MOVING FORWARD:

A Sustainability Planning Guide

This Sustainability Planning Guide is designed to help you work through the key steps in the process of planning for the sustainability of your High Growth Job Training Initiative (HGJTI) and Community-Based Job Training (CBJT) grants. The Guide is intended to assist you with sustainability planning on an ongoing basis – we encourage you to refer to it throughout the life of your grant.

Grantees are reminded that the expenditure of any grant funds on activities related to sustainability and sustainability planning must be consistent with the grantee's statement of work, and in accordance with all relevant rules and regulations that apply to their grants. When expending grant funds on activities related to sustainability and sustainability planning, grantees are reminded that they must adhere to Federal rules and regulations on outreach, fund raising, lobbying, and all other relevant and applicable rules and regulations.

▶ What is Sustainability?

"Sustainability" refers to the continuation of a project's goals, principles, and efforts to achieve desired outcomes. Although many grantees think that guaranteeing the sustainability of a project means finding the resources to continue it "as is" beyond the grant period, ensuring sustainability really means making sure that the goals of the project continue to be met through activities that are consistent with the current conditions and workforce development needs of the region, including the needs of both workers and industry. Thus, sustainability does not mean simply maintaining the status quo in terms of funding, staffing, and activities.

What is a Sustainability Plan?

There is no single formula or answer to the sustainability challenge. However, creating a written sustainability plan will provide a road map to guide you and your partners as you work on sustainability efforts. The process of creating a written sustainability plan can also strengthen your partners' buy-in and understanding of the efforts needed to keep your project operating and improving. You can use the plan to market your project to potential funders and other possible partners, and as a guide to support the ongoing management of the project.

A sustainability plan can help identify what resources are necessary to sustain your project, encourage the development of partnerships and support collaboration, and help define

progress and the necessary action steps needed to ensure long-term success after the grant ends. Engaging in sustainability planning gives you an opportunity to map out how you can maintain valuable projects and innovations in a changing environment.

Developing a Sustainability Plan

Thinking about sustainability is not something that should be left until your grant funding is coming to an end. You will need time to conduct an assessment of your current project and determine which activities can and should be continued, whether you want to add or drop any target groups, what the desired scale of activities you want to sustain is, etc. You also will want to develop buy-in among currently participating partners and staff, and market your project, both internally within your organization, and externally to the outside world. Perhaps most importantly, you should plan for sustainability, and choose sustainability strategies that are most appropriate for your situation.

Conducting a sustainability planning process involves six key steps. This Guide provides information on issues you will want to consider in planning for sustainability, and worksheets that you can use to work through these key steps. Documenting your planning efforts is a good idea, so we have allowed room for writing down your plans or other ideas for sustainability. You can even use these pages to create a full-blown sustainability plan, in order to keep track of – and continuously improve – your plans and your progress in sustaining your efforts.

KEY STEPS IN THE SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING PROCESS

1. Clarify your vision.

2. Determine what you want to sustain.

3. Build collaboration.

4. Choose your desired sustainability strategies and methods.

5. Develop action steps for sustainability.

6. Document and communicate your sustainability successes.

Planning Considerations

Deciding What You Want to Sustain

When thinking about which, if any, of your grant activities you want to sustain, consider which ones **should** be sustained. It is important to first assess the success of current grant activities. Is there a clear benefit to continuing the effort over a longer time period? What if the grant activities have not been effective? A training program with lower than anticipated placement rates, for example, may not be worth sustaining. A lesson learned from the grant project may be that it should not be sustained or replicated. What outcomes do you want

to achieve in the future, and what activities are key to achieving them? Is there data to support your opinion? You do not have to sustain all of the activities—there may not be as much need for some and your activities may not be effective for all the outcomes of interest.

If you determine that grant-funded activities should be continued, are there certain aspects of the effort that should be emphasized? Are there certain aspects that should be changed? Consider whether there has been a change in the environment – either within your organization or an external factor such as an economic downturn or boom. It is likely that changes in the environment, both internal and external, will have an impact on your industry partners, workers, potential funders, or other components of your project. However, in some cases there may be no need to modify the current operations of the grant project – change should not be made for the sake of change, but to meet current and future needs. In other cases, internal and external needs will dictate the changes to be made. For example:

- In some cases, the occupational focus of the project may need to be expanded. Perhaps the grant project initially offered training in only one or two occupations, and it is now useful to increase the number of occupations for which training is offered. In some instances, the occupations will be independent of each other, such as electricians and operating engineers in the construction industry. In others, career ladders can be established or built upon. For example, a program established to train certified nursing assistants (CNAs) to become licensed practical nurses (LPNs) could add a component to train LPNs to become registered nurses (RNs).

