

Sustainability

Sustainability in regard to the SPF is defined as the likelihood of an identified approach continuing—especially after initial funding ends. Sustainability encompasses a coalition's ongoing ability to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality for the community. The emphasis is on attaining and sustaining positive outcomes. Sustainability is more than just finding monetary resources. It is also about creating support in the community that will carry your coalition's efforts over time.

**WHEN SHOULD WE
THINK ABOUT
SUSTAINABILITY?**

ON DAY ONE!

7 Habits for Sustainable Coalitions:

1. **Guard your capacity-** Your coalition's capacity—its membership, relationships, leadership, and organizational strength—is your most important asset. In facing new decisions, think about how they affect your coalition's ability to work collaboratively. Are there creative opportunities for growth? Does a particular strategy or decision limit your capacity?
2. **Track your progress-** An ongoing sense of your group's status relative to its goals helps you clearly outline what additional resources are needed and how quickly results can be achieved.
3. **Focus on the goal-** Far too often, coalitions pursue strategies unrelated to the main focus of their work, under the guise that they affect the same population or relate to the core issues. Beware of these distractions and refer to your assessment and strategic plan to help guide the work.
4. **Seek local support-** A "local first" approach means that your coalition will create more opportunities to engage partners, exercise a broader and more creative scope of funding options, and have local buy-in to demonstrate support of any external funding for which you do apply.
5. **Always add value-** Your coalition functions because key stakeholders in the community see value in having a collaborative effort. Look for ways that strategies can raise funds and develop partnerships that add value for diverse groups in the community.
6. **Tell a story-** Developing your coalition's story gives you a succinct way to communicate with potential funders and partners about your aims.
7. **Keep learning-** Smart coalitions recognize that there is always room to grow and more to learn. By encouraging continued education and research, the coalition will become more resilient and be able to more easily adapt to community changes.

The relationship between sustainability and cultural competence deserves special attention, because both need to be managed closely and tend not to receive their fair share of attention. Both should be addressed at every stage of your coalition's work—from assessment through evaluation. Approaches for ensuring sustainability, in light of concerns for cultural competence, include the following:

- **Ask first.** How are the different strategies under consideration aligned, or not, with the values of different groups in our community?
- **Let history be your guide.** Many groups can share stories of how their cultural perspectives have been ignored or misinterpreted. Take time to learn the history, so similar mistakes are not repeated.
- **Work with culture, not against it.** Culture represents a resource, not a burden. Building on your community's cultures can yield creative ideas for outreach and fundraising, and additional resources.