



# Sustainability Toolkit

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## Overview

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) recommends the following skills for sustainability:

- **Consistency:** Start planning for sustainability early in the grant cycle. If you are not in the early stages of the grant cycle anymore, start now.
- **Prioritize:** Decide what efforts to maintain after funding ends. Ask what worked best, what is most needed, and what can realistically be kept going.
- **Plan:** Build on partners' ability and willingness to take on key roles in program activities. Ask who is best able to take on things being done under the grant.
- **Implement:** Training, procedures, and policy are lasting pieces that can help sustain suicide prevention and postvention.
- **Document:** Collect and share data about program successes, outcomes, and processes, and strategize how to communicate program results.<sup>1</sup>



This toolkit will provide steps, guidance, and resources for you to work on these core skills and make sure key aspects of your Native Connections (NC) project live on into the future. This includes activities that can be maintained at low or no cost.

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<sup>1</sup> SPRC, Core Competency – Sustainability: <http://www.sprc.org/grantees/core-competencies/sustainability>



## The Native Connections Approach

All planning, activities, and evaluation of the grant should start with the NC Approach (see Page 3). Sustainability is built into the approach, which emphasizes communities' strengths and identity. It builds on existing resources to increase skills with planning experience, gatekeeper and other training, and evaluation tasks. All these skills contribute to sustainability efforts.

Youth, family, and community are at the center of the NC Approach. They should also be the center of your Sustainability Plan. A successful plan will use the tools in the Approach—the Community System Analysis (CSA), the Community Readiness Model (CRM), and the Strategic Action Plan (SAP). It will also be based on evaluation data you have collected.

### Sustainability Process using the Native Connections Approach

Figure 1 on the following page shows steps for sustainability around the NC Approach. The steps start on the right-hand side of the graphic and are numbered in the order they should be followed:

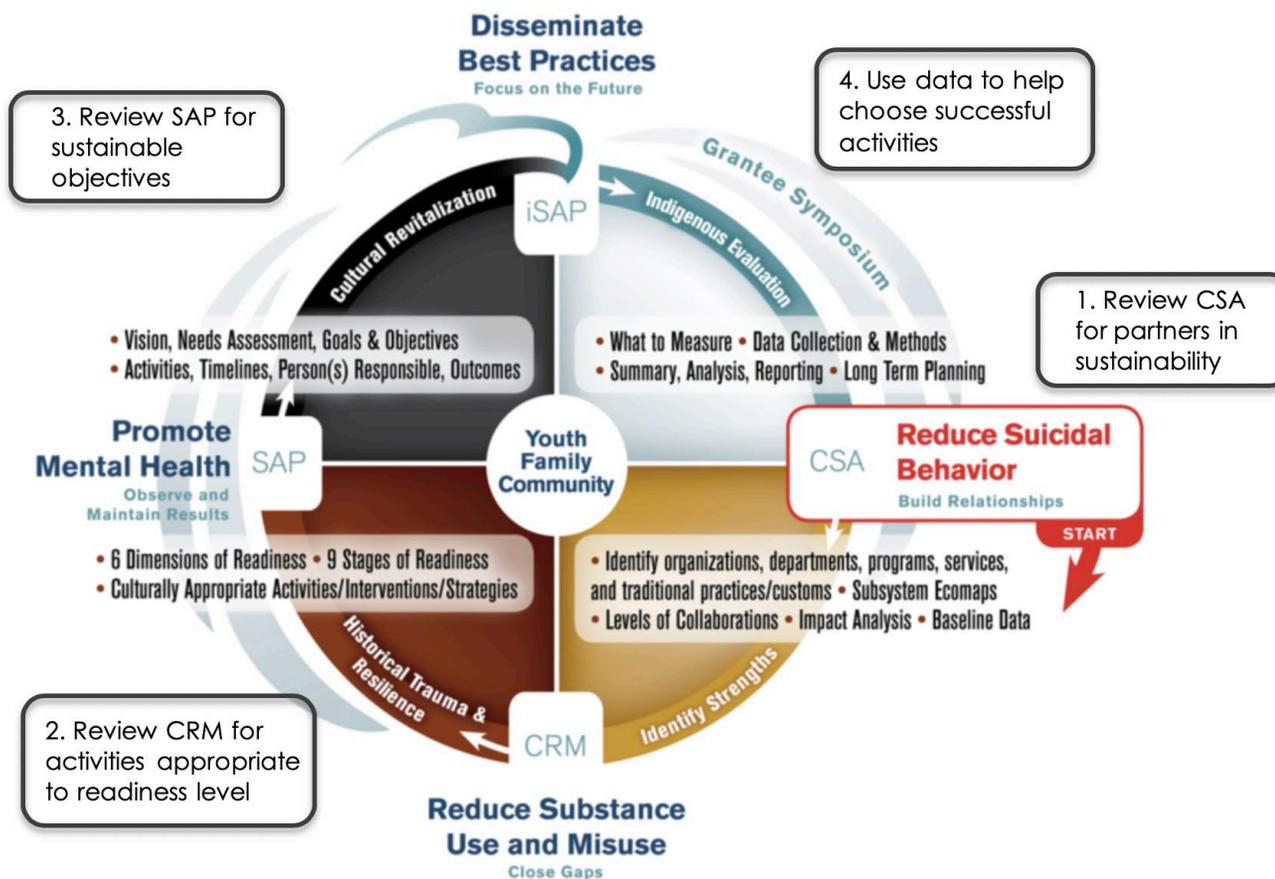
1. Review the CSA to decide which partners are the best fit for working together to sustain the successful activities of the grant.
2. Review the most recent CRM. With the CRM levels of readiness in mind, determine what activities are appropriate to sustain in the community.
3. Review the SAP and objective outcomes, then decide which activities have a chance of being sustained.
4. Review the data gathered through the life of the grant to help choose successful activities for sustainability.

