

# Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool



Sustainability planning is a necessary and helpful task to undertake when beginning a new training and technical assistance resource center (in this assessment they are called intermediaries) and for its ongoing strength and viability. This tool provides a comprehensive planning process from a sustainability perspective to address the seven ingredients to Getting the Right Start. Use this tool to rank progress on each of these sustainability tasks according to the following five-point scale:

The youth development intermediary's leaders:

- 1 – Have not started this task
- 2 – Have started initial conceptual and planning work
- 3 – Have begun to implement this task
- 4 – Have made solid progress in implementing this task
- 5 – Have made sufficient progress in completing this task

## 1. Identify the Right Leadership

*The intermediary's leaders know what leadership they need to succeed.*

TASKS	1	2	3	4	5	COMMENTS
A. There is a clear vision for needed leadership skills and attributes based on an understanding of the unique skills of a successful intermediary leader and the culture, goals and expectations of the intermediary constituency.						
B. There is a process to determine who will be hired.						
C. Given the typically small staff size of intermediaries, a succession plan is in place for key staff.						
D. A staff evaluation process is in place that includes measurements of skills unique to intermediary leadership and sustainability.						

E. Stakeholders who can bring financial resources and resource connections to the organization are identified and recruited.						
F. There is agreement on the necessary governance or oversight structure based on legal organizational status (501©3, hosted, internal department).						

## 2. Clarify Vision, Mission, Roles, and Results

The intermediary's leaders know *what they want to sustain* and how it fits with the needs of the youth-serving community. They incorporate processes to measure performance and use that information to improve their work over time.

TASKS	1	2	3	4	5	COMMENTS
A. A practical 3-5 year vision and a mission for the intermediary is in place.						
B. The process for determining what is to be sustained over time, and by whom, ties to identified community and constituent needs.						
C. The services to be delivered (e.g. training, technical assistance, policy analysis) are viable and sustainable.						
D. The intermediary's fit within the youth-serving community is analyzed and clearly articulated.						
E. Changes are monitored in the external policy and youth program environment to see how the intermediary's work could fit with new directives and agendas.						
F. How the intermediary complements and is distinguishable from other intermediaries is analyzed and articulated.						

G. The intermediary uses performance measures to demonstrate that its work enhances the skills and competencies of youth workers that seek to improve the lives of young people.						
H. Performance measures are used to plan future work, budget resources, and find ways to improve service design and delivery, including changing or discontinuing activities as necessary.						
I. The leaders collect quantitative and qualitative data from the community /constituents to demonstrate the value of youth worker professional development.						

### 3. Form Strong Relationships

The intermediary's leaders seek to **build relationships in the community and involve others in the work** to gain constituency support to positively impact youth worker skills. The intermediary's leaders identify potential stakeholders, partners and champions—including senior decision makers, local community representatives, peer intermediaries, and individuals—whom they need to approach on an individual level and are following a plan to do so. Multiple strategies of relationship building are included.

TASKS	1	2	3	4	5	COMMENTS
A. There is a plan for tailored outreach to key youth development and community decision makers and champions (including appropriate messengers and messages).						
B. There is involvement from a diverse set of stakeholders (e.g. community-based organizations, government agencies, and private businesses) to improve service design and delivery and to build ownership and support.						
C. Multiple strategies of authentic constituent engagement are planned and utilized (e.g. advisory /governance, writing, speaking, setting guidelines, program design).						

D. Young people are utilized as a resource for service design, delivery, and evaluation.						
E. Funders are utilized as a resource for service design and delivery.						
F. A plan for communication with constituents is in place.						
G. The people who are instrumental in helping achieve sustainability for the work are recognized and rewarded.						

#### 4. Build Credibility through High Quality and Reliability

The intermediary's leaders *attend to the organization's reputation and credibility in the community. They pursue ways to communicate with stakeholders in an efficient fashion.*

TASKS	1	2	3	4	5	COMMENTS
A. There is a plan to establish a desired identity and reputation within the community encompassing stakeholder involvement, staff expertise, PR materials, and original work.						
B. A plan is in place that matches constituent needs with internal resources, including staff expertise, materials, information, and processes.						
C. The leaders actively participate in decision-making processes about changes in youth development policy and practice (e.g. standing advisory groups, grant reviews, state/federal opportunities for comment on expending funds).						

