

# **Sustaining Community-Based Programs: Relationships Between Sustainability Factors and Program Results**

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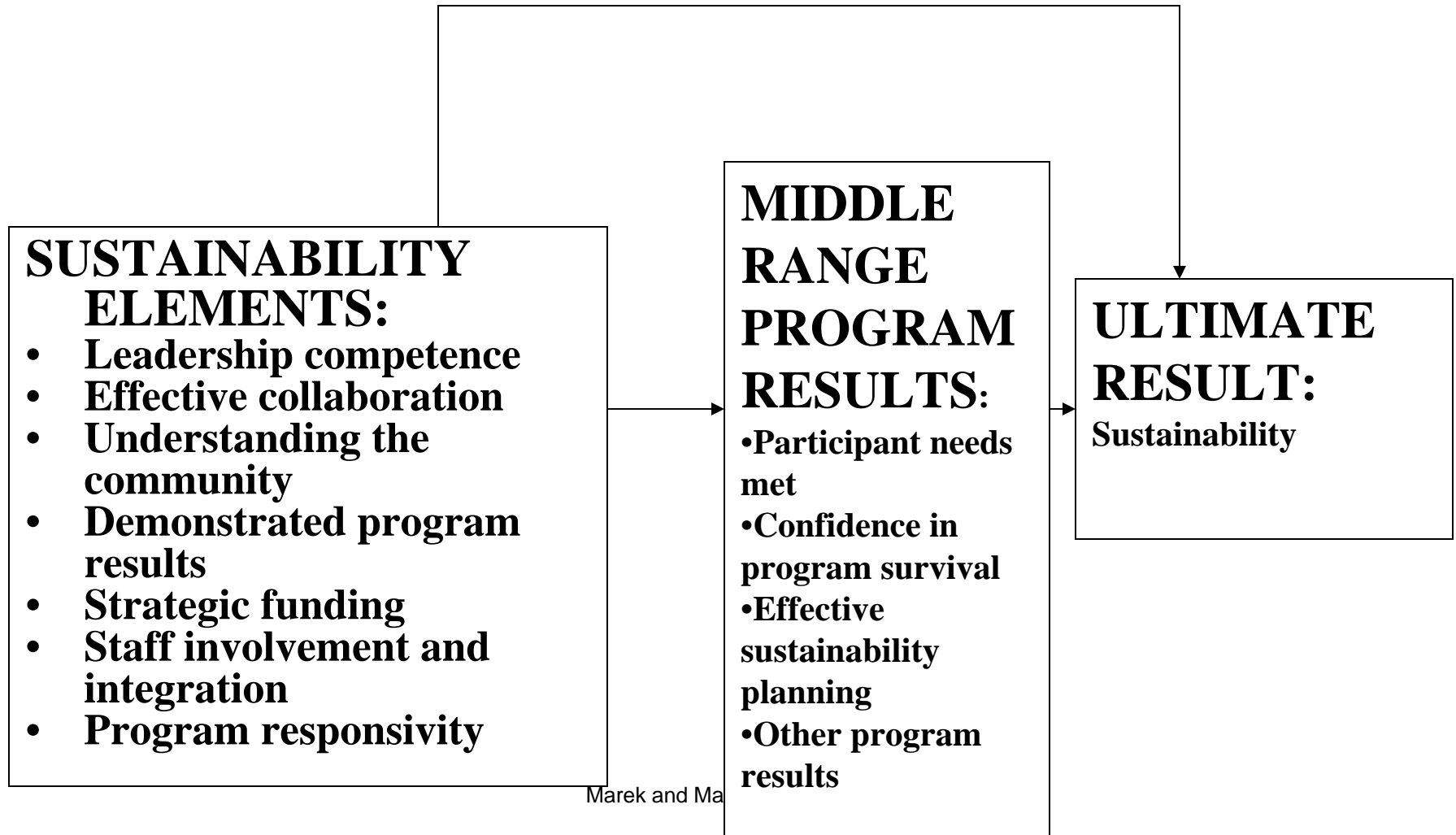
# Introduction and Purpose

- Community-based programs important components of service delivery to at-risk families
- Despite prevalence of these programs, relatively little information on elements of sustainability
  - Data suggest many of them are not sustained once initial start-up funding is exhausted
- What are primary elements of program sustainability?
- How do these elements relate to sustainability planning, confidence in program survival, and meeting the needs of at-risk families?

