

06

Module

EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

About This Module

This module focuses on maximizing the long-term impact of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) projects. The evaluation plan is designed to measure the project's effectiveness, and the sustainability plan increases the potential that its benefits will continue beyond the funding period.

This section provides best practices and suggestions for writing the evaluation and sustainability plan sections of your proposal, emphasizing strategic thinking and alignment with the funding opportunity. Tailor the content further based on specific details and objectives unique to your CBPR project and the requirements of the Request for Proposal (RFP) you are responding to.



Evaluation Plans

The evaluation section of your proposal can demonstrate how you will measure the project's results and identify ways to improve it as you implement it. Evaluation plans might address:

- What does the evaluation aim to answer?
- What measures will answer the question(s)?
- Who will be involved in the evaluation?
- How will the findings be disseminated and used to improve the project?
- What outcomes could be explored for future research? Could it be expanded to a larger scale after your study?
- What aspects of the project are sustainable and have long-term value for the community? (Many RFPs will specify that they are interested in funding projects that have value beyond the funding period.)



Evaluation Questions

The evaluation plan outlines the evaluation questions and data sources you will use, such as interviewing study participants or partners and reviewing records to gather relevant data. Most evaluation plans include some objectives related to the project implementation (process evaluation) along with others looking at the results of the study (outcome evaluation). Depending on the project and the data available, you may only have process evaluation questions. In either case, the evaluation plan will help you communicate the effectiveness of your research project.

Process evaluation questions look at the research project's planning and logistics to determine what went well and what could be improved in the future. For example:

- Did we involve the community in identifying a public health need?
- Did we examine existing data sources in identifying a public health need?
- Did we set up and stay within the timeline?
- Were staff and others trained and prepared to do the work?
- Did we have strong partnerships and support from the community?



Another area the evaluation could examine relates to the study outcomes or results:

- What limitations or assumptions were built into the research?
- Were the findings in line with what we expected?
- Do we know why we got the outcomes that we did?
- Did the project have any unanticipated effects in the community (positive or negative)?
- Did community members have different reactions to the outcomes than expected?
- What could we change to make the study outcomes more meaningful in the future?
- Did our leadership and board of directors find value in the project and support applying for similar funding in the future?

Logic Models

Although commonly used to evaluate program processes and outcomes, logic models can be used for planning the objectives, expected achievements and potential impact of a research project. They can be thought of as road maps detailing how project activities will lead to the desired outcomes. While not required by most RFPs, they can be useful in communicating connections between your activities and expected outcomes with your partners and community members. The format of a logic model is flexible, allowing for visual representations such as flow charts or maps that illustrate the connections between project inputs and expected outcomes.

A worksheet for thinking through the components of your project's logic model is found in [Appendix 6-1](#).



Stakeholder Involvement

CBPR emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders in all phases of research, including evaluation. Discuss the role of community members and other partners (e.g., academic partners, study participants, people with lived experience) in the evaluation design and implementation process. Think broadly about who your stakeholders are and consider:

- Beneficiaries – those who receive your support
- People with lived experiences
- Individuals, foundations or companies that provide financial contributions
- People who volunteer their time and skills
- Local governments
- Community partners
- Leadership
- Anyone who ensures you remain effective, responsive and committed to your mission

Disseminating And Using Results

Consider how you intend to use the evaluation results you generated from the questions developed in Module 4. Will you use the results to strengthen your community partnerships? Will you develop lessons learned from your research project to improve future research for your organization and other CBPR projects? The intended use of the findings informs the evaluation questions and approach you develop. For example, if one of the objectives is to evaluate the strength of your community partnerships by conducting interviews with your partners, this section of the proposal could describe how you will share the findings with your partners and discuss what is working well and what could be improved.

Outcomes For Future Research

Lastly, the evaluation section might include a discussion of how you would develop outcomes and funding for future research. For example, you could hold a meeting with your academic and community partners at the end of the project to discuss what questions remain for future research. You could host a town hall to generate ideas or this may be a discussion you will have internally with your research team or leadership.

What Is Sustainability?

Sustainability can be defined as ensuring that the benefits and outcomes achieved continue to impact the community after the project period. It involves strategic planning to maintain project achievements and foster ongoing community engagement.

Sustainability in CBPR goes beyond continued funding. Depending on the project goals, it can include increased community capacity to conduct research, the integration of project outcomes into local systems and the continuation of positive health impacts. It involves creating pathways for communities and organizations to maintain and build upon the progress achieved through the research partnership.



Why Plan For Sustainability When Writing The Proposal?

