



TOOL | SUSTAINABILITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Developing a sustainable collaborative can be challenging. The sustainability self-assessment tool helps collaborations to consider 10 factors and assess the degree to which the partners are engaged in building sustainability into their effort. It is also important to note that not all collaborations or the outcomes of the collaboration should be sustained. In some cases, when the collaboration has achieved its core purpose, it should consider how to wrap up its work.

Sustainability is about many factors including leadership, funding, community engagement, and the ability to influence policy and systems that lead to program or collective impact. Sustainability includes investments and outcomes that can have lasting impact.

Successful and sustainable collaborations are ones where every actor in a partnership has a role to play and where responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of their collaborative efforts is shared. This includes conveners, backbone partners, community members, and partners who are engaged from different sectors. To achieve longer-term sustainability, all partners can and should play a part.

Source: 10: A Guide to Building a Sustainable and Resilient Collaborative

The 10 Factors for creating Collaboration Sustainability

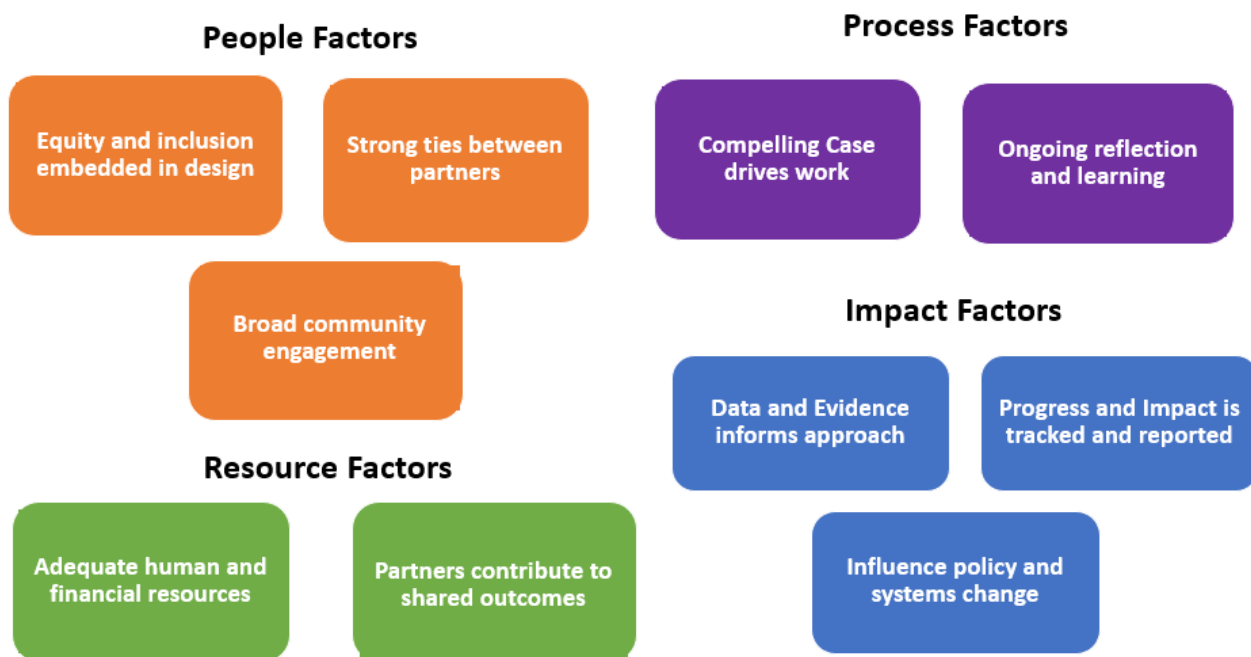
The 10: A Guide for Building a Sustainable and Resilient Collaborative identified ten sustainability factors. These factors focus on the people, resources, process, and impact of the collaboration's efforts.

There are two stacks of work for the collaboration to be sustainable over a longer term. The first stack includes people and resources. The people factors focus on embedding equity in the design, strong ties between partners, partners contribute to shared outcomes, adequate human resources, and broad community engagement. The resource factors focus on ensuring adequate human and financial resources and the contributions of partners.

The second stack of work includes the process and impact. The process factors focus on creating a compelling case, the use of data and evidence to inform the approach, and ongoing reflection and learning. The impact factors include tracking progress, and influencing policy and systems change.

Sustainable collaboration processes pay attention to these 10 factors in their design and collective effort. In some contexts, one or more of the factors may be easier to achieve while other collaborations may struggle with the same factor. This assessment tool invites your collaboration to reflect on both its sustainability strengths as well as those factors which might be more challenging to your work. The Sustainability Self-Assessment is designed to be a reflection, learning and action tool.

10 Sustainability Factors



When to use the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool

The Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool can be implemented at any stage during the collaboration journey. If the collaboration is at the beginning of its journey, the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool and the 10 sustainability factors can be useful as an early-stage scan or audit of community capacity and ownership. It can also provide a roadmap for sustainability factors to consider from the onset of the collaboration. The Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool might also prove useful to developing a sustainability plan for a funding application.