As you review the NC Approach, focus on the strengths of the community and grant activities that have been successful.



Figure 1. Native Connections Approach and Sustainability Steps

## Native Connections Approach





## Using the Native Connections Approach in Grant Writing

If you have followed the NC Approach, you have already been planning for sustainability. The CSA, CRM, procedure and policy development, data collection, and using data for evaluation are all key elements of sustainability. These are the tools and activities that will help you develop a realistic, community-specific sustainability plan.

### The Role of the Community System Analysis

The CSA is one type of asset mapping, which is a process of identifying strengths and resources of a community. Many grant proposals require or would be improved by an asset map of the community. Since the CSA is updated throughout the NC grant, it is a living document that can be used both as a current asset map and also to show that asset mapping skills exist in the community.

### The Role of Community Readiness Model Scoring in Grant Application

The CRM is a scientifically-validated tool to assess how ready a community is to address an issue. It helps create community- and culturally-specific interventions, and can be used in grant applications. It is a good way to assess the community's need for a specific grant. It can also be used for evaluation, if that is a grant requirement. NC staff has been trained in the scoring process, so the skills needed to do a CSA exist in the community. As you know, the CRM can be used for other issues besides suicide prevention. This combination of skills in assessment and evaluation could help secure future grants. Likewise, a grant that targets a community's level of readiness would not only have a better chance of being funded, it would have a better chance of succeeding.

### The Role of the Strategic Action Plan

Reviewing the SAP for what was successful and what to sustain is one of the first steps in sustainability planning. In addition, the skills to develop, follow, update, and evaluate an action plan can be listed in a grant application. This could help in the success of an application.



## Sustaining the Benefits of the Native Connections Approach

The first step in sustaining the benefits of the NC Approach is to identify what other agencies in the community might benefit from the skills of the CSA, CRM, and SAP. Partners may be able to benefit from portions of the SAP or planning skills the Community Advisory Board (CAB) has developed over the course of the grant. Ask, “What agency or project would be the best fit to take over the tools and data that have been developed? Who is in the best position to carry progress made through the NC project forward into the future?”

