

Project Sustainability Checklist





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Sustainable CARE projects are community-based partnerships that continue to improve the local environment after CARE funding ends.



Purpose of the Checklist

This checklist is a tool developed to help CARE communities focus your CARE program activities in a manner that will help you work toward long-term project sustainability. It will help you think through some of the elements that have helped other CARE communities sustain their work. It is not a roadmap or a cookbook, but it is a method to ensure that you can reach the goal of project sustainability. The application of each element described in the checklist will vary from community to community depending on the circumstances. Use this checklist as:

- a planning tool throughout your project;
- appropriate and adapt it to help you plan for sustaining your work; and
- the basis for discussions in your partnership to help identify areas that need additional attention.

Remember, you have the best chance for success if you plan with sustainability in mind from the beginning of your project.

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CARE Program Overview

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program is a competitive grant program that offers communities an innovative way to address the risks from multiple sources of pollution in their environment. The program is designed to help communities build the capacity they need to continue their work long after the CARE funding has ended and continue to achieve results long after EPA grant funds are exhausted. This is the fundamental concept of project sustainability.



Some additional information has been collected on how EPA might help communities work toward project sustainability. Those ideas are included in Appendix A.



CARE grantees follow a four-step process to successfully complete their CARE project. Grantees:

1. **Bring together all stakeholders to form a broad-based partnership dedicated to reducing toxics in the local environment.** Partners may include:
 - Non-profit groups,
 - Community organizations,
 - Businesses,
 - Schools,
 - State, Tribal and local government agencies,
 - EPA and other federal agencies.
2. **Identify problems and solutions.** Working together, the partnership assesses the risks from toxics in the community and considers options for reducing those risks. EPA provides technical assistance as needed to support this process.
3. **Implement solutions and reduce risks.** The partnership identifies and implements the combination of programs that best meet the community's needs with EPA providing funding to help with implementation. The community begins improving its environment, while continually reassessing risks and priorities.



4. **Facilitate self-sustaining projects.** The community develops new ways to attract funding and partners into its broad-based collaborative to build on its success. New problem assessments are completed and new solutions identified. As a result, the project becomes self-sustaining and continues to improve the environment where community members live, work and play.

As communities identify problems and solutions, the CARE Roadmap (<http://www.epa.gov/care/library/20080620roadmap.pdf>) can be used to help guide the process. Similarly, this checklist provides guidance to communities as they work toward long-term project sustainability. We all know that it is unrealistic to think that the environmental concerns facing communities will be completely solved in the two or four years of CARE funding. CARE communities should use the opportunity presented by the CARE funding to plan carefully for sustaining their work over the long-term.

Sustainable CARE projects are community-based partnerships that continue to improve the local environment after CARE funding ends.



Key Elements of Sustainable CARE Projects

The Checklist has five sections, each covering a number of key elements. Examples and descriptions are included to help you think about the individual elements and how they may apply to your project. Check whether your organization has addressed each element or whether your organization may need further work in that area.

I. Developing the Foundation for Success

- a. **Develop a mission or vision statement for the organization or project.**

The mission or vision statement is the long-term objective for the organization or project.

- b. **Develop a set of guiding principles that is agreed upon by all members of the partnership.**

A set of guiding principles helps ensure that all members of the collaboration are working in a similar manner with similar priorities.

- c. **Develop project goals that are community inspired and community driven.**
- Goals should be bold and exciting and must be clear, simple and compelling. These are the individual achievements needed to reach the organization or project's mission.*

- 1. Engage community members in the development of goals.** *Goals must come from the people. They must have ownership of the goals and see the goals as crucial to their lives.*

- 2. Ensure that the goals fit with overall community priorities.** *Figure out how the goals of your project support and help the community reach its other priorities. You may wish to include your work as part of a total community revitalization plan ensuring that it fits with the other community priorities.*

Example of Mission and Vision Statements

South Atlanta for the Environment (SAFE) Coalition

SAFE Coalition used the CARE Sustainability Checklist in the planning process and came up with the following vision and mission statements.

Vision: A community free of environmental hazards, which promotes health and safety for all.

Mission: To work together as a team to identify, publicize, reduce and prevent environmental health hazards in South Atlanta neighborhood planning.



