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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 others¹: 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.

¹ Norris (2000), “Healthy Wealthy and Wise,” Community Initiatives. Serageldin & Steer (1995). “Expanding the Measure of Wealth”. World Bank monograph.

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 principles² continue to be supported and advanced.

Key Sustainability Planning Steps

As suggested above, sustainability planning includes both a comprehensive approach that examines key factors that drive sustainability of the overall initiative as well as planning at a strategy- or program-level to assess the sustainability of specific CHI activities. Basic planning steps are described for each.

1. Applying the framework to the comprehensive sustainability planning/assessment (Table 1):

Goal: Cultivate a sustainability mind-set for the initiative as a whole, focusing on key attributes of the community change process most likely to influence the sustainability of the initiative.

Key Planning Steps:

- a. Create or ensure the existence of a shared understanding of sustainability that is held by leadership and key stakeholders.
- b. Examine each dimension and assess how well your current efforts or existing plans “deliver” the factors in each dimension.
- c. Based on your self-assessment, for the dimensions/factors where there is a gap between what currently is in place and what is desired, build a sustainability plan by identifying action steps to get to agreed-upon outcomes.
- d. Execute the plan/action steps and periodically assess progress.

2. Applying a strategy/activity-level decision-making guide at key junctures (Figure 1):

Goal: Inform sustainability assessment and decision-making at key moments or junctures to: 1) identify specific activities, strategies, and efforts to maintain, evolve, and/or drop; and 2) identify specific actions to ensure that retained strategies or efforts are sustained over the long term. Key moments/junctures might include:

- ☐ Development of a proposal (if responding to an RFP)
- ☐ Development of a Community Action Plan (CAP)
- ☐ CAP revisions

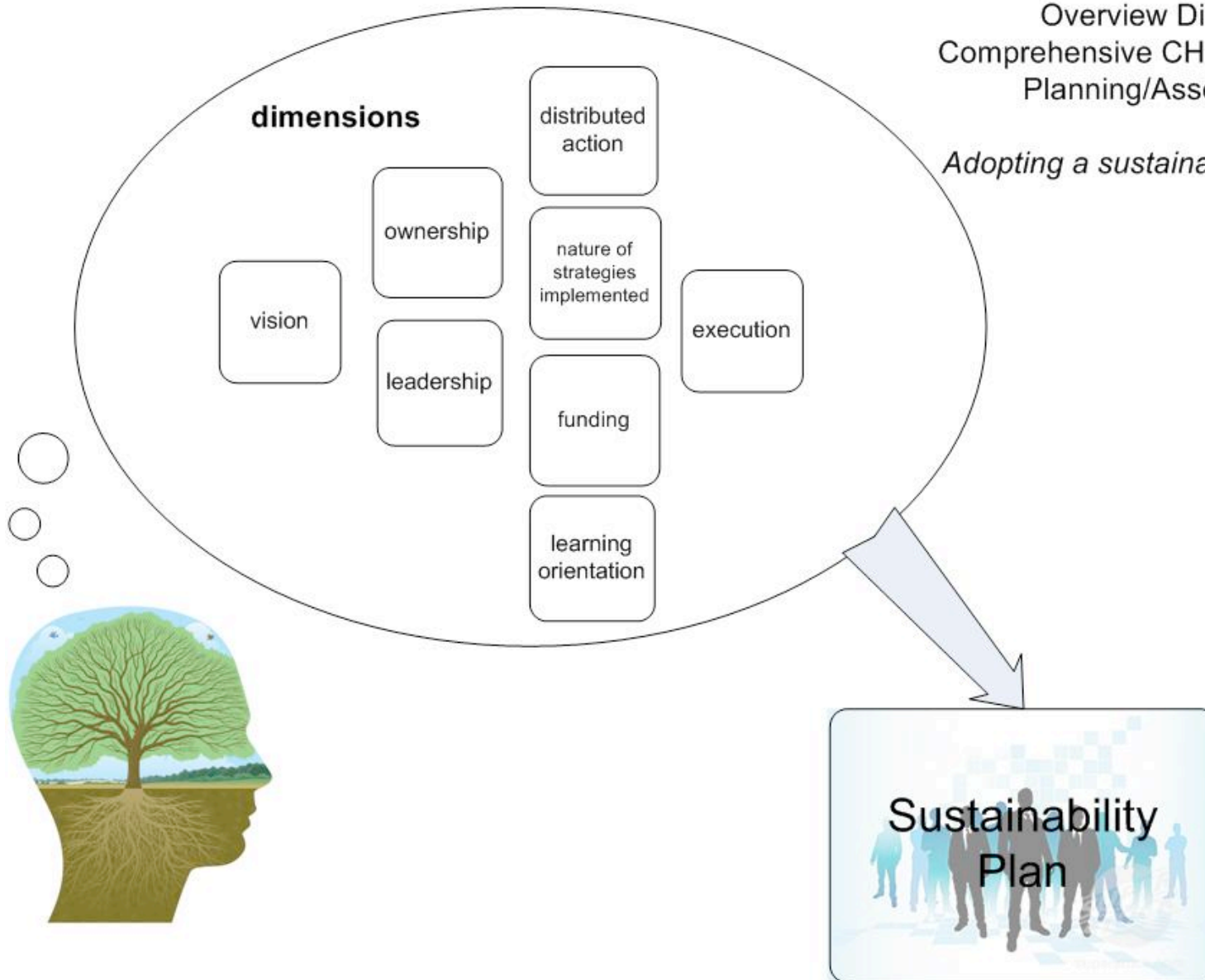
Key Planning Steps:

- a. Decide what you want to sustain/evolve and what NOT to sustain.
- b. Identify how (or what strategy/ies to use) to sustain those efforts.
- c. Identify corresponding actions steps.

² KP’s CHI core principles include: a partnership approach to working in communities and providing support for long-term, multi-sector, place-based, community-driven, evidence-informed initiatives focused on policy and environmental change.

Overview Diagram:
Comprehensive CHI Sustainability
Planning/Assessment

Adopting a sustainability mind-set



Embraces a learning orientation, and a willingness to change direction and earlier decisions

Table 1. Dimensions and Factors Promoting Sustainability Within CHI Communities

Factors	Rating (1=low; 5=high)	Action Steps
1. Vision		
a. A vision is crafted with the participation of community members. It is steeped in, and accurately reflects, the needs and priorities of the community.		
b. There is authentic consensus of partners or stakeholders on the vision and outcomes, and a readiness to act.		
c. The vision and outcomes are articulated in a logic model or theory of action.		
d. Desired outcomes are defined and used to develop and refine strategies.		
2. Community Ownership		
a. The initiative is led by residents of, by, and for the community. They have formal roles on the leadership team.		
b. The priorities reflect the needs of community residents and strategies are asset-based.		
c. The key stakeholders required to implement strategies are involved in their development and execution.		
d. 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.		
3. Leadership		
a. There are champions with strong skills in strategic thinking, communication, facilitation, influence, and execution who support the initiative, regardless of whether they have a formal role on the leadership team.		
b. The leadership team includes or is made up of credible, respected community leaders (residents as well as organizational representatives).		
c. Members of the leadership team bring the influence, commitment, and sanction of their institutions.		
d. 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.		
e. There is a plan for on-boarding and orienting new members and a succession plan for formal leadership roles.		
f. At key junctures, there is an examination of important leadership that may be missing, and there is a plan developed to secure that leadership.		
4. Distributed Action		
a. 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		