Too often, the materials, activities, and results from a program are lost once the grant ends. When the next grant comes along, efforts start again from scratch. This results in lost time and wasted effort, and it can also create a sense of futility and hopelessness. Examples that have led to problems early on in a grant include: staffing issues, such as hiring and retention challenges, lost time and productivity, and too few staff to accomplish grant requirements; misunderstanding the goals or objectives of the grant because those who wrote the proposal are no longer on staff; and lack of guidance within the funding opportunity announcement or request for proposals regarding a sustainability plan.

To avoid losing both the skills and the hope built in the NC project, directors should look at what else in the community is being done for prevention. Then they should ask who would benefit from having the materials developed by the NC project. What grants or agencies are working in prevention that might best be able to use the materials to advance to the next step? Later in this toolkit, we will look more in depth at partnerships and community support.



## Deciding What to Sustain

It is important to establish a CAB early in the grant cycle, with the right people seated in a formal capacity to provide organized oversight throughout the life of your grant. If a dedicated advisory board is seated, it is much more likely the community will be able to sustain efforts after the grant ends. When developing a sustainability plan in the first year or 2 of a grant, the CAB should answer these questions:



1. What would be the *most important aspects* of the program to sustain?
2. What can we *realistically sustain*?
3. What *actions need to be taken* to build community solutions that will last?

The following steps will help the CAB decide what to sustain and develop a plan for how to do it. Sustainability should be a part of the CAB focus and responsibility at each meeting, so that actions taken, progress made, and actions left to complete can be mapped out and monitored.

### **Step 1: Assess current objectives**

Start by going back to the objectives in your grant application, SAP, or logic model. For each objective, ask yourself:

- Has the project been successful in meeting this objective? If so, what changed after this objective was implemented? Can this change be sustained?
- Which parts of the project's work have momentum?
  - What has helped it move forward?
  - Whose support has been key?

### **Step 2: Assess possibility of sustaining objectives that have momentum**

The CAB should address the following questions:

- What would be the most important thing achieved to keep going?
- What is already sustained?



- What should and could be sustained but needs more work?
- What partners are or should be involved in the efforts we think are most important to sustain?

### **Step 3: Assess possibilities for funding that are realistic to pursue**

The CAB should address the following questions:

- Do any partners have funding or other resources that could address our high-priority objectives?
- Is there any funding available from the tribe, the state, or local entities?
- Are there grant opportunities that we could pursue?

### **Step 4: Develop a Sustainability Plan using a format similar to the SAP**

The CAB and partners should meet to develop a plan with objectives, activities, people responsible, and timeline for the activities identified in Step 2. Write up the plan and distribute it to all parties.

You can use the worksheet template and sample on the following pages to assess objectives as described in Steps 1 and 2 above.



### Template – Current Objectives Assessment for Sustainability Worksheet

Objective	What parts of this objective have momentum? What helped move it forward?	Which partners' support has been key?	What long term outcome are you trying to change with this objective?
			<i>(For example, "Increasing X protective factor." Or "Decreasing Y risk factor.")</i>



### Sample – Current Objectives Assessment for Sustainability Worksheet

Objective	What parts of this objective have momentum? What helped move it forward?	Which partners' support has been key?	What long term outcome are you trying to change with this objective?
Train 10 people in Question, Persuade, Refer	We now have 8 people who are certified trainers	Clinic provided space to train community members Church advertised in bulletin	Raise awareness level of suicide prevention Increase referral rates to behavior health
Hold a Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) in the summer	Held a GONA in summer and had good community participation	Domestic violence grant helped with GONA costs School provided venue	Keep community healing going by making GONA an annual event
Project Venture (PV) in summer school	Students like PV 2 teachers are trained	Summer school program	Increase protective factors through youth involvement and cultural teachings



## Partnerships and Community Support



Relationships have always been key to Native resilience. These relationships include family, elders, peers, agencies and organizations, and tribal leadership. Sustainability relies on these circles, from one-on-one word of mouth with family and friends to official tribal or village council policies.

