporations may still be able to help through in-kind donations. This can include space for activities, equipment (such as computers or furniture), or pro bono services (designing a brochure, or hosting a Web site, for example). Just about every business has something they can contribute if grantees help them figure out the logical connections. Brainstorm all the material things a program needs, both for day-to-day operations and for one-time events, and see how many of them can be acquired free as an in-kind donation.

Foundation Funding—Foundation funding can take the form of a family or private foundation, a corporate foundation, or a community foundation. There are nearly 65,000 foundations in the United States today. In most cases, foundations award grants in a geographic area near their home base. McGrath (2005) recommends the following steps if grantees pursue foundation funding:

- Through online and library research, identify foundations that make grants in the program's town or city and that fund projects in prevention or education.
- Read the foundation's instructions carefully and put together a clear, concise proposal that incorporates everything requested.
- Do a who-do-you-know check with board members, staff, and friends before approaching a foundation. If someone is found who knows someone, use that contact.
- Submit materials on time, resist the urge to pester the foundation, and respond promptly when asked for more information, meetings, or site visits.
- Establish a record-keeping system to receive and administer the grants awarded.

Individual Giving—Individual giving accounted for 83% of charitable contributions made in 2003 (Bowman, 2005). This is more than corporate support (6%) and foundation funding (11%) combined. According to the American Association of Fundraising Council (AAFRC), this amounts to over $201 billion dollars. Although most of this

> - Nearly nine out of 10 U.S. families make charitable contributions (89%).
> - In the United States, more people donate money than vote in national elections.

(36%) goes to religious institutions, prevention programs can also diversify their funding sources by targeting individuals as well. There is great potential in asking friends and family, colleagues and fellow congregants, neighbors and new acquaintances to invest in the prevention program. Focus on people already known: the people who care about you and your organization and the things you care about. It is likely that passions will connect, making the actual asking easier and more successful.

Be Flexible

Be flexible moving forward with the programs. It is likely that grantees will need to modify the program in some ways to meet changing needs. This is a crucial factor in pursuing sustainability. This is consistent with Scheirer's (2005:338) finding that "*programs that were modifiable at the local level were more likely to be sustained.*" Sometimes modification is necessary to achieve positive principles of program implementation such as cultural appropriateness. However, with SDFSC programs, the need for flexibility may be related to changes necessary to meet the requirements of altered funding circumstances or shifting organizational or resource constraints. These kinds of changes may be necessary to maintain services or program viability, but they do not necessarily promote sustainability of program effectiveness, quality or even principles of operation. This is an important tension with respect to strategies for achieving sustainability, and opens the possibility that program flexibility in order to attract funding or survive in altered program settings may detract from the ability to maintain innovations in service and principles of delivery. Put more generally, sustaining resources and program identity may reduce fidelity to the initial program concept and principles in certain circumstances.

SDFSC Interview with the Experts

We asked J. Fred Springer, Director of Research for EMT Associates, Inc., to share his thoughts about sustainability.

J. Fred Springer, Ph.D. – Director of Research, EMT Associates, Inc.

I was recently asked to lead a follow up study of eight programs that participated in SAMHSA's Starting Early Starting Smart (SESS) demonstration funded by SAMHSA and the Casey Family Program Foundation. SESS grantees delivered integrated behavioral health services (mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment) for young children (birth to 7 years) and their caregivers. Rigorous evaluation conducted by EMT Associates, Inc. and a consortium of university researchers demonstrated the following: (a) greater accessibility of SESS program services to families with multiple needs; (b) improved behavioral health and parenting support in the family environment; and (c) improved social-emotional and cognitive development in participating children. The funders and interested stakeholders were understandably interested in how well these successful and innovative programs achieved sustainability, and how they were able to do it.

As we talked to program leaders about their sustainability experience, we were surprised by some of their insights. We had expected that sustaining funding was the sin qua non of sustainability, but we heard that sustainability involves much more than funding. Indeed, chasing sustained funding sometimes led to failure to sustain the very innovations, services, and population focus that defined the success of the program. At the bottom line, sustainability means continuing the benefits (enhanced outcomes) that a demonstration or program innovation brings to program participants. For SESS this meant the degree to which grantees were able to sustain: (a) the beliefs and principles that defined the SESS service delivery innovation (e.g., family-centered, relationship-oriented, culturally-appropriate, integrated); (b) the fully integrated service package; and (c) the funding base. The important lessons we learned from the SESS experience with sustainability included the following:

Strong implementation and organizational support are important contributors to sustained services and principles. The experience of SESS grantees indicated that the quality of implementation of the demonstration, and the degree to which the innovation was embraced and supported by the lead agency, had a strong influence on the degree to which services, and in particular the principles of the innovation, were continued. Specific organizational supports contributed to sustaining services in the SESS programs.

