

This article highlights the eight essential elements that a school or district should consider when planning a project, school-wide or district-wide initiative or applying for grant funds to implement or expand a project.

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8 Elements of Project Sustainability

Does your project have the “right stuff” for the long haul?

Anyone who has spent time as an educator has seen projects and programs come and go. Many projects with great outcomes have gone by the wayside when the initial source of grant funding ended.

Realistic and well thought out sustainability plans can result in a school or district being awarded a grant over another competing entity. Although grant funding is often necessary for a project vision to become a reality for a school or district, it is just as important to have a well developed sustainability plan to ensure that a project has the “right stuff” for the long haul.

Elements of Project Sustainability

The following eight elements of sustainability should be considered when developing a project or initiative. Carefully considering each of these elements may make the difference in your project’s long-term success.

1. VISION

Develop a vision statement that clearly defines what it is that you want to sustain. A vision is a clear picture of what the organization would ideally like the project to be. A project will never be greater than the vision that guides it.

2. RESULTS

Identify measurable outcomes and establish processes to track performance. The data collected should be used to improve the project and services over time.

3. STRATEGIC FINANCING & STEWARDSHIP

Identify financial strategies that integrate project and community needs and decisions. Project leaders must be good caretakers of funds and know how to balance current decisions with future effects. Resources should always be used efficiently.

4. ADAPTABILITY

Recognize that change is inevitable and it can be positive. Involve the community in planning and implementation.

5. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Develop broad-based community relationships that include and extend beyond financial contributions. Create a spirit of collaboration and responsibility among all current and future stakeholders.

6. CHAMPIONS

Identify and develop champions who can assist your organization in gaining the recognition and resources needed to achieve short- and long-term goals.

7. INTERNAL SYSTEMS Identify and hire strong leadership, staff, and volunteers. Develop communication systems, processes, and a risk management plan.

8. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Develop a written document that includes each of the elements of sustainability and establishes an action plan. Prioritize actions and activities.

Source: Keeping Your Program Growing After the Money Runs Out; T.H.E. Journal, December 1, 2005; Sheila Fernley