- It may be desirable to expand the activities to another labor pool. For example, a grant that initially focused on dislocated workers could be expanded to include disadvantaged youth, veterans, adults, or other labor pools such as ex-offenders, military spouses, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients.

- Some high growth industries experience significant technological changes, and there may be a need for curriculum development to ensure that training keeps pace with these changes. A good example is aircraft manufacturing, where aircraft are now made from composite rather than metal materials, and assembly workers need to be trained to drill and rivet the new material.

ENHANCING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

To enhance your sustainability efforts through collaboration, you need to:
- Identify key partners who will help achieve your project's vision;
- Make the most of the resources your partners have to offer; and
- Implement outreach and communications efforts to keep your partners informed of developments, challenges, and successes.

U.S. Department of Labor
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

Deciding What Sustainability Strategies to Use

For most grants, the key sustainability strategy is partnership with others with whom you can share ideas, expertise, and resources. Through partnerships you can leverage existing resources, increase your capacity, bring in new ideas, ensure what you are doing meets the needs of the community, and learn from the experience of others.

- Bring in other people – both internal and external – to help plan for sustainability.

- Identify others from whom you need buy-in for your sustainability plan to succeed (e.g. staff, other stakeholders, etc.).

- Identify – and learn about – potential partners within the networks important for the HGJTI and CBJT grants. Some important HGJTI and CBJT grant networks include:
  - The workforce system
  - The education system, including community colleges
  - Industry leaders and partnerships

- Identify potential partners from among other DOL/ETA grantees:
  - Other HGJTI and CBJT grantees
  - Youth programs
  - Older workers programs
  - Faith-based programs
  - Dislocated worker programs

- Identify potential partners within your community or state, such as the general public, community leaders, or elected officials.

- Share your goals for sustainability with key players and partners in your project.

- Make potential (and current) partners aware of the benefits they are receiving or could receive from the partnership.

- Consider the best way to involve your partners and make the most of the resources they have to offer. For example, some partners may provide valuable advice in creating a sustainability plan, while others may arrange meetings with potential investors or offer staff time to draft funding proposals. Not everyone you bring in needs to have the same type or degree of involvement.

Logic models, which show the relationships between resources, activities, outputs and outcomes, are a useful tool to identify which sustainability strategies you will utilize. Another method some organizations find useful is creating a flow chart or some other visual representation of the processes and resources that must be in place for success in sustainability.

Building on a clear understanding of the logic and flow of processes and resources needed to address your sustainability goals, sustainability planning involves choosing a number of different types of strategies:

> ## LOGIC MODELS
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> There are many good resources available to help you develop logic models. Two examples are:
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> **The University of Wisconsin Extension**, available at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html
>
> **The Kellogg Foundation**, available at http://www. wkkf. org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

- **Develop a detailed description of what services and activities you want to sustain.** Which ones will be maintained? Which ones will change? You do not have to sustain all of your activities, just the ones that are intended to achieve your desired outcomes. You may even want to add some new activities.

- **Determine whom you want to serve.** Identify whether the activities will be focused on one or more specific groups such as dislocated workers, incumbent workers, or youth, or have very broad eligibility criteria. In choosing your participants, consider the needs of employers and potential participants' skills and barriers to employment.

- **Determine if you have the right management structure.** You may, for example, decide that you need to add resources to improve the management of the project, which might be as simple as offering training to current staff; or you may decide that extending the project will permit a smaller commitment of management resources now that staff, management, and others involved have experience with the activities.

- **Be on the lookout for changes in needs.** Over time, there may be changes in the economy, the population, and new activities available from organizations within the

> ## ASSESSING NEEDS AND RESOURCES
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> Taking the time to complete a scan of your environment and develop a document based on one of the models listed below (or your own model!) may help you to assess your current needs and resources.
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> A guide for asset mapping is available at Mississippi State University: http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/227/227_asset_mapping.pdf
>
> Guidelines for conducting a SWOT analysis can be found at: http://www.careeronestop.org/red/SWOT.aspx

community. Update your sustainability plan to reflect changes in preferences of staff, community, funders, and other stakeholders. Developing an asset map or completing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis which identifies internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats can help determine how environmental changes affect your project to help you craft a suitable sustainability plan. For example, staff preferences are likely to change when there is a major change in leadership, as new officials are likely to have their own views on what is important and what works.