# A Matter of Responsibility

- *“We have a responsibility to our program recipients; they’ve had so many losses in their lives and for us to come in for a year or two or three and give them hope, only to have the program go away, we’ve just caused another loss and a further loss of hope in their lives” (Akerlund, 2000).*

# Model of Sustainability



# Sustainability: What Does it Look Like?

Marek & Mancini, 2005





# Elements of Sustainability: Overview

- **Elements are varied**
- **Elements are interrelated**
- **The significance of particular elements vary from program to program**

# Model of Sustainability



- **Elements that lead to sustainability**
  - **Leadership competence**
  - **Effective collaboration**
  - **Understanding the community**
  - **Demonstrated program results**
  - **Strategic funding**
  - **Staff involvement and integration**
  - **Program responsiveness**

# Model of Sustainability



- **Middle-range program results**
  - Participant needs met
  - Confidence in program survival
  - Effective sustainability planning
  - Other program results
- **Ultimate result**
  - Program is sustained



# Definition of Sustainability



- **Power or capacity of programs to continuously respond to identified community issues**
- **It is more important to sustain benefits to families and communities than to sustain program activities per se**
  - Programs can vary in intensity and frequency
  - Actual program activities can change

# The Nature and Importance of Sustainability

## A sustained program:

- **Continues to deliver programming to intended audiences over the long term consonant with program goals and objectives**
- **Modifies as necessary through expansion and contraction**
- **Supports community capacity**
  - Communities with high capacity can better respond to community needs

# Sustainability Elements Defined

<p><b><i>Leadership Competence</i></b></p> <p>Leaders establish goals, develop clear and realistic plans regarding development, implementation, evaluation.</p>	<p><b><i>Effective Collaboration</i></b></p> <p>Stakeholders who understand and support program goals, have clear roles, and who are actively involved in program.</p>	<p><b><i>Understanding the Community</i></b></p> <p>Entails knowledge of community needs and assets, respect for community members, and involving them in meeting program goals.</p>
<p><b><i>Demonstrating Program Results</i></b></p> <p>The evaluation of program process and outcomes with acceptable methods; informing stakeholders of results.</p>	<p><b><i>Strategic Funding</i></b></p> <p>Plans and resources in place for present and future programming; ongoing mechanisms to secure funding.</p>	<p><b><i>Staff Involvement and Integration</i></b></p> <p>Staff committed to program goals, involved in important program decisions and activities.</p>
	<p><b><i>Program Responsivity</i></b></p> <p>Ability to adapt to changing community needs.</p> <p><small>Matek and Mancini (2005)</small></p>	

# Leadership Competence

- **Leaders clearly establish the project's mission and vision.**
- **Leaders planned within the first two years for sustaining the project.**
- **Leaders continue planning for sustainability.**
- **Leaders developed and follow a realistic project plan**
- **Leaders identify alternative (and multiple) strategies for project survival.**

# Effective Collaboration



- **Local decision makers are project collaborators.**
- **Community service agencies are project collaborators.**
- **Collaborators share responsibility for providing program resources.**
- **Collaborators share credit for project success.**

# Effective Collaboration



- **Collaborators have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.**
- **Collaborators share a vision for the project.**
- **Turf issues are resolved.**
- **Collaborators' work on this project is supported by their agency.**
- **Collaborators are involved in program design, implementation, or evaluation.**

# Understanding the Community



- **Community needs are regularly assessed.**
- **Community resources and assets are regularly assessed.**
- **The project addresses key community needs.**
- **Community resources are effectively utilized by the project.**

# Understanding the Community

- **Project goals are matched with community needs.**
- **Project needs are matched with community resources.**
- **The projects accounts for diversity in the community.**
- **The project has strong local governmental support.**
- **Community members are involved in program design or implementation.**



