



# Office of Adolescent Health

*The Path to Program Sustainability Webinar Series:*

## **Part 2: Five Steps to Assess the Environment**

Sharon Vardatira

June 27, 2019

2:30 – 3:30pm EST





**Sharon Vardatira, MTS**

Director, Nonprofit Funding & Fiscal Solutions  
University Of Massachusetts Donahue Institute

[www.donahue.umassp.edu](http://www.donahue.umassp.edu)

**Nonprofit Funding & Fiscal Solutions (NFFS)**

- Mission: To enable our clients to create cultures and systems that result in sustainable programs, fundraising success, and stable infrastructure.
- National Nonprofit Sustainability Center



The views expressed in this workshop do not reflect the official policies of the Office of Adolescent Health, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Any statements expressed are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Adolescent Health, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Webinar Topic	Date	Focus on Sustainability Factors
Developing Your Sustainability Plan	May 16	1. Strategize: Create an Action Strategy 3. Lead: Identify, Engage, Develop Leaders 4. Evolve: Remain Flexible & Evolve
Five Steps to Assess the Environment	June 27	2. Assess: Assess the Environment 4. Evolve: Remain Flexible & Evolve
Sustainability Through Community Mobilization	July 25	5. Communicate: Communicate with Stakeholders 7. Partner: Build Strategic Partnerships and Mobilize the Community
After the Grant Runs Out: How to Keep Critical Programs Thriving	August 22	4. Evolve: Remain Flexible & Evolve 6. Integrate: Integrate Program Services into Community Infrastructure 8. Diversify: Secure Diverse Financial Opportunities



### The Eight Factors

1. Strategize: Create an Action Strategy
2. Assess: Assess the Environment
3. Lead: Identify, Engage & Develop Leaders
4. Evolve: Remain Flexible & Evolve
5. Communicate: Communicate with Stakeholders
6. Integrate: Integrate Program Services into Community Infrastructure
7. Partner: Build Strategic Partnerships & Mobilize the Community
8. Diversify: Secure Diverse Financial Opportunities



- Define components of environmental assessment:
  - A) Internal Capacity Assessment
  - B) Community-Level Assessment
- Overview of organizational assessment focus: leadership, operations, management, adaptive capacity
- Review five-step guide to environmental assessment
- Provide examples of assessment-driven adaptations

*Systematic process to gather, analyze, synthesize and communicate data to inform planning decisions. Includes:*

- A. Internal Capacity Assessment (Organization)
  - Internal stakeholders' perceptions of organization (using assessment tool)
  - External stakeholders' perceptions of organization
  - Participant/client survey data
  - Impact evaluation findings
  
- B. Community-Level Assessment
  - Internal and external stakeholders' perceptions of external threats/opportunities
  - Third party sources (census, planning documents, needs data, etc.)

**“A way of knowing what is going on around you....”**



## Leadership

- ✓ Ability of leadership team to support OAH program
- ✓ Board/leadership group capabilities and skills
- ✓ Alignment of organizational mission & OAH program

## Operations

- ✓ Quality and impact of program(s)
- ✓ Adequacy of program facilities & equipment
- ✓ Adequacy of program funding
- ✓ Participant/client satisfaction
- ✓ Support for general operations

## Management

- ✓ Staff capabilities/skill level and performance
- ✓ Effectiveness of management, personnel and financial systems
- ✓ Relationships with strategic partners

## Adaptive Capacity

- ✓ Organizational performance relative to competitors
- ✓ Use of data to sustain impact & meet changing community needs
- ✓ Responsiveness to changes in the external environment





## Key Stakeholders

- Program staff
- Other organizational staff
- Participants/clients (sampling)
- External stakeholders (sampling) – e.g. funders, program partners, local decision-makers, community leaders, potential collaborators, Federal Project Officer(s)
- Experts with specialized knowledge (e.g. accountant or fiscal staff with knowledge of financial system)

## Data Collection Methods

- Survey / Assessment Tool (i.e. [OAH Organizational Capacity Assessment for TPP Programs](#))
- Individual interviews (in-person/phone/virtual)
- Focus groups

## **Capacity Assessment for Internal Stakeholders (sampling of criteria)**

1. Organization has clearly articulated goals that support the mission.
2. Leadership group is actively involved in planning the direction and priorities of the organization.
3. Communication and decision-making by staff, volunteers, and the organization's leadership is effective and clear.
4. Organization is capable of generating funding to support activities and programs.
5. The organization's key stakeholders advocate for the organization and inform the community about the organization's accomplishments.