### Leadership Support

#### Funding

Council buy-in is very helpful to sustaining prevention efforts. If the tribal or village council is willing to fund even a quarter-time position, it can be enough to keep prevention activities alive. Tribal or village leadership could be asked to help fund the youth council. If you have not yet secured council support, in terms of both fiscal and leadership support, you might want to develop a list of talking points. This way you are prepared to talk to both individual council members and the council as a whole.

Many NC grantees find that one of the lowest dimension scores on the CRM is leadership. If your score on Dimension C: Leadership is still in Vague Awareness or below, the CAB should implement the strategies for Levels 1–3 (No Awareness, Denial/Resistance, and Vague Awareness). Figure 2 lists some of these activities, which include:

- Make one-on-one visits with community leaders and members.
- Visit existing small groups to share information with them about local statistics and outcomes achieved by the NC program.
- Engage local educational and/or health outreach programs to help your efforts to engage tribal leadership.
- Point out media articles that describe local statistics and available services.
- Continue to submit articles on prevention for tribal newsletters, church bulletins, local



newsletters, club newsletters, etc., and post flyers, posters, and billboards.

- Present prevention information at community health events.
- Publish newspaper editorials and human-interest articles with general information and local implications.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2. Dimension C, Vague Awareness Activities



## Policies

Getting the tribal council to officially adopt prevention policies is true sustainability. Tribes could develop and implement a Tribal Action Plan, which helps communities achieve their prevention and treatment goals. Other tribal policies could include alcohol outlet restrictions, legal protection for crisis response teams, policies for maintaining safe and drug-free neighborhoods, or Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts.

## Protocols

Agency protocols could be the legacy of the NC project. If crisis response protocols have been established or revised in schools, if safety net and warm handoff protocols have been

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<sup>2</sup> Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Handbook, Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, [http://www.triethniccenter.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2018/04/CR\\_Handbook\\_8-3-15.pdf](http://www.triethniccenter.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2018/04/CR_Handbook_8-3-15.pdf)

