

**Tool 6.2: PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

**Section in Planner: Phase 2, Step 6 (6.2)**

**Why is this important?**

To continue program benefits, it is necessary to understand the factors that contribute to program sustainability, e.g. maintaining funding and ensuring a strategy for ongoing training and supervision of fitness instructors. Additional strategies may be needed over time to respond to changing health care partnerships or emerging new evidence about exercise techniques, to ensure client retention and continued enrolment, to address staff movement or manage changes within the leadership and mandate of an organization. *Assessing your capacity* to maintain the proposed program is a continuous exercise.

**How to use this tool:**

Although this tool (PSAT) has been positioned in Phase 2 , program planners will find it a useful assessment activity at *several decision points* in the planning cycle including:

* Phase 1: to determine the feasibility of launching and maintaining the proposed program
* Phase 2: to identify potential program, program user, or organizational barriers and drivers
* Phase 3: to evaluate program impact and detect areas that need additional support

*NOTE: PSAT outlines the purpose and instructions for use of the tool (next page).*

You may wish to adapt this assessment to suit your own setting and circumstances, as needed.

**User Comments:**

*“This* (sustainability assessment tool) *is something we would have used. I definitely would have made more time or pushed the team for more time to do that sustainability piece. I wish we had focused on sustainability more at the beginning.”* (Physiotherapist)

Permission to include this assessment provided by:

Center for Public Health Systems Science, Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis. MO

Tool and guidance available from: <https://sustaintool.org/psat/>

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**Phase 2, Step 6: Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT)**

**What is program sustainability capacity?** We define program sustainability capacity as the ability to maintain programming and its benefits over time.

**Why is program sustainability capacity important?** Programs at all levels and settings struggle with their sustainability capacity. Unfortunately, when programs are forced to shut down, hard won improvements in public health, clinical care, or social service outcomes can dissolve. To maintain these benefits to society, stakeholders must understand all of the factors that contribute to program sustainability. With knowledge of these critical factors, stakeholders can build program capacity for sustainability and position their efforts for long term success.

**What is the purpose of this tool?** This tool will enable you to assess your program’s current capacity for sustainability across a range of specific organizational and contextual factors. Your responses will identify sustainability strengths and challenges. You can then use results to guide sustainability action planning for your program.

**Helpful definitions:** This tool has been designed for use with a wide variety of programs, both large and small, across different settings. Given this flexibility, it is important for you to think through how you are defining your program, organization, and community before starting the assessment. Below are a few definitions of terms that are frequently used throughout the tool.

* **Program** refers to the set of formal organized activities that you want to sustain over time. Such activities could occur at the local, state (provincial), national, or international level and in a variety of settings.
* **Organization** encompasses all the parent organizations or agencies in which the program is housed. Depending on your program, the organization may refer to a national, state (provincial), or local department, a nonprofit organization, a hospital, etc.
* **Community** refers to the stakeholders who may benefit from or who may guide the program. This could include local residents, organizational leaders, decision-makers, etc. Community does not refer to a specific town or neighborhood.

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**The name of the program or set of activities I am assessing is:**

In the following questions, you will rate your program across a range of specific factors that affect sustainability. Please respond to as many items as possible. If you truly feel you are not able to answer an item, you may select “NA.” **For each statement, circle the number that best indicates the extent to which your program has or does the following things.**

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| **Environmental Support: Having a supportive internal and external climate for your program** | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | Champions exists who strongly support the program  | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | The program has strong champions with the ability to garner resources | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | The program has leadership support within the larger organization | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | The program has political support from outside the organization | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program has strong public support | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
|  |
| **Funding Stability: establishing a consistent financial base for your program** | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | The program exists in a supportive state economic climate | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | The program implements policies to help ensure sustained funding | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | The program is funded through a variety of sources | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | The program has a combination of stable and flexible funding | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program has sustained funding | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |

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| **Partnerships: cultivating connections between your program and its stakeholders** | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | Diverse community organizations are invested in the success of the program | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | The program communicates with community leaders | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | Community leaders are involved with the program | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | Community leaders are passionately committed to the program | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The community is involved in development of program goals. | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
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| **Organizational Capacity: having the internal support and resources needed to effectively manage your program and its activities** | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | The program is well integrated into the operations of the organization | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | Organizational systems are in place to support the various program needs | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | Leadership effectively articulates the vision of the program to external partners | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | Leadership efficiently manages staff and other resources | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program has adequate staff to complete the program’s goals | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
|  |
| **Program Evaluation: assessing your program to inform planning and document results** | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | The program has the capacity for quality program evaluation | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | The program reports short term and intermediate outcomes | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | Evaluation results inform program planning and implementation | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | Program evaluation results are used to demonstrate successes to funders and other key stakeholders | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program presents strong evidence to the public that the program works | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |

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| **Program Adaptation: Taking actions that adapt your program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness**  | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | The program periodically reviews the evidence base | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | The program adapts strategies as needed | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | The program adapts to new science | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | The program proactively adapts to changes in the environment | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program makes decisions about which components are ineffective and should not continue | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
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| **Communications: strategic communications with the public and stakeholders about your program** | **To little To a very** **or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | The program has communications strategies to secure and maintain public support | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | Program staff communicate the need for the program to the public | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | The program is marketed in a way that generates interest | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | The program increases community awareness of the issue | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program demonstrates its value to the public | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
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| **Strategic Planning: using processes that guide your program’s direction, goals and strategies** | **To little To a very or no extent great extent** | **NA** |
| **1** | The program plans for future resource needs | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **2** | The program has a long-term financial plan | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **3** | The program has a sustainability plan | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **4** | The program’s goals are understood by all stakeholders | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
| **5** | The program clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders | 1[ ]  2[ ]  3[ ]  4[ ]  5[ ]  6[ ]  7[ ]  |  |
|  |  |