# Demonstrated Program Results

- **Evaluation plans are developed prior to implementing programs.**
- **Project effectiveness is demonstrated through evaluation.**
- **Evaluations are conducted on a regular basis.**
- **Evaluation results are used to modify programming (expand, reduce, eliminate).**

# Demonstrated Program Results



- **Project successes are made known to the community, funders, etc..**
- **Public relations (marketing) strategies are in place to highlight successes and recruit participants, funders, and collaborators.**

# Strategic Funding



- **Current funding is sufficient for the project's operations.**
- **Funding is available on a long term basis (at least 2 or more years).**
- **There are plans in place for obtaining additional funding.**
- **There is adequate funding for hiring and retaining quality staff.**

# Staff Involvement and Integration

- **Staff are involved in program design.**
- **Staff are involved in project decision making.**
- **Staff are committed to the project mission, vision, and goals.**
- **Staff are qualified to work on the project.**
- **Staff are adequately trained.**
- **Staff are from the community that the project serves.**

# Program Responsivity



- **Goals and programming that no longer meet the community's needs are reassessed and changed as appropriate.**
- **Projects that no longer meet the community's needs are eliminated.**
- **When there are community needs that are not being met, programs are developed or expanded to better meet those community needs.**
- **Sites are consolidated, as appropriate, to better use project resources.**

# Program Sustainability: Translating Research and Theory to Action

- Research-Based Program Development, Implementation, and Assessment
- Being Intentional About Sustaining Programs
  - The Sustainability Workbook and Sustainability Index

# Middle-Range Program Results: On The Road to Sustainability

- Closely aligned with a program being sustained but are not end points (objectives rather than ultimate goals)
  - Continuing to provide benefits, in this case, meeting needs of at-risk families
  - Planning for sustainability, sooner rather than later
  - Having confidence in program survival
  - Other middle-range results

# Ultimate Result: Program Sustained

- Can be defined in various ways
- Being sustained always transitory, here today and gone tomorrow
- Possible definitions:
  - Program goals met or exceeded
  - Programs expanded, sites expanded
  - Number of years in existence
  - Functioning to full capacity
  - Routine part of larger organization





# Model Effects and Directions

- **Sustainability elements directly related to ultimate sustainability**
- **These elements also indirectly related through middle-range program results**
- **Middle-range results directly related to ultimate sustainability**
- **Direct and indirect effects yet to be fully tested**

# Measure: Program Sustainability Index\*

- Multi-item measure oriented around 7 sustainability elements (53 items, eventually distilled to 29 items)
- Confirmatory factor analysis (EQS program)
- Fit indices indicate viability of each sub-scale
  - Challenge to minimize correlated errors (multiple loadings)
- 29 of 53 items clearly loaded on a distinct factor
- Overall model analyses did not retain element of “understanding the community”
  - Items loaded across multiple factors
  - Internally strong factor

\*Mancini, J.A., & Marek, L.I. (2004). Sustaining community-based programs for families: Conceptualization and measurement. *Family Relations*, 53, 339-347.

# Measures: Middle-Range Program Results

- **“To what extent does this project’s current programming meet the needs of at-risk children, youth, and families?”**
- **“When did program leaders begin actively planning for this project’s post-funding survival?”**
- **“How confident are you that your project will still be active in five years?”**

# Conclusions



- **Consistent with the sustainability model, sustainability elements are related to middle-range program results**
- **Other parts of the model not tested in this study**
- **Particular sustainability elements more germane to these middle-range results (leadership competence, understanding the community, demonstrating program results, strategic funding, and staff involvement)**
  - **Each of these can be manipulated to increase chances of sustainability**

# Implications

- Findings suggest framework is a roadmap for being intentional about sustainability efforts through planning and implementation activities
  - Leadership selection, training, and monitoring
  - Strong and effective collaboration
  - Community engagement of community-based programs
  - Systematic evaluation of program process and results
  - Funding strategies (example of diversification)
  - Staff development and mentoring
  - Adaptability and flexibility is required

# The Sustainability Process: Applying Knowledge



- **Developing a Sustainability Plan**
  - **Be as detailed as possible.**
  - **This is your map into the future as you work towards sustaining your project.**
  - **Your plan needs to be reassessed on an annual basis.**

# For Additional Information:



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