Factors	Rating (1=low; 5=high)	Action Steps
contracts, and other business activities that address healthy communities objectives) catalyzed by their involvement in the collaborative effort.		
b. Partner organizations influence the work of their peers outside the collaborative to do their work differently by sharing ideas for change- <i>see 4a.</i> (e.g. A business partner influences the work of the Chamber of Commerce.)		
c. Individuals involved in or exposed to this initiative influence the actions of their family, friends, neighbors, etc. in creating healthy communities.		
5. Nature of Strategies Implemented		
a. Community change strategies selected and implemented are those that fall in the upper 2-3 levels of the Spectrum of Prevention ³ , i.e. focus on policy, organizational practice and built/food environment changes and fostering coalitions and networks.		
b. 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.		
c. Leaders have a systems orientation: they actively seek opportunities for strategies and solutions that coordinate and leverage the efforts of different sectors. They focus on convergent strategies that help partners find common causes and win-win solutions ⁴ . This is important because it increases the scope of what can be changed, increases the constituency for change, and broadens the assets that can be deployed to create change.		
6. Funding		
a. There is a plan/forecast for resources needed to enact the Community Action Plan (CAP).		
b. There is multi-year funding mindset and commitment.		
c. There exists a consistent, reliable, long-term funding stream(s), e.g. public sources, internalized into partner agency budgets, market-based/commercial revenue, etc.		
d. Return on Investment/economic analyses and evidence of cost savings/neutrality are being developed and used to make the case for investment/support.		
e. The leadership group leverages in-kind and other funds, including resources from other sectors – <i>see example in 5c.</i>		
f. The leadership group coordinates with funders to maximize flexibility and best use of committed and potential resources.		
g. At key junctures or ad-hoc as needed, decisions are made about what should continue to receive funding and what not, based on agreed upon criteria.		

³ http://www.preventioninstitute.org/tool_spectrum.html

⁴ Advancing sustainable regional agriculture benefits rural economies and ecosystems while also providing greater access of fresh local foods to communities, schools, institutions, etc. This type of strategy brings together constituents interested in economic development, farm preservation, and access to healthy foods.

Factors	Rating (1=low; 5=high)	Action Steps
7. Learning Orientation		
a. Evaluation data is used for demonstrating progress, case-making, improving/modifying programs, and deciding what to sustain/not.		
b. Information from the external environment, including peer initiatives, is systematically brought into the collaborative (and offered to partner organizations) to identify opportunities/risks, inform adjustments, and test assumptions.		
c. The evidence base is reviewed periodically to ensure that the revision of community action plans utilizes the latest and best evidence.		
8. Execution		
a. Key non-health stakeholders (e.g., community developers, transportation, social justice, ecological environment, local gov management and design/planning) who are responsible for implementation are included in the planning of the strategies.		
b. The transition to the implementation stage identifies the people with the appropriate skills, authority, and resources to do the work.		
c. There is a structure within the initiative for distributing the work to implementation teams, keeping implementation teams connected to the broader leadership group/initiative, ensuring that implementation teams have resources and competency to effectively deliver, and gathering feedback for quality improvement.		
d. The collaborative functions effectively in regards to agenda planning, facilitation, decision-making, respectful negotiation, conflict resolution, communication, inclusiveness, rooted in the comm vision.		
e. Outside technical expertise/assistance secured, and applied as needed.		
f. There is an explicit communications plan for ensuring regular communication of the vision, objectives, and progress of the CHI effort to key stakeholders.		
g. 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.		
9. Sustainability Planning⁵		
a. A shared understanding of sustainability is created.		
b. A sustainability lens is used when developing priorities and identifying core stakeholders.		
c. There is a workplan for sustainability, with agreement on outcomes, milestones, tools (e.g. sustainability audit), etc. <i>Note: This can be part of a community's action plan; it need <u>not</u> be a stand-alone plan.</i>		
d. At key junctures, decisions are made about what should be continued and <u>not</u> , and what should be prioritized, based on agreed criteria.		
e. The leadership group determines plans for how they will continue/sustain efforts that deliver on those priorities they have decided should be continued.		
a. The leadership team implements the sustainability plan and periodically assesses progress.		

⁵ While sustainability planning is a process, not a specific aspect of the CHI initiative, it is included here to indicate that a formal sustainability planning process and a resulting plan is critical to sustainability in general.

Figure 1: Decision-Making Guide for Sustaining Strategies within CHI Communities

