

Kaiser Permanente Community Health Initiatives

Sustainability Framework

What is this document?

This document describes a sustainability framework for Community Health Initiatives (CHI) that contains definitions and key drivers of sustainability. It was initially designed to support Kaiser Permanente's (KP) place based, multi-sector, coalition-driven initiatives working for policy and environmental change to measurably improve health status and reduce health disparities. However, it has broad applicability to a range of initiatives being undertaken across the nation.

It is an attempt to lay out a broad set of considerations which we believe, if attended to by collaborative leaders, will result in long-term support for, and lasting impact of, our work. The framework asserts that realizing sustainability is a continuous process that can guide work over time, as well as inform decisions at particular moments in time.

How the framework was developed

The framework was informed by peer review literature on sustainability of community change initiatives as well as the authors and advisors direct experience with initiatives in and outside the KP investment portfolio.

How to use this document

The Sustainability Framework represents our thinking about the different dimensions of sustainability and many ways in which sustainability planning can be built into comprehensive initiatives -- what we think we all need to be mindful of as we do this work. Depending on the stage of an initiative, the user may choose to focus on specific sustainability factors that are most useful and relevant at that point in time. The framework can also be used as an assessment tool to identify how we think we are doing across key dimensions of sustainability, and to plan for and make appropriate adjustments.

Separately, there is a decision-making guide (Fig. 1) intended to inform decisions about what specific strategies or activities to sustain (or not) at a particular moment in time – for instance when developing an annual budget or when revising a community action plan. The decision-making guide can also inform questions we might ask during early initiative planning/design.

The Broader Context of “Sustainability”

Broadly speaking, our intent is to create healthy places for healthy people. This requires us to locate our initiatives in a broad sustainability approach that includes the four forms of health/wealth identified by the World Bank and others: the environment (natural capital), economic capital, social capital, and human capital/equity.

Connecting human health to these other forms of health/wealth connects our work to the social determinants of health and the environments in which health and health disparities are created. In addition, thinking about sustainability (broadly defined) helps drive us towards multi-win, or “nexus” strategies that have particular salience and relevance in a world increasingly focused on environmental sustainability and economic revitalization. Here we consider co-benefits to health.

Definition of Sustainability

Effective community changes remain in place and continue to evolve to promote progress towards long-term health and equity goals. The relationships between people and organizations created or reinforced by our initiatives continue to drive social action to improve health. This focus on sustaining the work and relationships is distinct from sustaining particular collaborative structures or other grant-funded entities per se. Core principles continue to be supported and advanced.

Self-Assessment Tool

Factors	Rating (1=low; 5=high)
Vision	
1. There is authentic consensus of partners or stakeholders on the vision and outcomes, and a readiness to act.	
2. Desired outcomes are defined and used to develop and refine strategies.	
Community Ownership	
3. The priorities reflect the needs of community residents and strategies are asset-based.	
4. The key stakeholders required to implement strategies are involved in their development and execution.	
5. An institutional home in the community, with a high degree of stability/permanence (e.g. local health department, community organization, or trusted local entity) is in place to ensure that essential functions (i.e. leadership, learning and communications) continue.	
Leadership	
6. Leadership of the initiative is shared across a high-performing group of people. This leadership team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, values diversity, has tolerance for different views, and has a learning orientation.	
7. There is a plan for on-boarding and orienting new members and a succession plan for formal leadership roles.	
8. At key junctures, there is an examination of important leadership that may be missing, and there is a plan developed to secure that leadership.	
Distributed Action	
9. Partner organizations find opportunities to do their own organization's work differently (as expressed in changes to mission statements, strategic plans, budgets, job descriptions, vendors contracts, and other business activities that address healthy communities' objectives) catalyzed by their involvement in the collaborative effort.	
Nature of Strategies Implemented	
10. There is a balanced portfolio of short-term and long-term wins to maintain momentum and attract community energy and engagement while working towards systemic change.	
Funding	
11. There is multi-year funding mindset and commitment.	
12. Return on Investment/economic analyses and evidence of cost savings/neutrality are being developed and used to make the case for investment/support.	
13. At key junctures or ad-hoc as needed, decisions are made about what should continue to receive funding/resources, based on agreed upon criteria.	
Learning Orientation	
14. Evaluation data is used for demonstrating progress, case-making, improving/modifying programs, and deciding what to sustain and not.	
Execution	
15. Key stakeholders who are responsible for implementation are included in the planning of the strategies. This includes non-health stakeholders (e.g., community developers, transportation, local government).	
16. Outside technical expertise and assistance is secured and applied as needed.	
17. There is an explicit communications plan for ensuring regular communication of the vision, objectives, and progress of the CHI effort to key stakeholders.	
18. At key junctures, decisions are made about what efforts should be continued and not, based on agreed upon criteria. Plans for continuing high priority work are developed.	
Sustainability Planning	
19. A shared understanding of sustainability is created.	
20. At key junctures, decisions are made about what should be continued and <u>not</u> , and what should be prioritized, based on agreed upon criteria.	
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)	