

Elements of Sustainability for Grassroots Organizations

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Steve Ridini, Ed.D. sridini@tmfnet.org

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

Definition of Sustainability

The process of maintaining an initiative by weaving a practice into the fabric of the community or making a permanent home for a practice within the community

Characteristics of Effective Groups

- Understanding of the “community”
- Shared Vision
- Clearly defined mission, goals, and objectives
- Active community engagement
- Organizational Competence
 - Effective leadership
 - Experienced staff/volunteers
 - Trust
 - Accountability

Characteristics of Effective Groups

- Organizational Structure and Function
- Task done and Team spirit
- Communicating message/benefits to community
- Linkages to other organizations
- Time and persistence
- Continually assessing progress

Potential Obstacles

- Poor communication
- Limited experience
- Resistant leaders
- Over-committed leaders
- Not enough time
- Poor organization/unproductive meetings

Characteristics of Ineffective Groups

- Lack of leadership and teamwork - conflict
- Turf and competition
- Failure to act
- Poor links to the community
- Funding - too much or too little
- Costs outweigh the benefits

Elements of Sustainability

- **Institutional Capacity**

- Process for replacing members/cultivating new leaders
- Creating sound organizational structure

- **Strategic Planning, Implementation and Evaluation**

- Turning vision and mission into reality

- **Communication:** cultivating buy-in

- **Marketing:** building support/visibility

- **Financial Security**

- Developing resource plan with diverse funding streams
- Cultivating in-kind (material, human) resources

- **Integration of Efforts:** integrating programs/services into other initiatives