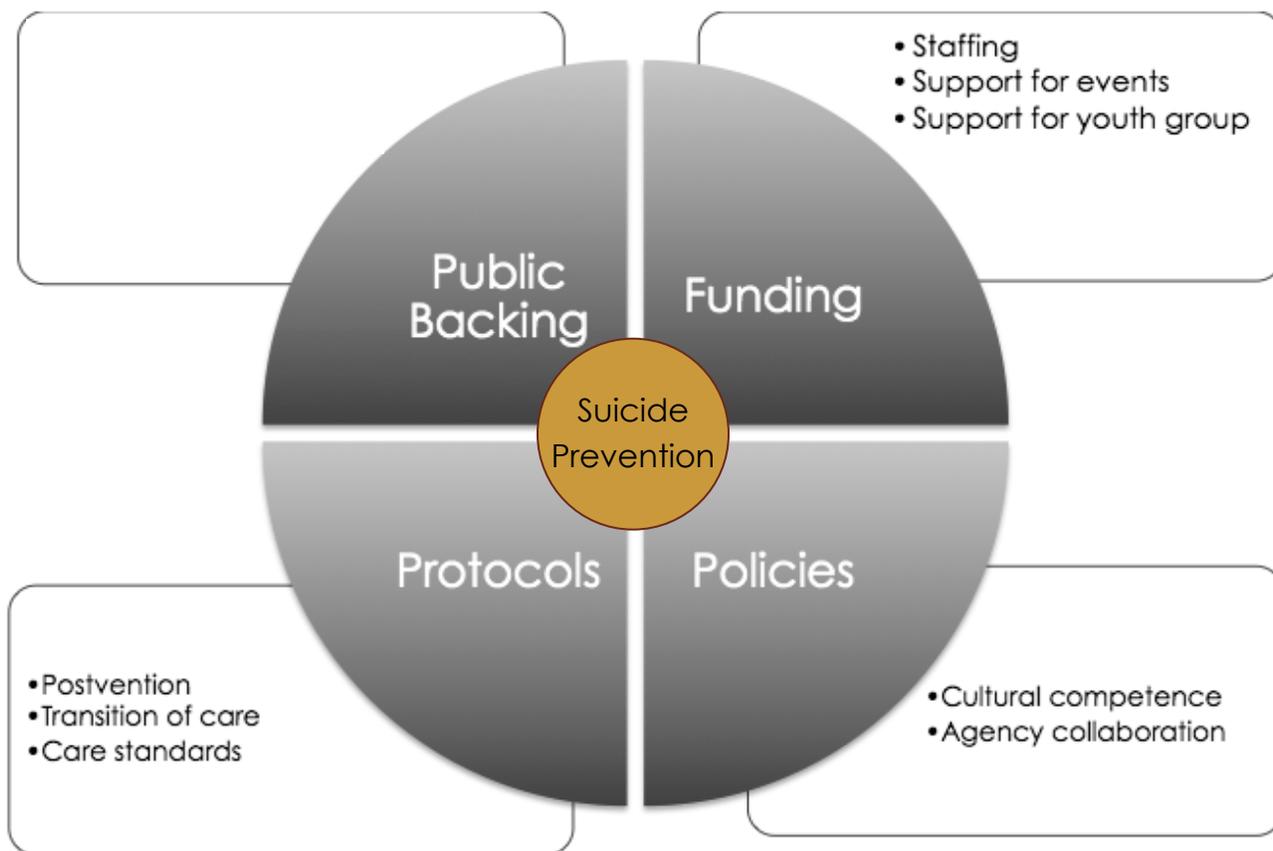


implemented and codified through a Memorandum of Understanding between mental health clinics and schools, this is also sustainability. See the Procedure, Protocol, and Policy Development Toolkit for more detailed explanations of these protocols, templates, and implementation guidance.

## Public Backing

If tribal leaders have knowledge of prevention activities, if they talk about prevention activities and programs publicly and they show up at events—this all contributes to sustainability. Identifying a key champion in leadership who will continue to push prevention efforts after the grant is over can help keep awareness levels high. Figure 3 shows the types of support tribal leadership can contribute.

**Figure 3. Types of Leadership Support**





## Other Agency Support

Before asking another agency if they have staff or resources to take on an NC activity, you need to have a relationship with that agency. The CSA is the starting point for reviewing what agencies and groups are in the community. The CAB should review the CSA and hold a discussion. This discussion is about relationships, other agencies' resources, and the next steps in reaching out to those who might help sustain objectives identified by the Current Objectives Assessment for Sustainability Worksheet (on Page 8.)

Partners might help promote sustaining prevention in the community by:

1. Keeping the issue public,
2. Educating policy makers,
3. Promoting community buy-in and enhancing community involvement,
4. Helping obtain state and grant resources,
5. Advocating for policy change, and/or
6. Identifying the needs of a community.<sup>3</sup>

One sustainability strategy is to promote the NC mission, not just the activities the grant developed and delivered. The Community Toolbox<sup>4</sup> from the University of Kansas says,

*By promoting your initiative's mission and objectives, you encourage others to take them to heart and make them their own. This will increase the overall impact of your work. Promoting the adoption of your mission and objectives will also help ensure that your work will continue when or if your group is no longer around (heaven forbid!)-or if you simply decide to move on to other things.*

## Resources

Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts: The Key Components:

<http://www.wellnesscourts.org/files/Tribal%20Healing%20to%20Wellness%20Courts%20The%20Key%20Components.pdf>

Walking on Common Ground: Resources for Promoting and Facilitating Tribal-State-Federal Collaboration: <http://www.walkingoncommonground.org>

The Tribal Law and Order Act Implementation: <https://www.samhsa.gov/tloa>

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<sup>3</sup> CDC: Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs User Guide: Coalitions State and Community Interventions: [http://www.ct.gov/sustinet/lib/sustinet/referencelibrary/tobacco/cdcuser\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/sustinet/lib/sustinet/referencelibrary/tobacco/cdcuser_guide.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Taken from Tools to Change Our World: A Service of the Center for Community Health and Development



## No-Cost and Low-Cost Sustainability Efforts

### Sustaining Youth Activities

#### Sustain Youth Council and other successful youth activities

If you have a youth council, discuss what it needs to continue. Could it become self-sustaining through youth-led fundraising efforts, school-based sponsorship, or sponsorship from another organization?