Collaborations which are at a mid-point in their process, might use the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool to determine what is working well and where there might be gaps in sustaining their work. An action plan can be developed using the tool to course correct.

Collaborations at the end of their journey might use the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool as an opportunity to review and reflect. The results of the self-assessment process might guide future collaborations or identify key community strengths or weaknesses which should be addressed.

Step 1: Define what Sustainability Means to the Collaboration

The first step in the Sustainability Self-Assessment is for the collaboration partners to define sustainability. In each collaboration context, the response might be different. Achieving agreement about how the collaboration defines sustainability will be helpful in the next steps of the self-assessment process.

The following questions are designed to prompt discussion and reflection.

Prompting Questions	Our Response
How do we define sustainability as a collaboration?	
Which of the 10 sustainability factors are most relevant to our collaboration’s core purpose?	
What expectations do our funders have about sustainability?	
What expectations do our partners have about sustainability?	
What specific thing would the collaboration want to sustain? (For example, the collaborative table, the programs delivered, the overall approach, etc)	
What else do we need to consider?	

Step 2: Assess the Sustainability of the Collaboration using the 10 Factors

The second step in this process is to critically assess each of the 10 sustainability factors. Each of the 10 factors is defined in **10: A Guide to Building a Sustainable and Resilient Collaborative**. Please refer to the guide for a more detailed description.

The following table identifies each of the 10 factors and invites collaboration partners to reflect and assess the strengths for each factor and areas for growth and development.

Sustainability Factor	Collaboration Strengths: How do we know this is a strength?	Collaboration Area for Growth: Why is this an area for growth?
Equity and Inclusion embedded in the design		
Strong ties between partners		
Broad community is engaged		
Adequate human and financial resources		
Partners contribute to shared outcomes		
Compelling case drives the work		
Ongoing reflection and learning		
Data and evidence informs approach		
Progress and impact is tracked and reported		
Influences policy and systems change		

Step 3: Consider How to Leverage the Collaboration Strengths

The third step in the Sustainability Self-Assessment process is to focus on the sustainability factors which have been identified as strengths. Leveraging existing strengths is important for collaboration sustainability.

For example, if the collaboration has developed a compelling case which drives collective action, it should consider how this compelling case aligns with funding priorities or government priorities. In developing the compelling case, did the collaboration engage local partners and gain commitment and buy in? How could these local partnerships be leveraged to advance the compelling case.

Factor – Identified Strength	Define what makes this factor a strength for the collaboration?	How can we leverage this strength?

Step 4: Consider the Collaboration Areas for Growth

Every collaboration will identify sustainability factors which might need more focused attention. Be realistic and critical about the strengths and areas for growth. The goal of a self-assessment process is to engage the collective intelligence of the partners and to build strategies which will create a more sustainable approach.

Factor – Identified Area for Growth and Development	Define what makes this factor an area for growth?	What actions are required to develop this factor?

Step 5: Developing the Sustainability Action Plan

The final step is to develop a sustainability action plan. This is where all the pieces come together. The following table will help the collaboration to form the sustainability action plan.

Name of the Collaboration		
Our Compelling Case		
How the Collaboration defined sustainability		
What element(s) in the collaboration to be sustained		
Collaboration Factors	Factor	Action to leverage or develop
Strengths		
Areas for Development		
Action Plan Steps	Timeframe	Collaboration Lead Partner(s)

The collaboration partners should be involved in developing the action plan. In some cases, an individual partner might lead out and in other cases it may require multiple partners to contribute to the action. A key principle for developing the Sustainability Action Plan is co-design. This not only leverages the collective wisdom of collaborative partners, but it also builds a framework for meaningful engagement.

Final Thoughts about Collaborations and Sustainability Factors

Considering sustainability, particularly for collaborations working to address complex and long-term challenges and achieve population-level outcomes, requires a thoughtful approach. The Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool is designed to enable collaboration partners to consider the sustainability factors and build an action plan. The Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool can be used at any point in the lifespan of a collaboration.

Collaborations are dynamic and should be responsive to the changing conditions of a community. Over the lifespan of the collaboration, leadership will change and evolve as will funding and other commitments. Sustainability is built on a foundation of many different factors. Building competency across these 10 factors is a key condition toward building sustainability.

Consider the specific elements of the collaboration that need to be sustained and what is no longer needed when building the Sustainability Action Plan

It should also be noted that not every element of a collaboration process will need to be sustained. There will be cases where the collaboration has achieved its core purpose and may cease operations. There might also be times where the core purpose of the collaboration can be more effectively integrated into an existing organization or program that already exists in the community.

The Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool is an opportunity to have these frank and important conversations about what the collaboration hopes to sustain and focus on those strategies which build sustainability.