



Many funders are beginning to expect grantees to address sustainability of improved outcomes in a more formal and strategic manner.

ANSWERING THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTION IN GRANT PROPOSALS

In most grant applications, there is usually a question about how your planned improvements will be sustained after grant funding had ended. Many applicants answer this question by describing plans to obtain future funding. This answer is sometimes satisfactory to funders because they are also thinking of sustainability in terms of funding. However, many funders are beginning to expect grantees to address sustainability of outcomes and in a more formal and strategic manner. One way grantees can do this is to describe their sustainability plans using some of the factors that are outlined in this toolkit. Grant reviewers will then see that they are thinking through sustainability with the same attention that they are giving to design, implementation, and evaluation.

Using these factors to answer the sustainability question can be easy. This is because many of the activities that you will have described in the project description section of your grant proposal already or can have a sustainability component. These activities can include changes to forms, training staff to work in new ways, and status reports that you will be providing to people involved in the project. The following example is based on an actual grant proposal and shows how these sustainability activities can be described.

You will notice that in the description on the next page the names for the sustainability factors appear slightly different from the way that we have listed them in the toolkit. For instance, *systems changes* has been used for *Organizational Infrastructure*. This is because the term *system changes* is more immediately recognizable in this context. *Staff involvement* was used because the term *Staff* by itself did not have much meaning. Finally, promoting the value of the changes has been used for *Perceived Value* because that is also a phrase that is more easily understood by grant reviewers.

The key is to use whatever terms work for you and your project. It is more important that the grant reviewers be able to understand the description of your sustainability activities quickly than it is to use the exact names of the factors



ANSWERING THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTION IN GRANT PROPOSALS

– continued

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO ANSWER THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTION FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

In order to maintain the improvements in the number of low-income pregnant women who receive smoking cessation services from our home care staff, we will be focusing on three specific sustainability factors: systems changes, staff involvement, and promoting the value of the changes that have been made.

We will be addressing systems changes by redesigning our intake and follow-up forms that are used by our home care staff during client visits. The new forms will require staff to document the details of the cessation activities that take place during home visits with pregnant women who smoke. These new forms will continue to be used after the end of the grant period.

Sustainability also will be strengthened by involving the home care staff in the development of the cessation activities that they will be using with their clients. This early and ongoing involvement of staff will ensure that they develop the skills, confidence, and interest in continuing these cessation activities.

We will also work to make sure that the value of adding cessation activities to the home care is clearly recognized by all those involved in the improvement project. This includes the home care staff, the clients, leadership within our organization, partners, and our funders. We will provide ongoing feedback to these individuals about the positive impact the cessation activities are having. We will provide this feedback in staff updates and brief email reports using both graphs and case reports.