A well-designed sustainability plan not only extends the longevity of CBPR projects but also strengthens community resilience and empowerment. Every day, in every role within your nonprofit, you embrace sustainability as a guiding principle. It's not just a goal; it's the heartbeat of your mission and accountability to the community. By nurturing this commitment in this research project, you ensure that this impact is not just for today, but for the future. Remember, the dedication you show in your daily work is already creating sustainability within your Community-Based Organization (CBO). Some specific benefits of sustainability planning include:

- **Maximizing Impact:** A well-structured sustainability plan increases the value and effectiveness of the project by continuing to benefit the community over time or expanding into other populations or geographic areas.
- **Future Planning:** Some obstacles to sustainability will take time to address. By planning early, you will have the opportunity to put solutions in place by the time they are needed. Determine what aspects of the project are essential if funding is reduced and you are not able to continue activities at the same level you were during the funding period.



Developing A Sustainability Plan:

Identify which aspects of the project have been most beneficial and which are most critical to sustain. Assess the feasibility of continuing each part of the project. Can ongoing funding be identified? Is it resource-intensive? Additionally, consider whether the activity aligns with community priorities, organizational mission or scientific objectives. See [Appendix 6-2](#) for a Sustainability Planning Worksheet. Other considerations:

- **Scalability:** Determine what can be maintained at current levels and what can be expanded. Decide if the project can be developed into a model that can be implemented in multiple communities or can be scaled up to reach a larger population.
- **Impact on community capacity:** Evaluate whether community capacity for CBPR is expected to grow and how that growth can be sustained. Assess the potential for continuing community partnerships established through the CBPR process.

Engage Stakeholders:

- Involve community partners and stakeholders in the sustainability planning process from the beginning. Their insights and perspectives are invaluable in determining what strategies are a priority for the community.
- Discuss opportunities to develop the capacity of community members and organizations to independently continue or adapt the project activities. Address what training or skills development might be needed.

Assess Resources Needed For Sustainability:

- **Organizational/human resources:**
 - › Define the ongoing role of your organization in sustaining project activities.
 - › Assess leadership support available to maintain partnerships and other activities beyond the project period.
 - › Plan for staff turnover by documenting important procedures and information.
 - › Identify resources within the community that can support sustainability efforts (e.g., local leadership, institutional support and community networks).
 - › Explore opportunities for community organizations to assume ownership of ongoing activities.
- **Financial resources:**
 - › Consider what level of funding is necessary to continue the partnership and other outcomes in your sustainability plan.
 - › Determine if it is necessary to seek the same level of funding as during the project period.
 - › If needed, begin fundraising and engaging a grant writer to identify other funding opportunities and to write proposals.

Identify Barriers To Sustainability And Strategies To Overcome Them:

- Anticipate potential barriers to achieving sustainability goals, such as funding reductions or staff turnover.
- Develop strategies to overcome these barriers, such as diversifying funding sources or enhancing community buy-in through outreach and education.



Reminders For Writing The Sustainability Plans Section:

- 01.** Use the proposal outline and writing template from Module 3.
- 02.** Refer to the proposal writing calendar developed in Module 3 and adjust as necessary to meet deadlines.
- 03.** Incorporate language specific to the RFP to align with the funder's expectations and criteria.
- 04.** Reinforce themes, emphasizing the project's potential for long-term impact and lasting community partnerships.
- 05.** Complete the "Writing The Sustainability Plans" section of the "Proposal Requirement Checklist" from Module 1 to ensure all requested elements are addressed comprehensively.

Appendix 6-1: Logic Model Planning Worksheet

You may use this worksheet to think through the outcomes you hope to achieve through the activities you have planned. The worksheet has several components to help you plan your project including:

- **Purpose or mission:** The need for change or the problem that the project is addressing
- **Process components:** The essential elements needed for the project:
 - › **Inputs:** Resources allocated to the project, including materials, funding, personnel and expertise
 - › **Activities:** Specific actions undertaken to achieve project goals, encompassing processes, events, products or services
 - › **Outputs:** Tangible, countable findings generated by each activity, crucial for tracking progress toward desired outcomes
- **Outcomes or goals:** The anticipated results of the project:
 - › **Short-Term Outcomes:** Changes in awareness or knowledge expected within weeks or months
 - › **Intermediate-Term Outcomes:** Changes in behavior anticipated within months or years
 - › **Long-Term Outcomes:** Changes in social or life conditions expected over years or decades

Purpose (Mission):					
Process			Outcome		
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short	Intermediate	Long

Appendix 6-2: Sample Sustainability Planning Worksheet

Objective	Priority	Facilitators	Barriers	Other Considerations	Decision
Objective 1: Examine feasibility of implementing a new evidence-based practice.	High community priority	Aligned with my organization's mission Strong community partner	Resource intensive No further funding identified	Fills a gap in scientific field	Will continue if supported by my org and community partner
Objective 2:					