Identifying Sustainability Resources

Identify what resources are needed to sustain your project – for example, redistribution of departmental financial resources, redeployment of staff, obtaining outside funds, etc. What do you need to manage and operate the activities you have selected? You may, for example, decide that you need to secure funding from a new source as your grant comes to an end. Or, you may decide that a smaller commitment of management resources is necessary now that project activities have become established ways of doing business.

Many sustainability efforts require new financing after the grant ends. It is often easier to obtain funds if you can leverage these funds with other resources. Foundations are often a good source of support for the sustainability of projects, particularly if the project is in a focus area of, or serves a target group of interest to, the foundation. Consider what funding may be available to you, both from local and national foundations. Additionally, private employers may have resources to invest in training, through either cash or in-kind contributions such as providing equipment. At several HGJTI grantees, employers agreed to pay for training once the grant ended. Trade associations and employer groups may also be interested in supporting training efforts that serve a number of their members.

Other potential sources of funding include federal, state, and local governments; unions and labor-management organizations; and fee for service options. If you want to go to outside funders, various funding mechanisms, such as requests for proposals (RFPs), grant solicitations, and more ambitious approaches such as pursuing special legislation, are all possible vehicles for securing additional resources. Learn the best ways to approach various funders; often, their Internet sites will guide you in this.

Some HGJTI projects have been able to sustain their initiatives by securing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds at the state and/or local level. Key issues to consider with these funds include:

- Which local workforce investment area or areas will our project serve?

- WIA funding for adults and dislocated workers may be carried out through individual training accounts (ITAs), which are like vouchers provided to workers. Learn what the requirements are to be on the Eligible Training Provider list and restrictions on ITAs. For example, some local programs have ceilings on the cost or length of time for their ITAs.

- Some of the HGJTI projects have customized training developed for one or more employers. It is possible for customized training to be directly funded by local workforce investment boards.

Other federal government agencies also support training. Depending on the nature of the training or other project efforts and the target group(s) being served, agencies such as Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Education, and Interior are all possibilities. A number of states sponsor training and economic development programs which can include resources for training and fund other services as well. These programs often target particular types of individuals (such as youth, offenders, or public housing residents) or locations (such as Empowerment Zones), and may require matching funds, but they are worth exploring. In some instances, federal funds that go to the state are then used to fund special state initiatives.

SUSTAINABILITY RESOURCES

Although the following resource list may not pertain directly to your particular project, it may offer some insight and guidance into sustainability planning for your project.

Foundations

Ford Foundation: http://www.fordfound.org/grants

Gates Foundation: http://www.gatesfoundation.org

Hitachi Foundation: http://www.hitachifoundation.org/

Robert Wood Foundation: http://www.rwjf.org/grants/

Sloane Foundation: http://www.sloan.org/

Not-for-Profit Organizations

The Finance Project: http://www.financeproject.org/

MDRC: http://www.mdrc.org/

Public/Private Ventures: http://ppv.org/ppv/index.asp

Venture Philanthropy Partners: http://ppv.org/ppv/index.asp

Sustainability Training

Finance Project Sustainability Training Institute: http://www.financeproject.org/special/engage/sti.cfm

SUSTAINABILITY RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

Further Reading

"End Games: The Challenge of Sustainability" from the Annie E. Casey Foundation: http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/end%20games.pdf

"Sustaining Comprehensive Community Issues: Key Elements for Success" from the Finance Project: http://www.financeproject.org/publications/sustaining.pdf

"Sustaining Grassroots Community-Based Programs: A Toolkit for Community- and Faith-Based Service Providers" from the US Department of Health and Human Services:
http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/prevline/pdfs/SMA08-4340.pdf

Publications from the Institute for Educational Leadership:
http://www.iel.org/pubs/sittap.html

Resources from the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse:
http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/hot_topics/sustain/index.php

"Implementation and Sustainability: Emerging Lessons from the Early HGJTI Grants" from the Urban Institute: http://www.urban.org/publications/411556.html

The Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategies Initiative: http://www.aspenwsi.org/

Workforce Strategies Initiative (WSI) identifies and advances strategies that help low-income Americans gain ground in today's labor market. To that end, WSI engages in applied research, facilitates dialogue, disseminates findings and shares new ideas. WSI includes a number of publications and resources that focus on sector strategies including short profiles of sector initiatives that feature some of our High Growth and Community-Based grantees:
http://www.aspenwsi.org/WSIprofiles-program.asp

Community Tool Box: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/

There are 46 Chapters through which you can reach nearly 300 different sections providing practical, step-by-step guidance in community-building skills, including sustainability. This site also includes a troubleshooting guide that can be helpful in solving problems and dilemmas that are common with doing community work. Sustainability planning support can be found here:
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/solveproblem/Troubleshooting_Guide_13.htm

Sustainability Plan Model

On the following pages are checklists to help you work through the six key steps in sustainability planning. These worksheets provide one possible format for documenting your sustainability planning efforts, and can be used as a starting point for your planning. They allow you to flesh out each of the "cells" in detail as you plan, or provide an "At-a-Glance" summary of the plans you have completed. As a reminder, before you start writing your sustainability plan, take time to review the key elements of sustainability outlined below.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. **Vision**: Develop a sustainability 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 future of the project to be.

2. **Results**: Identify any new measurable outcomes and establish or update processes to track performance post grant period, if applicable. The data collected during and after the life of the grant should be used to improve the project and services over time, as well as to communicate the project's successes.

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.

4. **Adaptability**: Recognize that change is inevitable and can be positive. Involve the community in planning and implementation.

5. **Collaboration**: Develop partnerships that include and extend beyond financial contributions. Create a spirit of collaboration and responsibility among 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. **External Systems**: Do a scan of your external and internal environment at different times during the life of your project. Identify untapped funding sources and other resources, as well as determine how the needs in your community have changed over time and how you anticipate they will change in the future.

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

STEP 1: Clarify Your Vision

Your vision should be what unifies all of your project's sustainability efforts. Your vision should serve as the focal point that brings your project staff, participants, community partners, and supporters together. The ability to convey your vision clearly to others is essential for maintaining and attracting support.

CHECKLIST	NOTES AND PLANS
☐ Establish a formal or informal sustainability group—do this early in the grant period. Small teams of 3-4 people are easiest to manage. Larger teams bring more resources and ideas. Consider including individuals with project knowledge, marketing skills, and knowledge of target audiences.	
☐ Write out your vision and goals for the project.	
☐ Write out the results your project is trying to achieve after the life of the grant.	
☐ Identify which activities will lead to desired results after the life of the grant.	
☐ To help with identifying resources/inputs for your sustainability plan and/or logic model, conduct a SWOT analysis or create an asset map.	
☐ Consider creating a flow chart or logic model that shows the relationships between your resources, activities and desired outcomes.	
☐ Identify the benefits of your project and the stakeholders who benefit the most from it.	
☐ Have several members of your team describe your vision to others to hear what kinds of questions they might be asked. Ensure you describe your vision clearly, and that your team members all share that vision.	

STEP 2: Determine What You Want to Sustain

In addition to being guided by your vision, base your decisions about what to sustain on the needs of your region and data regarding the performance of your grant – the data you collect on your grant's performance outcomes is a good starting point. An assessment of your current project can provide useful information for good decision-making about the most important aspects of your efforts to sustain over time, and which activities contribute most effectively to achieving your goals. Think about which activities you want to maintain and which ones will change. You do not have to sustain all of your activities, just the ones that are intended to achieve your desired outcomes. You may even want to add some new ones.

CHECKLIST	NOTES AND PLANS
☐ Work with your sustainability team to set both short-term and long-term goals for sustainability.	
☐ Assess which activities are most likely to support your short and long-term goals.	
☐ Determine which activities can and should be continued (based on your knowledge of your needs and desired outcomes).	
☐ Prioritize the activities you wish to sustain (based on your goals and the effectiveness of different activities).	
☐ Take advantage of the lessons learned by others. Talk to current and former grantees about how they decided what was desirable and feasible to sustain, and how they found or negotiated the resources they needed to meet their sustainability goals.	
☐ Be sure to consult with partners to get their input on priorities.	