Example of Guiding Principles and Community Inspired, Community Driven Goals **West Oakland - Using a Partnering Agreement**

West Oakland is immediately adjacent to the Port of Oakland, one of the largest container ports in the U.S. After concluding a small scale study of diesel trucks with 13 action oriented recommendations, the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (EIP) chose to use the study results to bring together a broad set of stakeholders to address in a collaborative fashion the broader set of toxics issues facing the community. To structure the collaborative, the EIP partnered with EPA Region 9 and adapted a partnering agreement previously developed for use in Barrio Logan in San Diego. The agreement includes a formal definition of the Collaborative and its goals, as well as the roles of the co-leads (EIP and EPA), Steering Committee and member partners. The agreement provides for community co-chairs and neutral facilitation. The West Oakland Toxic Reduction Collaborative (WOTRC) was formally launched in March of 2005.

The Partnering Agreement addressed the needs and opportunities to (1) formally and structurally empower the community and (2) address a broad set of toxic issues in a multi-stakeholder format. The formal Partnering Agreement provided for a neutrally facilitated multistakeholder collaborative. Key outcomes were:

- Community co-chairing is essential. “Community” in this sense refers to representatives of the impacted community. The community co-chaired the Collaborative at every level, including every workgroup, the Steering Committee and the full Collaborative.
- Neutral facilitation was essential. Further, there was a clear lesson that effective facilitation should not only be neutral, but knowledgeable and experienced regarding the issues on the table and the players at the table.
- Effective collaboration is not as simple as bringing key stakeholders together around a table, but requires orchestration to ensure that all the key sectors are effectively represented and heard.
- Effective involvement by the impacted community requires special attention due to a comparative lack of resources and capacity in comparison to other sectors such as industry and agencies, especially on technical and legal issues.



d. Define what long-term sustainable success means for your project and organization. *One of the key goals of the CARE Program is for each CARE community to develop the capacity to continue to work over the long-term to improve its environment and environmental health.*

- 1. Discuss and define what long-term sustainable success is for your project.**
- 2. Clarify and decide up front with the collaboration what long-term sustainability means.**
 - *Does it mean to merely finish the specific project that was started?*
 - *Will it mean continuing the work and the collaboration after the grant ends?*
 - *Will the collaboration create a new group or organization that will continue the work or seek to institutionalize a new function in an existing organization to continue the work?*

II. Building and Sustaining the Partnership

- a. Develop a long-term plan for continuing your work after the CARE funding ends.** *The key to continued success is having a shared community vision that will drive the process for the long-term.*

You may need to develop a long-term plan, not just for the two or four years of the CARE grant. It may take much longer to make the significant improvements you envision.

Plan to work consistently for at least the length of time of the one or two CARE grants; avoid stopping and starting work, as this can be very disruptive to community members and can drain their energy.

- b. Develop short-term gains or milestones that are steps in your long-term plan.** *A long-term plan may seem overwhelming for some members of your collaboration. Short-term gains or milestones break the project into doable steps. Attempt to progress through your short-term plan at every meeting. Acknowledge and/or celebrate even the smallest successes or victories.*

- c. Enlist and develop leaders from all sectors of your partnership.** *Projects need collaborative leaders interested in promoting leadership skills in everyone.*



- 1. Create and implement a plan for leadership development.** *Ensuring strong leadership for the long-term will require planning for leadership development from the start.*
- 2. Recognize and value diversity (e.g., age, ethnic, economic, social) in your leadership team.**
- 3. Plan for succession so that the organization/partnership is not dependent on a single individual or leader.**
- 4. Make sure that the organization has a succession plan for management.**

d. Develop a plan for engaging organizations and community members. *To succeed you will need both a partnership with the key stakeholders and deep community involvement.*

- 1. Seek organizations that help you reach and engage community members, such as churches, clubs, business associations, PTAs, neighborhood associations or local government representatives.** *By reaching out to diverse and already established and supported community organizations, you will help ensure that many members of the community will be represented. In determining your plan for reaching out, consider, "Who is currently not represented from this community?"*
- 2. As needed, bring government agencies, universities, nonprofits, business groups, and other stakeholders into your partnership.** *Engaging each sector of your partnership may require a separate approach. Some stakeholders may have had adversarial relationships in the past and will need special attention and planning.*

Know that there are EPA resources currently available to address some of the social issues that many communities face.