## **Sample Questions for External Stakeholders:**

1. What does the stakeholder need or expect (criteria for performance) from the organization?
2. How well does the organization perform against those criteria (excellent, good, fair, or poor) and why?
3. How well does the organization perform relative to its competitors?
4. Do you have any advice or suggestions for changing or helping increase the organization's effectiveness?



*Examination of external factors that impact or may eventually impact the program*

**Economic Environment**

- ✓ Economic factors affecting service area/target population
- ✓ Changes to fund development and philanthropy landscape

**Demographic & Social Environment**

- ✓ Changes to participant population (numbers, location, service area)
- ✓ Race, ethnicity, languages spoken by target population
- ✓ Numbers of youth with disabilities, disconnected and youth in foster care
- ✓ Health, education, social service needs of target population
- ✓ Community/local/state resources available to address identified

**Political & Legal Environment**

- ✓ General public's knowledge of and attitude toward your issue
- ✓ Decision-makers' knowledge of and attitude toward your issue
- ✓ Influential actors who have the potential to affect your issue

**Media & Technology**

- ✓ New and emerging media/social media/technology
- ✓ Client expectations/practices related to media/technology



## Information & Data Sources

- External stakeholders (funders, partners, collaborators)
- State agencies (DCF, DYS, DPH, Education, etc.)
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Faith-based institutions
- Local economic development agencies
- Local media sources
- Local assessments (Head Start, planners, etc.)
- U.S. Census Bureau

## Information Gathering Methods

- Research third party information, studies, data
- Individual interviews with key stakeholders
- Focus groups with key groups (e.g. educators)

## Overarching questions to be answered:

1. What major changes can we expect in the needs of the target population over the next 2-5 years?
2. What significant changes can be expected in the target population's economic environment in the future?
3. What significant changes can be expected in the target population itself and their social environment in the future?
4. What significant changes can be expected in the relevant political environment in the future (laws, regulations, interest in issues, etc.)?
5. What significant changes can be expected in the relevant media and technological environments in the future?
6. How is philanthropy projected to change in the next 5-10 years in response to changes in the environment? (in particular focused on core issue area for program)
7. What are emerging opportunities over the next 2-5 years for diversifying resources and program funding?
8. Are there external threats to our program/agency in the future? What are they?

Step 1: Plan and Organize

Step 2: Design the Work

Step 3: Gather Data

Step 4: Analyze Data and Make Decisions

Step 5: Communicate and Incorporate



## **OAH Sustainability Factors:**

- 2. Assess: Assess the Environment
- 4. Evolve: Remain Flexible & Evolve



- Form the Environmental Assessment team
- Determine what information to collect
- Establish a timeline and assign responsibilities
- Prepare for the EA process and inform key stakeholders

- Align assessment data collection with the program purpose, goals, requirements
- Develop the primary questions to be answered through the environmental assessment
- Identify internal and external sources of data, information, and feedback
- Distinguish between open- and closed-ended questions, as well as quantitative and qualitative data



- Create and test worksheets and surveys
- Manage logistics
- Adopt strategies to address and ensure sensitivity to cultural considerations, trauma-informed approach, inclusivity,
- Implement data collection methods (conduct interviews, administer surveys, conduct research and collect third party data, facilitate focus groups, etc.)
- Manage data collected

- Establish plan for data analysis
- Select data analysis strategies and procedures
- Interpret the data
- Use data to inform sustainability planning decisions:
  - Vision for future of program
  - Establish program priorities for future
  - Establish sustainability goals and objectives
  - Establish strength-based sustainability strategies to be used immediately and in future
  - Identify strategies to neutralize threats and capitalize on opportunities

*Documenting the assessment process, findings, and recommendations will enable your staff, partners, OAH, and other key stakeholders to benefit from what you have learned, as well as understand the reasoning behind certain program decisions.*

- Prepare the assessment report
- Communicate the data and recommendations
- Review and update the assessment on a regular basis
- Integrate the environmental assessment findings into the sustainability planning process (and ongoing strategic and program planning)

## ***Case 1: All Our Families***

### **Key Assessment Findings:**

- a) Weak infrastructure
- b) Community unaware of breadth of services
- c) Known for parenting program
- d) Strong history of engagement with disadvantaged/minority community