- Lead organizations should encourage and support *strong and stable leadership of the program innovation* during the demonstration period. Strong leadership was a frequently recognized contributor to sustainability in the SESS study.
- Lead organizations should *clearly define and support the staff roles that are important to successfully implement the principles of the innovation.* When staff members understand innovations, believe in them and feel success, there is an increased chance that the principles will continue beyond the grant period. For example, some SESS programs included strong training that addressed issues identified by staff—clear identification of roles that are best filled by para-professional and professional staff, the development of guides and resources to empower staff in home visits and other direct service activities, the development of supportive work groups that integrate para-professional and professional roles on a continuing basis, and recruitment, training, and practice procedures that support cultural awareness and appropriateness.
- When service delivery involves multiple collaborating agencies, *the development of strong staff relations (e.g., cross-agency workgroups) and early discussion about sustaining collaboration post-grant* are important. Maintaining ties with service providers in other agencies was one of the most difficult challenges to SESS organizations. It is important to be flexible to allow continuation of core service relationships, and to change relations when experience during the grant period recommends modification.

Interview with J. Fred Springer, Ph.D Continued...

Continuation or replacement funds require strategic integration of multiple sources. SESS programs encountered an unstable and fragmented funding environment. Those SESS programs that were able to sustain funds melded support from multiple federal, state, and local public sources, and through private sources, including foundation grants, contracts, and donations. Funding instability and divergent requirements (e.g., participant eligibility, service requirements) made it a challenge to sustain the full range of SESS innovations.

- Lead organizations must *plan for sustained funds early, and develop search and advocacy strategies* including scanning opportunities, leveraging current relationships, and assessing ways to modify services to allow managed care or federal (e.g., Medicaid) reimbursement.
- To identify sources of funds, implementers should *carefully assess the degree to which new funds may be incompatible with the core service innovations to be sustained.* SESS programs sometimes had to move away from some services and service principles to meet requirements of new funders.
- Lead organizations should *support strong performance monitoring, including outcome effectiveness and cost analysis* to support sustainability. Materials should be clearly presented and suitable for program advocacy before multiple funding sources.
- If demonstrations of effective innovative services are to be fiscally sustained with stability and fidelity, *policy makers and funders must modify the funding environment to allow more flexible, continuous and performance-driven funding decisions.*

Summary
Improvement in the ability of providers to sustain positive innovation in services for early childhood behavioral health and development will require careful matching of demonstration programs in compatible organizational environments; emphasis on strong implementation and support of innovations during the demonstration period; clear documentation of program service strategies, effectiveness, and cost; and adaptive, flexible, and careful strategies to continue funding without losing positive service innovations. Just as important, it will require changes in the funding environment that will allow successful innovation in program service to more efficiently drive the allocation of funds to promote positive outcomes for young children.

Sonoma County

Sustainability Component:
Padres Unidos Staff have learned the value of creating satisfied clients through their parenting skills program. Staff work hard to help parents overcome barriers to participation, offering child care, snacks, and one-on-one support to clients. In addition, the facilitators make the classes engaging, offering practical parenting tips and sound guidance. Staff measure success by tracking retention rates and make every effort to help each client complete the 16-week program. Efforts are paying off, with more than 80% of parents completing the course. These happy clients are spreading the word to other parents. Staff who track referral sources attest that former client referrals are the number one source of new clients.

Padres Unidos is also continuing efforts to document its program impact now that funding for a paid evaluator has dissipated. The Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) has supplied Sonoma County with technical assistance in developing a sustainable evaluation program that is easy for program staff to manage. Continuing the evaluation component allows Padres Unidos to track success over a longer period of time, and to continue to share results with current and potential supporters.

Finally, program and county staff have worked together to create a financial sustainability plan. This plan includes outreach to the community, building relationships with potential local partners, and applying for additional grants. Staff put together a "road show" complete with a PowerPoint presentation, "press kit" and client testimonies and has scheduled several presentations at various community forums. Potential local partners such as the local police and probation department have been identified, and staff are working to cultivate relationships and future funding opportunities. A list of state and national foundations was also created, and staff are currently writing grant applications to secure a new wave of long-term funding.

Challenges:
✓ Continuing evaluation efforts after funding for a paid evaluator dissipates can be a challenge.
✓ Developing new funding sources to avoid taking money away from other important local programs proved difficult.