- 3. Ensure that the impacted community is fully represented.** *Their insights and participation will be crucial to the partnership's success. Remember, that unless you are a member of the impacted community, you may need to spend a significant amount of time building trust.*
- 4. Engage the youth and elders of the community.** *Their participation has proven to be a key driver for many successful projects. How will you get youth and elders involved in the work?*



- 5. Seek partners who have special skills that can enhance the project.** *For example community college professors who can help analyze data, or understand survey research techniques. People or organizations with meeting facilitation skills can also be extremely valuable.*

- e. Develop a governance structure for your project that helps build a strong partnership and organization.** *You will need a strong governance structure to coordinate and lead the work of your partnership for the long-term. Your structure should reflect your mission statement and guiding principles.*

- 1. Develop policies and procedures agreed upon by all members of the partnership.** *Establish policies and procedures to ensure smooth operation of the decision-making process that encourages participation and builds trust.*

- 2. Engage Stakeholders.** *Members of your partnership will become involved, commit their resources, and remain for the long-term if:*

- *They think that the organization is doing important work;*
- *They are respected by others;*
- *They trust the organizations or individuals involved in the project;*
- *They feel they are making a significant contribution to the work;*
- *The work is shared equally;*
- *Decisions are made in a fair manner;*
- *Throughout the project they see progress; and*
- *The time spent together is generally fun and fulfilling.*

- 3. Avoid creating a governance structure that makes decisions in a vacuum, creates barriers to involvement, or does work separate from the broader community.** *Regularly reassess your structure to look for unintended consequences. Build an organization that sees itself as the facilitator for community decisions and community action, helping to*

Example of Policies and Procedures

Consider developing policies and procedures such as:

- Establishing open procedures for filling leadership positions, setting agendas, and making decisions;
- Setting meeting times carefully and providing support where necessary to accommodate members, especially community members;
- Modeling respect and demonstrating a clear desire to be as inclusive as possible;
- Ensuring enough time for education and the exchange of ideas to *create a level playing field* among members, and;
- Using a consensus model for decision-making.



ensure community ownership of and community resources for the work that needs to be done.

III. Developing the Project Workplan

- a. Develop a workplan based on the short and long-term goals of the project.** *Using your goals as a guide, develop a workplan consisting of individual activities. Assign leads for each activity and time frames for accomplishing them.*

Consider using a "Logic Model" to document your plan and your progress. An example logic model is included in Appendix B.

- b. Lay out strategies for accomplishing the activities in your workplan.** *Each activity might require separate tasks. Determine what resources are needed to accomplish the tasks. An organizational structure may need to be developed to track the tasks as they are completed.*

- c. Establish measures of success for your work.** *What will success look like? How will you know you are achieving it? These are questions that are critical to project planning and management. The use of measurement enables you to demonstrate to yourself and outside parties that you have thoughtfully considered what work needs to be accomplished to evoke positive environmental change, and that you are accomplishing your goals and documenting your progress.*

- 1. Choose behavioral measures touching on each key work area (e.g., building and maintaining a strong collaborative, achieving environmental and public health benefits, developing community capabilities) and use them to inform your partnership.** *What could you do to move further towards empowering your community to take on these issues? During your grant project, what targets can be set that will keep the partnership focused on meeting its goals? What key behaviors do you aim to influence and change? Write these behaviors down and determine ways to measure these actions, monitor them throughout your grant, and report your successes.*
- 2. Focus on a few strong environmental measures and back them up with a solid calculation methodology.**



Example of Measurable Goals and Outputs

Sonora Environmental Research Institute, Inc. (SERI)

SERI set the following goals to measure the success of its program Community Assist of Southern Arizona (CASA).

Goal 1: Implementation of a voluntary pollution prevention program for all industry sectors of concern with a goal of 50% participation where participation is defined as successful referral to business assistance organization, attendance at a pollution prevention workshop, and/or implementation of best environmental management practices.

Goal 2: Participation of 75% of the families found to have lead containing items in their homes in a voluntary childhood lead poisoning prevention strategy.

Goal 3: Development of a draft zoning ordinance based on the environmental zoning concepts.

Goal 4: Participation of 25% of the families receiving home visits in other CASA activities.

Goal 5: Retention of promotoras in the program during the grant period with a goal of 95%.

