

HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE

This sustainability plan is designed to be adapted by community collaboratives, initiatives, or coalitions. Each section below includes guiding questions and pointers to help you tailor content to your local context, priorities, and funding environment. Not all questions need to be answered fully—use what is most relevant to your initiative’s stage and capacity.

INTRODUCTION

Guiding Questions

- What is your initiative, and when and why was it launched?
- What specific community or population does your initiative serve?
- What issue(s) are you addressing, and why are they urgent in your community?
- What does “sustainability” mean for your initiative specifically?
- What assumptions do you want readers to understand about funding, capacity, and time?
- What should readers expect to find in this plan?

GOAL-SETTING

Guiding Questions

- What are the major pillars or goals of your sustainability approach?
- How do these goals work together to support long-term impact?
- What funding sources currently support your work?
- Where are you most vulnerable to funding loss?
- What types of funders are most aligned with your mission? Who are your natural partners in this work?
- What values or priorities must a funder share to be a good fit?
- Which sectors are most promising (foundations, corporations, individuals, government)?
- What internal systems are needed to manage grants well?
- What assets already exist in the community? How can partnerships strengthen capacity?

Pointers

- Be honest about current concentration of funding.
- Balance near-term revenue needs with longer-term diversification.
- Show how funding diversification supports community ownership, not just stability.
- Encourage a living prospect list, not a static one.
- Acknowledge capacity constraints when setting expectations.
- Emphasize relationship-building, not transactional fundraising.
- Connect grant management to credibility and trust.
- Use asset mapping to guide decisions.
- Avoid partnerships based solely on funding opportunity.
- Prioritize trust and alignment over speed.

FUNDABLE PROJECTS

Guiding Questions

- What components of your work are most compelling to funders?
- Which projects align with specific funding interests?
- How can projects be described clearly and concisely?

Pointers

- Frame projects as investment opportunities, not just needs.
- Link each project to outcomes and impact.
- Keep descriptions adaptable for proposals.

PROSPECTIVE FUNDERS

Guiding Questions

- Which funders align with which goals?
- What relationships already exist?
- Where are new opportunities emerging?

Pointers

- Use this as a working document.
- Update regularly.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Guiding Questions

- Who is responsible for which sustainability functions?
- Which roles exist now, and which are aspirational?
- Where are responsibilities shared or embedded in partners?

Pointers

- Acknowledge phased development.
- Use this section to support clarity, not rigidity.

ANTICIPATED RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Guiding Questions

- What could realistically derail sustainability efforts?
- Which risks are internal vs. external? How will risks be mitigated or monitored?

Pointers

- Be candid—funders value honesty.
- Pair each risk with a mitigation strategy.
- Revisit this section annually.

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM FUNDRAISING OUTCOMES

Guiding Questions

- What does success look like in 1–3 years? In 5–10 years?
- How will progress be measured?
- What financial benchmarks matter most?

Pointers

- Use specific, measurable targets.
- Balance ambition with feasibility.
- Tie outcomes directly to sustainability goals.

CASE FOR SUPPORT

Guiding Questions

- What problem are you uniquely positioned to address?
- Why does this issue matter now?
- What has already been accomplished?
- What is possible with investment?

Pointers

- Lead with community context and urgency.
- Use data strategically—not excessively.
- Center residents as agents of change.

ELEVATOR PITCHES

Guiding Questions

- How would you explain your work in 30–60 seconds?
- What statistic or story captures attention?
- What clear action are you inviting the listener to take?

Pointers

- Create multiple versions for different audiences.
- Keep language conversational.
- Consider ending with a call to action.