<p>D. It is determined how to improve the leader’s ability to participate in community decision-making and partnership opportunities (e.g., establishing credibility as technical experts or serving as community representatives), and leaders have followed through to increase the likelihood of being able to participate.</p>						
<p>E. Intermediary leaders and community partners have data and research to understand and communicate the value of enhancing the skills and competencies of youth workers.</p>						
<p>F. The value and quality of the intermediary’s work is packaged in user friendly formats and communicated regularly to the community, key stakeholders, media, potential funders, and others.</p>						
<p>G. Less labor intensive ways are used to contact and keep current and potential constituents and partners informed (e.g. sending newsletters or email, inviting them to intermediary events, building an effective website).</p>						
<p>H. The website and other technology are used for constituent and volunteer interactivity.</p>						
<p>I. The website is used for fund raising.</p>						

## 5. Create Meaningful Partnerships and Collaborations

The intermediary's leaders seek *new opportunities and support through partnerships and collaboration* and are able to respond to new opportunities as they arise.

TASKS	1	2	3	4	5	COMMENTS
A. The intermediary collaborates with other organizations that are pursuing improvements in youth development policy, practices and research to save money, increase efficiency and/or systematize services.						
B. Public-private partnerships are built to leverage private-sector funding.						
C. The leaders consider how its work can be framed or positioned to interest previous, current and new funders and to take advantage of new financing opportunities.						
D. A variety of strategies are used to encourage peer and partner involvement in service planning delivery and financing.						

## 6. Develop Effective Operations

The intermediary has *strong internal processes* that ensure a vibrant, durable, and continuously improving intermediary including identifying a variety of financing strategies.

TASKS	1	2	3	4	5	COMMENTS
A. The intermediary has a well-defined team of staff, advisory / governance group members, volunteers, and others that it needs to accomplish its mission.						
B. The leaders and others understand and accept their job descriptions, roles and responsibilities.						

C. The intermediary has strong fiscal processes that allow leaders to stay informed of its current financial status and to be alerted to emerging financing concerns.						
D. Staff and governance develop and review projections for short- and long-term revenues and expenses.						
E. Leaders develop financing strategies to meet those needs, and review and change financial strategies as needed.						
F. The intermediary has strong non-financial internal systems (e.g. management information, personnel) to maintain quality control over its work.						
G. The intermediary has strong internal communication processes to ensure that all staff and partners are kept informed of successes, key events and opportunities, and concerns.						
H. A long-term plan for what leadership and the constituency wants to accomplish is created.						
I. Challenges or obstacles to sustaining the intermediary, including potential conflicts with alternative initiatives or agendas, are identified.						
J. The amount of funding needed to sustain the work is known.						

<p>K. The types of financial resources necessary to sustain the work are identified and are based on a knowledge of funding streams commonly utilized by intermediaries, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sources of public funds (e.g., one-time, ongoing)</li> <li>• earned income: fee for service, contracted work</li> <li>• sources of private funds</li> <li>• institutionalization within an ongoing system or process.</li> </ul>						
<p>L. The leaders have identified and are pursuing ways to ensure the most efficient use of existing funds (e.g. outsourcing).</p>						
<p>M. Ways to increase the flexibility of existing funding streams (e.g. through pooling funds across agency and program lines or improving coordination of existing funding streams) are pursued.</p>						
<p>N. A process to periodically reassess and adjust the sustainability plan is in place.</p>						
<p>O. The leaders are communicating with other key individuals about the sustainability plan.</p>						

*The Sustainability Planning Workbook* is a comprehensive tool for developing a written sustainability plan. The Workbook is organized into five user-friendly modules and includes a CD of all the tools and worksheets. The Workbook is available from The Finance Project at [www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org).