Talk with the youth council about sustainability. It could develop its own sustainability plan. This plan might include:

- 1) Membership recruitment efforts,
- 2) Youth asking local businesses for funding,
- 3) Youth-led social media campaigns,
- 4) National youth organization membership, and/or
- 5) Appealing to the tribal council for sponsorship and funding.



A youth council could strengthen peer relationships using teambuilding, creating digital stories, and mentoring. Adding cultural components to youth-led efforts helps sustainability.

Many youth councils have no funding and must operate with the resources and materials from the community. These may come from the health center, schools, or a church or traditional cultural group. Building relationships with school, church, and health center staff can increase the likelihood a youth group is sustained.

Studies show groups with high rates of retention emphasize youth leadership by providing many leadership opportunities. They also have staff who are informed about other youth



programs and are community-based.<sup>5</sup> NC staff should look to sustain strategies that are effective in the community. For example, evidence-based Project Venture, an outdoor leadership-style program for youth, has several strategies known to be effective. These can be modified to fit your own tribal or village culture and can be carried on through partnerships, perhaps with a school or youth group.

You could look into United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY). UNITY's mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical, and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth. This includes helping to build a strong, unified, and self-reliant Native America through greater youth involvement. UNITY's website includes a step-by-step guide to establish a UNITY Youth Council.<sup>6</sup> Your existing youth council may want to convert to a UNITY youth council to take advantage of the many leadership opportunities they offer as well as other opportunities, including a suicide prevention initiative called "I will live."

## Sustain School-Based or Curriculum-Based Activities

Sustainable youth-focused activities, such as American Indian Life Skills, may be housed in schools. Once teachers are trained in delivering the material, the school would just have to buy the books.

Other cultural activities, such as Project Venture or wilderness camp, might be incorporated into after school or summer school programming. The cost could be covered by funding that supports these programs, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program or Title I funding, both from the U.S. Department of Education.

## Resources

UNITY website: <https://unityinc.org/native-youth/youth-councils/>

Creating and Sustaining a Thriving Youth Advisory Council: <http://www.umhs-adolescenthealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/manual-for-website.pdf>

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<sup>5</sup> Deschenes, S.N., et. al., Engaging Older Youth, <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Engaging-Older-Youth-City-Level-Strategies-Support-Sustained-Participation-Out-of-School-Time.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://unityinc.org/native-youth/youth-councils/>



Sustaining Youth Engagement Initiatives: <https://wvsystemofcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Sustaining-Youth-Engagement-2009-Finance-Project.pdf>

American Indian Life Skills Development:

<http://www.humanserviceagency.org/NEPrevention/index.php/american-indian-life-skills-development>

Project Venture: <https://projectventure.org>

## Word of Mouth Promotion

Discuss word of mouth promotion with the CAB and youth council. This includes talking about the strengths of the community and promoting other protective factors. Discussing suicide and getting help for mental health and drug and alcohol challenges is also prevention. Talking up prevention doesn't cost anything. This can and should be a life-long goal for everyone that has been touched by the NC program.

People can struggle with what to say to a person they fear may be suicidal. They may also struggle generally with talking about suicide. Consider ways to address the various aspects of suicide prevention and then come up with an "elevator speech" for one or more of these topics, a brief (30-second) speech that you can memorize and have ready for any opportunity. For example, you might want to have the information about when a traditional activity involving youth occurs and what youth could expect if they decide to participate. (Cultural activities have been shown to be a protective factor.) Another example of an elevator speech for sustainability might be talking about the fact that support is available for people struggling and that therapy helps.

