

Program Sustainability Index (PSI)

As discussed in *Sustaining Desired Results* (Module 9)

The Program Sustainability Index (PSI) (Mancini & Marek, 2004) is a tool to help organizations and planning team members gauge its status on the seven essential elements of sustainability.¹ The PSI has been modified from the original format to better meet the needs of military family support personnel. The index takes into account the elements that research has shown lead to sustaining benefits of an initiative to individuals, families, and communities overtime. It also gauges which elements are strong and which need to be strengthened. The PSI can help an organization start discussions about sustainability and become intentional about including these elements from the beginning of planning efforts.

Instructions

To use the PSI, team members rate efforts toward sustainability on each of the seven elements, treating each item as a program goal. Members decide individually whether they feel the item is “not at all true,” “somewhat true,” or “very much true” of their initiative. Items rated:

- **Not at all true-** Indicate it is completely absent and needs to be improved.
- **Somewhat true-** Indicate it is more or less present and active in the initiative but has room for improvement.
- **Very much true-** Indicate satisfaction with the current status and that the particular element is a prominent asset for the team.

By answering the questions on the PSI individually and then discussing responses as a team, it becomes clear what needs to go into the plan to sustain benefits. The discussion allows the planning team to appraise its strengths and prioritize areas that need improvement. These strengths and growth areas will become the basis for a sustainability plan. For factors that the team feels are a priority and need the most improvement, have the group answer the following questions:

- What will be done to close the gaps/make improvements?
- Who will do it?
- By what date does it need to be done?
- How will you know you are making progress?

The team will want to repeat this exercise periodically to monitor the plan to sustain the benefits of a program.

¹ The seven elements include: demonstrating program results, understanding the community, program flexibility, effective collaboration, leadership involvement, strategic funding, and staff involvement and integration.

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (PSI)²

Sustainability Elements and Items

<i>Demonstrating Desired Results</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
1. Monitoring and evaluation plans are developed prior to implementation of the action plan			
2. Desired results are demonstrated through monitoring			
3. Monitoring efforts are conducted on a regular basis			
4. Monitoring efforts are used to modify the action plan			
5. Program successes are made known to the community			
6. Program successes are made known to funders			
<i>Understanding the Community</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
7. Community <i>needs</i> are regularly assessed and used by the program			
8. Community <i>resources/assets</i> are regularly assessed and mobilized			
9. Program goals are matched with community resources			
10. The program accounts for diversity in the community			
11. Community members are involved in the design of the action plan			
12. Community members are involved in monitoring			
13. The program addresses key community needs			
14. The program has strong local government support			
<i>Flexibility</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
15. Activities are eliminated when they fail to contribute to achieving the desired results			
16. New activities are implemented when community needs change			
<i>Effective Collaboration</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
17. Local decision-makers are program collaborators			
18. Community service agencies are program collaborators			
19. Representatives from businesses are program collaborators			
20. Collaborators are involved in the design of the action plan			
21. Collaborators are involved in implementation			
22. Collaborators are involved in monitoring and evaluation			

² From "Sustaining Community-based Programs for Families: Conceptualization and Measurement," by J. Mancini and L. Marek, 2004, *Family Relations*, 53, p. 339-347. Reprinted with permission.

23. Collaborators share responsibility for providing program resources			
24. Collaborators share credit for program success			
25. Collaborators have clearly defined roles and responsibilities			
26. There is shared vision among collaborators			
27. Any collaborative issues are resolved			
28. This program is part of the mission of participating institutions			
<i>Leadership Involvement</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
29. Leaders clearly established the program's mission and vision			
30. Leaders planned how to sustain the program within the first two years of the project			
31. Leaders develop and follow a realistic project plan			
32. Leaders identify alternative (multiple) strategies for program longevity			
33. Leaders are committed to the long term program goals			
34. Leaders continue planning to sustain the program			
<i>Strategic Funding</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
35. Current funding is sufficient for program operations			
36. Funding is available on a long term basis (at least two more years)			
37. There is adequate funding for hiring and retaining quality staff			
38. There are plans in place for obtaining additional funding			
<i>Staff Involvement and Integration</i>	Not at all True	Somewhat True	Very Much True
39. Staff are involved in the design of the action plan			
40. Staff are involved in program decision making			
41. Staff are committed to the program's mission, vision, and goals			
42. Staff are qualified to work on the project			
43. Staff are involved in monitoring and evaluation			
44. Staff turnover on the project is not a problem			
45. Staff are flexible and creative			
46. Staff are recognized and rewarded for their work			
47. Staff are adequately trained			
48. Staff are from the community that the program serves			