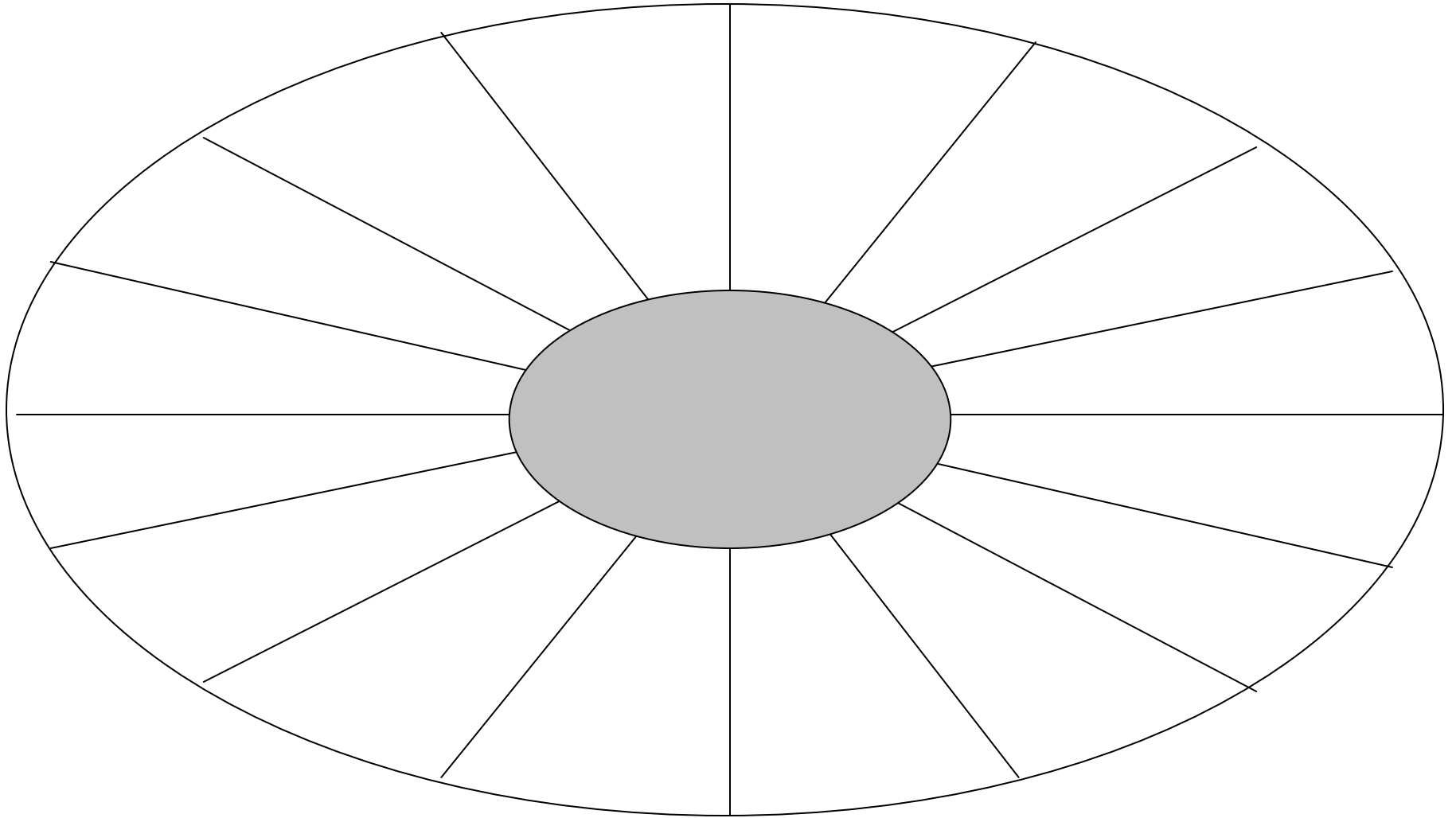
- **Turn to Community Champions**

- Source: *Getting to Outcomes*, SAMHSA, CSAP, June 2000.

Recruitment + Engagement = Retention

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Volunteer Recruitment



Organizational Structure

- Governance
- Rules and Roles
- Distribution of Work
- Formalize Operating Procedures

Organizational Structure and Function

Complete

Needs Work

Roles

_____ _____ Written description of roles/responsibilities of members/staff

Structure

_____ _____ Mission and by-laws

_____ _____ Organizational chart with committee structure

_____ _____ Plan for membership, recruitment, and turnover

_____ _____ Plan for how leaders are selected and succeed one another

_____ _____ Standard orientation for new members

_____ _____ Written agendas and minutes of meetings

Functions

_____ _____ Plan for how decisions will be made

_____ _____ Internal communication system

_____ _____ External system to use in communicating with organizations

_____ _____ Approach to handling conflict

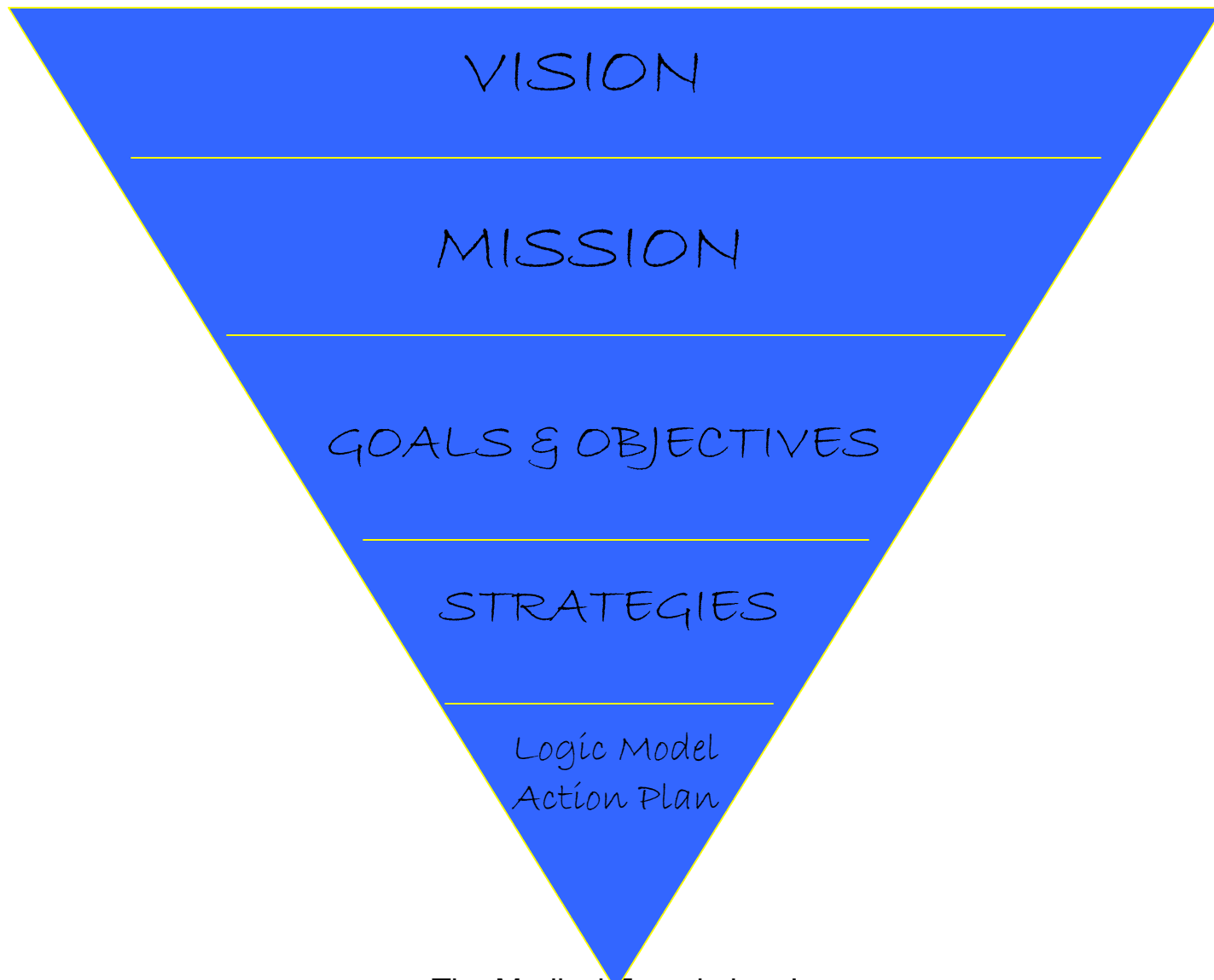
_____ _____ Identified areas members want to know more about (e.g. training)