Social media is another form of "word of mouth" promotion. One sustainable, no-cost activity could be having every member of the CAB and the youth group commit to posting once a month about something related to suicide prevention.

## Gatekeeper Training

The NC grant may have sponsored training in evidence-based gatekeeper practices such as Mental Health First Aid; Question, Persuade, Refer; or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Promoting these training opportunities with partners may be a low-cost sustainability effort. For example, get the local health clinic or school to commit to training their staff annually. Many states have gatekeeper training for low or no cost. It is also possible



that individual members of the CAB would be willing to pay for their own ongoing “booster” training.

## Community Healing Events

Get community support and partner with the tribal or village council for community prevention activities, such as hosting a Gathering of Native Americans or Alaska Natives (GONA/GOAN). This could be a low-cost sustainability activity. If several organizations contribute funding for such an event, it may be possible to meet the cost of hosting a GONA/GOAN for your community.

If local community members have been trained in GONA/GOAN facilitation, the cost of hosting such events may be fairly low. If the community would respond better to an outside facilitator, it may be possible to exchange facilitators with another community that also has GONA/GOAN facilitators.

You may also be able to get partners or other stakeholders to host other types of healing events, such as a Wiping the Tears ceremony.

## Resources

The Education Development Center, Inc, Leaving a Legacy: Six Strategies for Sustainability: [http://www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/legacy\\_wheel.pdf](http://www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/legacy_wheel.pdf)

Three Bold Steps, Community Impact through Partnering, Planning, and Action: <http://3boldsteps.promoteprevent.org>



## The Sustainability Plan Template

Using the template below, identify which objectives from the SAP you want to sustain and what actions will be necessary to sustain them. Then identify what individuals and partners will take the lead and when actions will be completed. Add more goals and as many objectives as the CAB determines are appropriate.



### Template – Sustainability Plan

**Goal 1: Sustain the aspects of the NC project that have the greatest chance of success for sustaining the best outcomes achieved by the grant.**

<b>Objective (chosen from SAP, if appropriate)</b>	<b>Activities to Achieve Objective</b>	<b>Lead Responsible and Involved Partners</b>	<b>Due Date</b>



