

Summary of Technical Assistance Responses From Currently Sustained CYFAR Projects in New Hampshire

Guiding a community-based program from initial federal funding to post-funding success is a significant goal of every CYFAR project. Since 1991, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) has assisted four communities in establishing and sustaining effective programs for at-risk children, youth and families.¹

In the process, UNHCE staff and community partners have drawn from sustainability research,² while gaining practical experience and expertise that may be useful to other community-based programs seeking to establish their own sustainable practices.

The following is a list of responses from a survey, “Technical Assistance Questions for CYFAR Sustainability” administered on-line in February 2006 with UNHCE staff and community partners associated with previously supported CYFAR projects.

¹ CYFAR programs established and sustained in New Hampshire include Youth Opportunities Unlimited Afterschool Program, Manchester; B.E.S.T. Afterschool Enrichment Program, Boscawen; It’s Your Future! Middle School Afterschool Program, Claremont; and Haverhill Cooperative Middle School Afterschool Program, Haverhill.

² Mancini, J.A., Marek, L.I., & Brock, D.P. (2003). Sustaining community-based programs for families: Program development implications from longitudinal research. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Cooperative Extension.

<http://www.cyfernet.org/eval/sustainlong.pdf>

KEY FACTORS FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY - *Describe what you feel are the keys for achieving sustainability of funded projects. You may think of these keys as components, steps, stages, and/or tasks.*

- clear mission statement and program vision
- project plan with timelines and policies
- deadlines
- evaluative tools to measure progress towards goals – use of a logic model
- build community support
- effective advisory board
- request funds from tax supported entities – schools or town budget
- make small \$ requests from multiple sources
- identify a key champion in town who will help to lead the public relations charge
- assure the community views the service as important enough to deserve financial support
- link your program to the mission of regular school day education
- document and disseminate program outcomes and especially successes well
- slowly add participant fee structure with sliding scale
- build relationships with schools and organizations
- maximize family involvement
- involve the most people possible from the community early on

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES?

What are the obstacles to watch for in planning for sustainability?

- don't "own" your program so much that you won't let it change as others take it over
- lack of community awareness of successes
- lack of civic engagement in town
- lack of clarity in town re program purpose
- lack of support from education staff
- communicating program availability
- be sure to seek people who will follow through
- lack of identifiable community resources
- lack of memorandums of understanding with collaborative groups that clearly outline the expectations for the project completion and evaluation

WHAT ARE THE BEST MECHANISMS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS?

If you identified any obstacles, what are the best methods to overcome these barriers?

- high quality communication processes
- training for advisory board and holding regular meetings
- getting families involved
- newsletters
- use of community groups in giving the program ongoing direction and visibility
- "hone your message" and tell it repeatedly
- look for other agencies in surrounding towns
- go to public meetings –town meetings and publicize your program – put up displays – use local papers

- be open to other people's ways of running or funding programs

WHO ARE THE CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS TO INCLUDE IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING?

From your experience, who are the critical stakeholders to include in planning process(es) for sustainability?

- media
- school administration
- youth
- parents
- business people
- advisory board members
- organizations with similar missions
- community coalitions
- school board
- community leaders/local politicians
- social service agency directors
- police department
- key town personnel who "buy into" the project
- people with access to money/donations
- people who "think outside the box" at creative financing ventures

HOW MUCH OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ON COOPERATIVE EXTENSION? *How much responsibility for sustainability planning should be assumed by UNH Cooperative Extension county staff?*

- advisory and facilitation of collaborative groups
- technical assistance on needed information for grant writing
- only to the point a local group feels it can be successful
- none – not their responsibility

- UNHCE needs to be sure momentum is sustained, keep focus and provide resources and technical assistance
- UNHCE needs to facilitate community goal setting and planning
- UNHCE need not be writing future grants unless that is in their area of expertise anyway – they should support other grant writing efforts by providing background data

HOW MUCH OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ON OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS /

STAKEHOLDERS? *How much responsibility for sustainability planning should be assumed by UNH Cooperative Extension?*

- most of the responsibility as it is their community and youth who will benefit if the program is sustained
- community partners must articulate their program visions and visit other programs to get ideas/models
- all of it
- primarily community partners with assistance from UNH
- 95% of it

WHICH METHODS FOR SUSTAINABILITY DO YOU RECOMMEND?

- new grant funding
- private donations
- fees to participants
- in-kind support by other agencies/partnering
- merging with other agencies
- local tax dollars

TYPES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO PROJECTS - *What types of technical assistance related to sustainability can you offer to current projects?*

- methods for partnering for in-kind support
- strategic planning using the logic model
- training for advisory groups
- clarifying project mission, vision and goals
- assistance setting up evaluation tools
- decision making points for continuing current auspices vs. finding a new agency post year 5

Developed by Scott Meyer, Ph.D., Professor of Social Work, Plymouth State University, Project Evaluator, New Hampshire CYFAR project. This information is intended to help community-based grant-funded programs make decisions about the range of strategies for building program sustainability. The University of New Hampshire does not recommend any particular strategy or practice as assurance of a program's capacity to continue.

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