- d. Prepare an evaluation plan.** *You must have a program evaluation process with methods to measure the effectiveness of the program, as well as be able to make any necessary changes. This is key to sustaining a long-term project. Participants need to have a clear and open way to develop lessons learned, correct mistakes and celebrate breakthroughs. Without this, the effort will eventually break down.*

IV. Conducting the Work, Celebrating Success and Learning from the Process

- a. Conduct activities as laid out in your workplan.** *Conduct your activities according to the workplan, while remaining flexible to opportunities that arise.*
- b. Set a tone that makes it fun to be part of the organization and project.** *Make the organization and project fun and exciting to be a part of by including food, learning opportunities, retreats, celebrations and awards.*





- c. **Evaluate progress and revise activities as needed.** *Evaluation, followed by revision or adjustment, is a critical component of sustainability. As a collaborative, regularly evaluate your progress so that you learn from your successes and failures and grow as a group.*
- d. **Celebrate success and acknowledge steady progress that is real and tangible, so that people are encouraged to continue the long-term effort.** *Clear progress and even small successes will be a key to enthusiasm. Ensure that success is celebrated. Plan for accomplishing something at least every six months. Put up a chart and mark off progress visually at each meeting and/or develop another method to track the group's success.*
- e. **Regularly report progress to funders and to the community.** *You will be asked to report to funders on a regular basis about the progress you are making. Make this a reflective and valuable time to assess your work and processes. Report out your findings to the group and readjust the plan, if necessary.*

V. Obtaining Sustainable Resources

- a. **Determine your core funding and resource needs and develop a plan for how to obtain them.** *Most projects will need some funding or other resources to continue long-term work. Take the time before your CARE funding ends to work together to identify your core funding and resource needs and develop a plan for obtaining these funds. Will you need funding for insurance, office space, printing? Funding and support for the staff and community leaders who do the work to organize and facilitate the partnership will be especially important for sustaining your work. Can you get your partner organizations to commit to sharing this responsibility? How will you find funding to support community leaders to do this work?*
- b. **Carefully consider where to use your grant funds and your partnership resources to make your work both successful and sustainable.** *You will need to make tough choices as you find the best balance between using your resources, including your grant funds, to get immediate results and using your resources to ensure the continuation of your work for the long-term. Aspects of your work, such as training and development; strengthening the relationships in your partnership; broadening community engagement; and advertising your successes, will help to ensure the sustainability of your work. How much of your time and resources can you devote to building your long-term sustainability?*





- c. **Explore a full range of funding and resource options, diversify your income, and reduce reliance on a single revenue source.** *Look for other funding sources besides government grants, such as private foundations and local community organizations. When possible, utilize in-kind and donated services. Plan to continue to mobilize volunteers for community projects. Ask your partnership to help with this responsibility.*

Example of Approach to Sustainable Funding

WE ACT for Environmental Justice's Approach to Sustainable Funding

Since 1988, WE ACT for Environmental Justice has consistently raised funds to support various multi-year projects in environmental health, sustainable development, movement building, and government/corporate accountability. Our annual budget currently stands at \$1.6 million, represents a combination of public and private dollars, and is a reflection of our philosophy that any non-profit organization must implement Sustainable Funding practices to survive. WE ACT's approach to Sustainable Funding is built on 3 pillars:

1) Diversification of Funding Sources

As part of our diversification strategy, WE ACT pursues a wide array of government (state and federal) and foundation support throughout each year. We also hold fundraising events through which individual donors and gifts are cultivated.

2) Leveraging Existing Dollars

When pursuing government and foundation grants, we make it a point to leverage existing dollars by designing new projects that build on the foundations of previously successful initiatives. Thus, none of our work is unnecessarily repetitive, and funding from one supporter is used to set the stage for the work that is carried out under a new supporter. For example, our current NYC Lead Outreach Campaign was designed to build on resources and relationships nurtured through the Our Housing is our Health Campaign (OHOH), and utilize trainings that were piloted under OHOH. Our current CARE grant was designed to leverage resources and relationships developed through our previous environmental health projects.

3) Obtaining In-Kind Support from Partner Organizations.

Retaining in-kind support is important to remain sustainable. Our in-kind support is mostly in the form of meeting space donated to host meetings or shared collaboration with other organizations with expertise and capacity not housed within the organization. WE ACT is able to add value to our projects and significantly ramp up the impact of each individual initiative through in-kind assistance. This is done without adding money for a consultant or technical expert to the organizational or project budget.

Together, these 3 practices have enabled WE ACT to sustain and grow our funding over the past 20+ years.





For more information go to: <http://www.epa.gov/care/>

The Sustainability Checklist was developed by:

- Mike Bandrowski, EPA Region 9
- Ogonnaya Dotson-Newman, We ACT for Environmental Justice, Inc.
- Michelle Mandolia, EPA
- Abayomi Noibi, Executive Director, ECO-Action
- Hank Topper, Former CARE Lead for EPA
- Ann Marie Wolf, Sonora Environmental Research Institute, Inc.

Special thanks to Remmington Jackson for her production efforts.