## Sample – Sustainability Plan

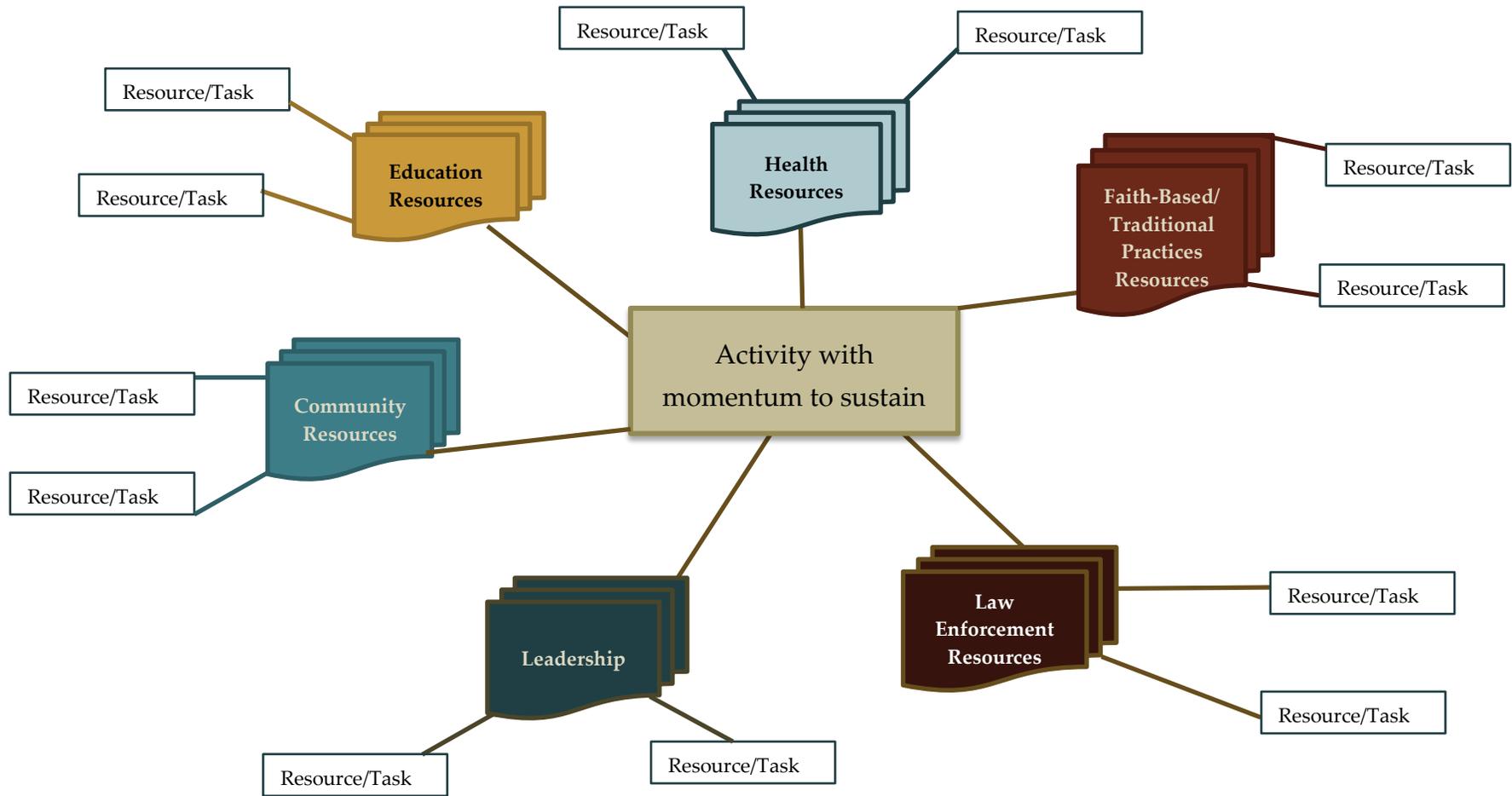
**Goal 1: Sustain the aspects of the NC project that have the greatest chance of success for sustaining the best outcomes achieved by the grant.**

Objective (chosen from SAP, if appropriate)	Activities to Achieve Objective	Lead Responsible and Involved Partners	Due Date
Gatekeeper trainings once a quarter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact state re: free QPR training</li> <li>2. Meet with clinic re: space for training</li> <li>3. Get commitment from CAB to post training info on social media</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director</li> <li>2. Director</li> <li>3. CAB</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. May 1, 2019</li> <li>2. May 1, 2019</li> <li>3. Ongoing</li> </ol>
Project Venture in summer school programming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Secure commitment from summer school coordinator</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. April 30, 2019</li> </ol>
One on one conversations and social media posts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get commitment from youth group</li> <li>2. Get commitment for CAB</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth group</li> <li>2. CAB</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. May 1, 2019</li> <li>2. May 1, 2019</li> </ol>
Secure funding for youth group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact Tribal council champion</li> <li>2. Ask champion to put on council agenda</li> <li>3. Mentor youth to contact UNITY</li> <li>4. Secure commitment from adult leader for youth group</li> <li>5. Encourage youth group to fund raise</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director</li> <li>2. Director</li> <li>3. CAB</li> <li>4. CAB</li> <li>5. Youth group/ adult leader</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. April 15, 2019</li> <li>2. April 15, 2019</li> <li>3. April 4, 2019</li> <li>4. April 4, 2019</li> <li>5. Ongoing</li> </ol>



## Graphic – Sustaining SAP Objectives

This graphic is taken from Tab 6 of the CSA and is a way to map out resources and tasks for sustaining activities from your SAP objectives. The next page provides a sample for reference.





## Sample – Sustaining SAP Objectives