_____ _____ Relevant information and reading material

(Strategic) Planning for Action

Why use a Strategic Plan?

- To give structure to your initiative
- To build shared agreement about what to do and how to do it
- To create buy-in/ownership
- To help focus your efforts



Action Plan Worksheet

Desired Outcome:

Desired Strategy:

Action Steps	Person Responsible	Timeline for Completion	Anticipated Barriers	Measure of Successful Completion

Decision Making Structures

- Consensus – mutual search for solution which all can accept
- Hierarchy
 - Autocratic – one-person rule
 - Consultative – one-person rule with advice
 - Oligarchic – experts rule
 - Business or Military – chain of command
- Majority Rule – Voting
- Parliamentary Process – Roberts Rules of Order
- No Structure – Free of rules/penalties
- Unanimity – All completely agree

Communications Planning Tool

Step 1: Develop the Message

Guidelines for developing your message:

- Is message clear and consistent?
- Does message reflect the passion of group members?
- Does message reflect an issue that will engage community members?
- Are personal anecdotes part of the message?

Does the message:

- Command attention?
- Cater to the heart and the head?
- Call others to action?
- Communicate a benefit?
- Create trust?

Communications Planning Tool

Step 2: Know Your Audience

Consider your audience:

- ___ Who is your audience?
- ___ What do they have to offer?
- ___ What is in it for them? How will they benefit?
- ___ Are you speaking their language?
- ___ Is your message tailored to them?
- ___ What is the ask?

Communications Planning Tool

Step 3: Develop Media Strategies

Television Stations:

News Market	Type of Outlet	Name Station/Channel	Name of Contact	Deadline Information

Print Media:

News Market	Type of Outlet	Name Station/Channel	Name of Contact	Deadline Information

Radio:

News Market	Type of Outlet	Name Station/Channel	Name of Contact	Deadline Information

Communications Planning Tool

Step 4: Consider Non-Media Communication

Type of Venue	Suitability	Date Initiated/ Success
Word of Mouth		
E-mail campaign		
Pamphlets		
Newsletters		
Websites		
Calendars		
Billboards		
Meetings		
Exhibits/Displays		
Presentations		
Events		
Other		

Marketing

- *Who* is your audience?
- *Why* are they important?
- *What* is your message?
- *How* and *Where* are you reaching them?
- *What* is the ask?

Stickiness

How to ensure that your ideas are understood and remembered and have a lasting impact – they change your audience's opinions or behaviors

Principle #1: Simplicity

- Find the core of your idea
- Strip the idea down to its most critical essence
- It's hard to make ideas stick in a noisy, unpredictable, chaotic environment

Principle #2: Unexpectedness

- Grab people's attention
- Use element of surprise → Increases alertness and causes focus
- Generate interest and curiosity

Principle #3: Concreteness

- Be clear
- Be concrete *not* abstract
- Present ideas in terms of human action, sensory information

Principle #4: Credibility

- Help people believe
- Build honesty and trustworthiness
- Provide details
- Use statistics that generate a human context

Principle #5: Emotions

- Help people feel something
- Make people care
- Associate ideas with emotions
- Emphasize benefits

Principle #6: Stories

- Tell stories
- Use stories as stimulation – to get people to act
- Use stories as inspiration – to give people energy to act

What Funders Want

- Organizational history/Staff competence
- Understanding of the issue
- Readiness
- Mission fit
- Sound approach
- Measurable and realistic outcomes → Impact
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Cost effectiveness

Resource Plan

Organization: _____

Desired Outcome:

Action Steps	Person Responsible	Timeline for Completion	Anticipated Barriers	Measure of Successful Completion

Community Champions

Who are your Community Champions?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____