

## RESOURCE 3

### Four Approaches to Sustainability

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Once you are clear about what you want to sustain, the next question deals with how you will go about reaching sustainability.

We have found that the broader the number of approaches taken to sustainability the greater the chances of not only actually achieving sustainability but achieving it in a richer and fuller manner. With multiple approaches we can begin to think of sustainability as being more than just maintaining our funding and staff. We can create a definition of sustainability that also includes policy changes, institutionalization of programs, the creation of long lasting policies and relationships. Using all these approaches will expand the impact and durability of the innovations that you create.

Let's look at these four approaches:

#### INSTITUTIONALIZATION

**Definition:** Using this approach, the program supports efforts – or even better plans efforts – so that each initiative developed could be incorporated into existing community institutions. For example, a violence prevention effort may begin a Second Step violence prevention curriculum with the intent of shifting its management to the schools health educators or the staff at the YMCAs over time.

**Program role –** When the major strategy for sustainability is institutionalization then the role of the effort is that of catalyst. That is, rather than creating programs with the intent of those programs being a part of the effort for ever, programs are created with the *intent* of spinning them off. This requires the program becoming skilled in the fine art of being a catalyst rather than a program developer. The program creates innovations and changes that can be adopted and institutionalized in other community organizations. Clearly involving the other institutions as early as possible increases your possibility for success.

Questions that a program might ask itself when considering an institutionalization approach include:

- Which of your programs do you hope to institutionalize?
- Which organizations in the community could adopt them?
- How will you engage these institutions?
- What are the long term implications for the collaborative's roles and presence in the community?

### POLICY CHANGE

Definition: One effective way to sustain your efforts and prevent violence and promote peace is through changes in rules, regulations and laws of the community.

By employing advocacy and social change mechanisms that permanently alter policies, practices and procedures within a community a violence prevention effort can continue to fulfill its mission over time. County wide ordinances that ban the sale of certain types of hand guns are an example of sustaining your efforts through policy change. Efforts can target large policies that emerge from government at various levels (national, state, county, municipal) or smaller policies such as school policies on how violent incidents are handled, or written memos of understanding between police departments and domestic violence shelters.

Program role: When policy change is the sustainability strategy, then the efforts role often involves being an advocate for policy change and training the community and its constituents to become more effective at creating policy change.

Questions that a program might ask when considering policy change include: What policies will get you to your goals?

- Large policies?(Legislation, funding policies, regulations, ordinances at the national, state, county or municipal level)
- Small policies (i.e. Protocols, Memos of Understanding, rules, and practices at the local or institutional level)
- What must be done to achieve these policy changes?
- How will you build the capacity of your community to advocate for policy change?

### COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP, CHANGING COMMUNITY NORMS

**Definition:** When violence prevention and peace promotion are seen as part of a community development and empowerment strategy then the goal is to mobilize community residents who will sustain the community efforts. In this approach the community can claim ownership to the violence prevention activities. For example a local citizen group can take responsibility for the annual Valentine's Day Vigil Against Domestic Violence. Another variation of this strategy is to change community norms. For example by providing a comprehensive training program to all junior high school students on partner violence, a program can modify the gender roles, attitudes and behaviors within that junior high school. Critical to this approach is engaging the community early in the process so that they will own and lead the efforts.

**Program Role –** When the program sees community ownership as their key sustainability strategy then the program' role becomes that of community capacity building. Projects that focus on the strengths and capacities of the community and that develop and enhance resident leaders are often central to these efforts.

Questions that a program might ask when considering community ownership include:

- What community norms do you wish to change?
- Who in the community can influence these norms?
- How do you engage them?
- What parts of the coalition's activities would you like to have owned by the community?
- How have you mobilized residents who are committed to sustaining effort to improve the community?
- How have you assessed the assets of the community?
- How can you engage and change the media?

### RESOURCES:

**Definition :** This is the definition of sustainability that is most commonly used. Here sustaining the effort means finding additional sources of revenue to support the ongoing activities of the effort. The rationale is simple – finding new funding sources will allow the successful program to continue its success. The advantage of this approach is that the program can continue to fund staff and programs it has created. The peril is that finding new dollars is often seen as the

only approach and doesn't allow for other strategies that might involve more community ownership of the issue and the long term solution.

Questions that a program might ask when seeking resources include:

- What resources are needed to sustain violence prevention in your community?
- What resources are needed to sustain your collaborative activities?
- Which can be continued with hard \$ resources?
- Where will you find them?
- Which of the following techniques might you use? (Grants, Seek government \$, Local, State, Federal, Foundations, Fees, Fees for service)
- Which can be sustained by in kind resources?
- Who can you turn to for in kind resources? (Space, Staff, Etc.)

**Source:** Tom Wolff & Associates, Amherst, MA. 01002, [www.tomwolff.com](http://www.tomwolff.com)