If you would like to provide comments or suggestions for revision, please send them to Mike Bandrowski at: bandrowski.mike@epa.gov





Appendix A

Potential Ways for EPA to Help Communities Achieve Long-term Project Sustainability

In developing the Sustainability Checklist, some ideas were provided on measures that EPA might take to help CARE communities in working toward sustainable projects. While the Checklist focuses on what communities can do to work toward sustainable projects, we wanted to capture the ideas of what EPA can do to help communities. Below are some examples of ideas. If you have others, please provide them to Mike Bandrowski at bandrowski.mike@epa.gov

Potential Ideas for EPA to Help Provide Project Sustainability

1. **CARE Academy-** Look at providing funding to CARE projects that have successfully completed Level 2 to remain as subject experts to provide expertise to new CARE communities and to the CARE program as a whole. Funding would allow successful CARE communities to attend the national meeting and to visit with new CARE projects to help them benefit from their expertise and experience.
2. **Certificate of Support-** As CARE projects apply for further funding with organizations, it would be helpful for them to be able to provide a letter of support from EPA that states they have successfully completed the CARE Level 2 program. Since EPA may not be able to provide individual letters of support, it might be helpful to provide successful Level 2 projects with a certificate of project completion and support that could be used to show their participation in the CARE program to help them get further funding.



Appendix B

Example Logic Model: West Oakland Toxic Reduction Collaborative (WOTRC)—Phase 3

This logic model is an abridged version of one that WOTRC created to plan for the third phase of their work.

Where WOTRC is now and what we see WOTRC's work being			SHORT TERM OUTCOME			INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
Resources/ Inputs	Activities (only things that WOTRC does, not that Port or targets do)	Outputs/ Products	2a) WHO has the power to bring about the outcome [that we need to influence]	2b) WHAT we want [them] to do	2c) HOW [we influence them]		
<p>WOTRC multiple stakeholder participants and what they bring to the table in expertise, experience, relationships and resources such as staff time and funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based organizations • Elected officials • Government • Industry • Intermediaries /technical experts • Labor <p>Funding</p> <p>In-kind contributions (e.g., staff time, meeting space)</p> <p>Non-WOTRC activities that can be leveraged</p>	<p>WOTRC capacity building to successfully implement focus areas 1 and 2</p> <p>Convening forums for collaborative problem-solving</p> <p>Outreach to educate, engage, and maintain momentum</p> <p>Assessment, analysis and monitoring</p>	<p>Grants and funding, MOU's for joint work, in-kind member contributions of staff time and other resources</p> <p>Meeting proceedings, plans of action, learning</p> <p>Documentation</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>See the table below</p> </div>			<p>A. AIR QUALITY Those responsible for air planning develop and implement local air plan(s) that reduce community health risk from (growing goods movement)</p> <p>Improved community and government/ agency collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful community engagement in the process • Transparent disclosure of government/ agency operations to impacted communities <p>B. LAND USE Those responsible for land use planning develop and implement local land use plan(s) that move polluting trucks and truck serving businesses out of the West Oakland residential neighborhood and onto appropriate industrial lands (i.e., base reuse)</p> <p>C. CAPACITY BUILDING</p>	<p>Reduced toxic air emissions and diesel pollution from stationary and mobile sources</p> <p>Reduced incompatible land uses to promote safe, healthy, and sustainable community</p> <p>Reduced proximity and impact of diesel truck traffic to West Oakland residents</p> <p>Reduced public exposure to air toxics/improved public health</p>



Short Term Outcomes*		
WHAT (2b)	WHO (2a)	HOW (2c)
A. AIR QUALITY		
1	TRUCK ROUTES Make sure that truck routes are implemented, monitored, enforced	The city (e.g., the planning department) The county (interstate)
2	TRUCKER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION Provide education and outreach to truckers Pertains to truck routes and clean up plans	The city/unions/other industry associations/dispatchers
3	ALTERNATIVE FUELS Use alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles	Progressive truckers Terminal operators Fuel suppliers Elected officials State/county
4	BLUEPRINT (Move it forward)	JPC/ABAG
5 & 6b	HEALTH STUDIES - Help West Oakland obtain funding to do health studies - Really recognize disparate impacts - Collaborate with other officials - Bring site health data and other information into region/local health database/repository	Federal elected officials Alameda County Public Health Department
6a	AIR PLAN - Create a local air quality plan focused on reducing all health risks - Create an enforcement "task force" (county, CARB, BAAQMD, city planning, EPA, city attorney department) - includes truck clean-up plan	Alameda County Public Health Department



Notes