STEP 3: Build Collaboration

Collaboration is a key ingredient for sustainability. While some organizations recognize the value of collaboration for building their project's success, collaboration is also a key element of a sustainability strategy. Community partners each possess unique skills and resources to contribute to your project and to expand its base of support. Collaboration also increases the number of individuals concerned with your project's sustainability and offers more avenues or access to a whole range of resources, including potential funding sources.

CHECKLIST	NOTES AND PLANS
☐ Identify your key partners in sustaining your project, especially those you want to collaborate with long term.	
☐ Identify others from whom you would like buy-in for the successful implementation of your sustainability plan. Identify potential partners within your community or state, such as the general public, community leaders, or elected officials.	
☐ Involve a wide array of individuals who may have an interest in your project, express the added benefit of your project, and develop partnerships that support and promote your efforts. (Don't forget to consider other ETA grantees as potential partners.)	
☐ Identify roles and responsibilities for each of your key partners in sustaining the project. Identify the benefits of participation for each partner.	
☐ Identify mechanisms for keeping your partners informed of progress and sustainability activities.	
☐ Re-visit the composition of your collaborative effort after you have completed your sustainability plan to make sure you are actively engaging the appropriate partners.	

STEP 4: Choose Your Sustainability Strategies and Methods

Some sustainability strategies, such as building partnerships and securing internal support for institutionalizing project activities, can be built into the project from the outset as a feature of the project design. Other strategies, such as identifying resources to address changing needs, will need to be identified in later phases of the grant to reflect the goals and resources in place at that time.

CHECKLIST	NOTES AND PLANS
☐ Identify the resources you will need to manage and operate the activities you have selected. Consider roles that can be combined or shared, whether you need more or fewer resources as activities become institutionalized, etc.	
☐ Identify resource challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve your sustainability goals.	
☐ Develop detailed descriptions of the activities you want to sustain. Make them specific and indicate what will be maintained and what will change.	
☐ Identify the resources that your partners bring to the table—What have they contributed in the past? What might they be encouraged to offer in the future?	
☐ Collaborate with partners to share ideas, expertise, and resources.	
☐ Decide how to adapt to changes in the needs and preferences of management, staff, partners, and other stakeholders.	
☐ Develop strategies for evaluating and promoting project success.	
☐ Consider how to achieve maximum visibility for sustaining project activities.	

STEP 5: Develop Action Steps

The action steps you establish to address your sustainability goals will vary depending on the specific goals you have established. There are basic considerations that need to be addressed, including determining needed resources, their sources, and securing the participation of partners and key stakeholders.

CHECKLIST	NOTES AND PLANS
☐ Develop a detailed budget for your project after your grant ends based on your current experience with the activities you want to sustain. Consider how costs and resource needs may change due to changes in scale, activities, economic climate, etc.	
☐ Identify potential funding sources for sustaining your project. Update this list regularly as unexpected events can happen at any time. Ask partners to suggest potential funding sources, especially those with whom they have first-hand experience. Consider Federal, state, and local sources, including government and foundations.	
☐ Obtain funding application guidelines and due dates and develop a plan for completing these applications. Consider simultaneous applications to multiple sources to leverage funds.	
☐ Develop business management systems (e.g., human resources, management information systems, etc.) that enable effective implementation of your plan.	
☐ Implement systems for ongoing communication with partners and other target audiences about progress and results.	
☐ Work toward institutionalizing project activities into regular business operations.	

STEP 6: Document and Communicate Your Successes

One of the best ways to continue to support sustainability over the long term is to document and communicate your success to key stakeholders and other supporters or potential supporters on an ongoing basis. Documenting successes will enable multiple staff members and partners to share success stories.

CHECKLIST	NOTES AND PLANS
☐ Prepare a written sustainability plan and document any changes to your plan as appropriate.	
☐ Develop systems for collecting and analyzing data on sustainability, if necessary.	
☐ Define what "sustainability success" will look like, and establish benchmarks against which to measure progress.	
☐ Document your achievements in terms of numbers and characteristics of participants served, activities and services provided, outputs, and outcomes.	
☐ Update your sustainability plan to reflect changes in preferences of staff, community, funders, and other stakeholders. Update your plan as you learn new things about the effectiveness of your project.	
☐ Share your successes with stakeholders, others in your profession and/or industry, and the outside world.	
☐ Know your audience when communicating your sustainability successes.	