

SUSTAINABILITY

Kinds of sustainability

The literature suggests three ways of framing sustainability :

1. Sustaining a specific activity

A particular activity continues indefinitely as a separate identifiable entity. For instance, a state education body is funded to organise a series of meetings between business leaders and faculty leaders. Once the grant ends, the Business Roundtable directly funds these meetings.

2. Sustaining the intended outcomes of an intervention

A particular activity does not continue as a discrete intervention. However the result of that intervention is sustained by other activities. In most cases this is because capacity has been built within one or more stakeholders and the original activities blend in with the overall way they do business. So, for instance, if the intended outcome was a that businesses and higher educational institutions are better informed about their needs, the liaison meetings are added to a community college's established practice of annual consultations with stakeholders.

3. Sustaining the idea or principles underpinning the intervention

The activity may no longer exist and even the original intended outcome may not be sustained, but the ideas or underlying principles that informed both continues. So, for instance, the idea of closer relationships between business and higher education institutions may be sustained by business leaders becoming adjunct faculty and faculty seconded to certain business activities.

Sustainability, transferability, scalability and adaptability

Understanding how to sustain a particular activity enables that activity to be *transferred* from one setting to another. Understanding how to sustain outcomes enables the activity to be *scaled* from pilot project to the mainstream. Understanding how to sustain the fundamental idea or principle enables *adaptability* in more complex and diverse situations.

Factors promoting sustainability

Overleaf is a check list drawn from the sustainability literature on factors that promote sustainability of activities, outcomes and ideas.*

* Based on Rogers, P., & Williams, B. (2008). Sustainability of Services for Young Children and Their Families: What Works? Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth; Patton, M., Q. (2010). Developmental Evaluation. Guilford Press

THE INTERVENTION OR IDEA	
What features of a particular activity, intervention or idea indicate or promote sustainability?	
Satisfies identified needs	The activity, intervention or idea is designed to address specific, identified stakeholder needs . In complex situations, an activity or intervention is aware of and able to respond to changes in needs.
Funding sources	The activity, intervention or idea has diverse funding sources. This may reflect broader support from a range of organizations or increased opportunity to secure subsequent funding from other sources. The earlier in the life of an intervention that this is addressed enhances sustainability.
Forward planning	The intervention actively plans and strategizes for sustainability from the very beginning.
Transparency	Transparent communication between the people involved.
Adequate and appropriate resources	Adequate and appropriate resources support the activity, intervention or idea. These resources include people, finance, raw materials, knowledge and skills.
Scope for activities to be incorporated in existing organizations	Intervention or idea translates into activities that can be readily incorporated into the everyday operation of existing organizations and ongoing programs.
Project effectiveness	The activity or intervention is able to demonstrate effectiveness ie satisfactorily fulfils an acknowledged need with credible evidence.
Regular monitoring and evaluation	Regularly monitoring and evaluate enhance sustainability of activities, capacities and ideas, if the monitoring and evaluation helps focus efforts, identify and resolve problems early and/or provided better evidence of effectiveness.
Marketing	Projects that effectively communicate their achievements.
ORGANISATIONAL COMPONENTS	
What particular organizational features indicate or promote sustainability?	
Project/Organization alignment	Extent to which the activity, intervention or idea is aligned with and incorporated into host organization's policies and procedures and establishes resources that preserve lessons learned
Incorporation	The activity, intervention or idea is incorporated into existing or larger organizations or projects.
Project champions and effective leadership	The activity, intervention or idea has internal and external champions, support from senior leadership of the organization .
Organisational stability and routinization in "simple" contexts. Organisational flexibility and adaptability in "complicated" or "complex" contexts.	Relative simple interventions with relatively predictable links between activity and outcome operate best in a stable organisational setting that has with well-established routinized procedures and goals. More complicated or complex interventions with that are context sensitive and with less predictable links between activity and outcome operate best in organizations that are flexible, with opportunities for mutual adaptation. .
ENVIRONMENT and CONTEXT	
The ways in which the activity, intervention or idea relates to specific and relevant aspects of its environment or context	
Community support and ownership	Interventions that that engage in diverse activities to engage community support. Interventions that engender a sense of ownership from within stakeholder communities eg influence, control, responsibility to, accountability for.
Partnerships with other organizations	Intervention with diverse and effective partnerships.
Alignment with political & economic climate	Projects aligned with current policy and funding priorities. .
Environmental turbulence and unknowability	In turbulent and unknowable environments interventions need to be able to "steer" their way through ambiguous and changing external contexts, uncertainties about the environment and handle shifting power structures . They need to have flexibility to adjust to unanticipated negative events and impacts, and exploit unanticipated positive events and impacts .