### **Decision:**

- a) Build on community connections/history
- b) Return to roots
- c) Engage families in community
- d) Seek funding for advocacy function
- e) Obtain fiscal management consultation



## ***Case 2: Community Youth Matter***

### **Key Assessment Findings:**

- a) Personnel systems weak, with rapid turnover
- b) Strong community partnerships
- c) Change in legislative priorities signaling potential significant loss in future funding
- d) Good reputation externally
- e) Holder of significant resources, training materials, skilled workers

### **Decision:**

- a) Identify outside organization to entirely take on program
- b) Take planned steps to dissolve organization, making sure to transfer knowledge/skill and program to new organization
- c) Make announcement to community only when new partner/program operator is identified and in position to implement program
- d) Sustain knowledge/skills and program through transfer of resources, personnel, and funding to new organization



### **Case 3: Youth Health Connect**

#### **Key Assessment Findings:**

- a) Anticipate major changes in legislation and health insurance systems
- b) Excellent leadership
- c) Strong skills
- d) Supportive parent agency
- e) Demographic changes to include increase in non-English speaking population and influx of immigrants from war zones

#### **Decision:**

- a) Revise approach to de-emphasize focus on connecting youth to health insurance
- b) Incorporate programming designed for expanded target population
- c) Approach new funders with interest in expanded target population
- d) Focus on leaders building major donor program
- e) Hold community rally to announce revised focus (coincide with state legislative campaigning)

- Have the issues we are presenting emerged from the analysis of the environmental assessment data?
- Have we identified and prioritized the key issues or problems facing youth that need to be addressed by our program?
- Have we described our rationale for prioritizing or determining the key issues?
- Have all sources of information been cited?
- Has objective and research-based data been included to support decisions based on future trends?

- Conduct full assessment every 3-5 years
- Complete annual review and update of assessment
  - ✓ Set up the EA team with the same or similar membership structure as used for the original EA.
  - ✓ Follow a similar sequence as used for the original EA, although you may be able to shorten the overall time frame.
  - ✓ Design your data collection so that it is focused and zeroes in on the changes.
  - ✓ Collect information from internal and external sources, including your partners and collaborating agencies.
  - ✓ Review how the new information might impact the recommendations previously made and any final decisions that followed.
  - ✓ Incorporate new data into the planning cycle – it may be necessary to add a new goal or modify objectives to existing goals.



- Embrace a team approach
- Appoint point person
- Orient team members to EA process
- Scale to your capacity (“don’t bite off more than you can chew”)
- Make use of existing assessments - e.g. Head Start, Community Health Assessments, HUD, etc. (“don’t reinvent the wheel”)
- Consider hiring a consultant to:
  - Oversee process
  - Develop data collection tools
  - Collect some types of data (third party research, surveys, conduct focus groups, and interview key stakeholders)
  - Prepare final product
- Report to the entire community or limit the results to your agency and OAH

Grantees can find some of these resources at the [OAH Teen Pregnancy Prevention \(TPP\)](#) and Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Resources Center

[Organizational Capacity Assessment for Teen Pregnancy Prevention \(TPP\)](#)

[Ideas for Your Annual Self-Assessment Process: Program Management & Fiscal Operations \(Head Start Self-Assessment Guidance\)](#)

[Program Sustainability Assessment Tool](#) (Washington University, George Warren Brown School of Social Work)

UMass Donahue Institute  
100 Venture Way, Suite 9  
Hadley, MA 01035  
(413) 545-0001

[www.donahue.umassp.edu](http://www.donahue.umassp.edu)

**Sharon Vardatira**

Director, Nonprofit Funding &  
Fiscal Solutions

(413) 545-6615

[svardatira@donahue.umassp.edu](mailto:svardatira@donahue.umassp.edu)



# Feedback survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/S2PMXPZ>

**Thank you!**



## Connect With Us!



Use OAH's Award Winning Website:

[www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/)



Follow Us on Twitter: [@TeenHealthGov](https://twitter.com/TeenHealthGov)



Sign up for E-Updates: Subscribe or check your subscriptions to OAH and TAG e-updates

[www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/news/e-updates/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/news/e-updates/index.html)



Watch us on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/teenhealthgov](http://www.youtube.com/teenhealthgov)