Lessons Learned:
✓ Funders want evidence of outcomes *AND* client testimony.
✓ Planning for sustainability needs to start early! Identifying potential funders and partners and then building new relationships takes time.

Recommendations:
1. Begin with an Attitude that Your Valuable Program is a Worthy Investment
✓ Do not put yourself in the subordinate position of being grateful for any crumb thrown in your direction—"Charity connotes a sense of the poor and needy."
✓ Feel the difference when you say to a potential funder, "I have come to you with an opportunity to assist in the solution of a community problem."

2. Demonstrate a Quality Product
✓ Create a "prospectus" or profile of your program that encourages investment, for example a one-page history of the organization, awards received, letters of praise from clients, summary of goals/ long range plans, brochures, and attractive information on the organization with charts and graphs showing growth, budget, list of staff, etc.
✓ Show off the data from your model program—science-based evidence of your future success.

3. Tie into the Passion and Values of Funders
✓ Target the issues—funders are investing in issues and expect results.
✓ Promote your values. Do not promote yourself as an agency and break down what you do by programs. For example, start with how you help build healthy families and then describe the outcomes of your programs—more resilient kids, confident parents, etc. vs. running down a list of your mini-program names.

4. Identify Problems and Needs
✓ Create a short problem description that clearly paints a picture and peaks the interest of the funder—create an emotional connection.
✓ Back up your problem description with evidence! Have local statistics and expert interpretation (census vs. school data). Try to provide collaborating evidence from police to schools to an economic profile.

5. Offer Solutions
✓ Show that your agency is in the unique position to lead this effort.
✓ Show you've carefully selected a strategy that's had proven results in other communities.

6. Accept Partners in Creating Solutions
✓ Tie your program name to the good reputation of local partners. If a school gives in kind space, then use their name as a partner.
✓ Provide opportunities for companies, such as employee participation or other involvement.

7. Develop a Slogan and Focus
✓ Brand yourself—put on all materials (brochures, fax covers, letterhead, signs, parent materials, etc.) and have on answering machine, etc.
✓ Continuously convey brand. A brand is the client's perception that a program is distinctive. Convey brand through all printed materials, staff interactions, and activities. Brands keep consumers coming back—funders and community will select you time and again.

8. Plan and Prepare
✓ Designate someone to lead marketing efforts—board member, staff, or you?
✓ Keep it simple—use a staff meeting to develop a slogan, determine how to integrate the slogan into work and all paper materials, identify target funders, and create a timeline to submit proposals/ make presentations—ALL staff and board should help carry this message.

9. Have Milestones
✓ Set goals for number of clients to serve AND target outcomes.
✓ Match to slogan, helping bring families together—track communication improvements, parent confidence, etc.
✓ Have everyone share in reaching these milestones—share goals with staff, clients, and funders.

10. Celebrate and Share Success
✓ Share when milestones are reached. Announce at staff meetings, send thank you notes to funders to share the exciting news, announce to parents in class, have an ice cream party with the kids, or send a press release.
✓ Make sure to track success and highlight this in reports and in new grant proposals.

We'd like to thank Holly White-Wolfe, Health Information Specialist for the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, for sharing these ten planning steps to sustain a prevention program.

Conclusion

Sustainability is a continuously evolving process in the life cycle of a project. Sustainability efforts should begin long before the end of initial funding. This brief highlighted the challenges grantees foresee as they begin to plan and implement their sustainability efforts, what the research says about sustaining prevention programs over time, as well as practical insights into sustainability around six topic areas:

- Finding alignment with Lead Agency's priorities
- Collaborating with community (and other existing resources)
- Involving key stakeholders
- Utilizing evaluation findings in marketing program to others
- Diversifying funding
- Being flexible

While doing so, this brief also shared the advice of an expert in the field as well as a grantee who has had success in program sustainability. The knowledge and insights shared by these resources provide grantees with a multitude of tips and strategies to keep in mind while working towards sustainability of prevention programs over time.

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Notes on *Prevention Brief*, Vol. 2 No. 1:

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As a former researcher at Harvard Project Zero on The Understandings of Consequence Project, Ms. Basca's work focused on complex causal science concepts and their application in the classroom. In particular, she studied how children reason about challenging topics in science at the elementary and middle school level. She developed science curriculum and conducted frequent classroom observations of teachers and interviews with children.

For this issue of *Prevention Brief*, J. Fred Springer was consulted for his expertise on sustainability. We thank him for his contribution.

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