**Sustainability**

**What is Sustainability?**

For the purposes of this module, a working definition of sustainability has been developed. Sustainability maybe divided into components such as ***organizational sustainability, financial*** ***sustainability, services or program sustainability (sometimes connoted as technical*** ***sustainability), or community sustainability. Others link activities at three levels: outcomes,*** ***programs, and organizational.*** Despite the fact that all these components bear upon an organization’s ability to achieve and demonstrate sustainability, a broad definition of sustainability is probably most useful.

***Remember…***

A working definition of sustainability:

**“…The ability of an organization to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to fulfill its mission effectively and consistently over time without excessive dependence on any single funding source, including maintaining its ability to continue offering quality services and having an impact long after primary donor funding is withdrawn…”**

**The Pillars of Sustainability: Planning, Management, Evaluation**

Sustainability requires systems for planning, management and evaluation. Regular planning must take place at multiple levels: project plans, fundraising plans, overall organizational plans, short-term plans, long-term plans. Planning systems enable you to organize your work, respond to needs and anticipate challenges. Management systems are the tools to establish clear responsibilities and procedures for handling everything from money and staff to projects and timelines. Finally, evaluation systems inform you of the results you are achieving

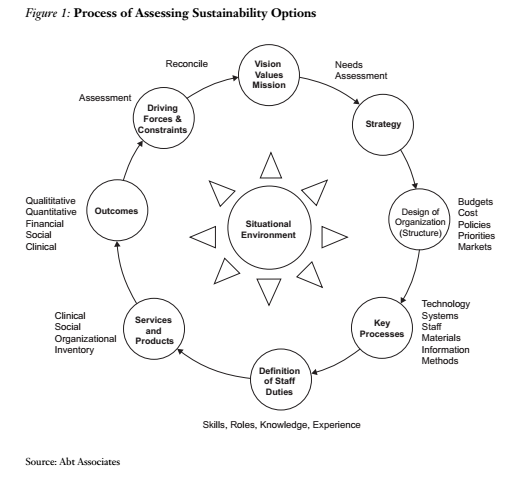
**Committed Leadership**

Building and sustaining an NGO takes people with different kinds of knowledge and skills: project managers, proposal writers, website developers, fundraisers and survey takers, to name a few.

But, above all, NGOs need leaders — people committed to the organization and willing to spend time and effort directing its work. Typically, the leadership group consists of an executive director, senior staff and the board of directors. An NGO’s leaders take on extra responsibility for making sure the NGO has a clear mission, effective programs and efficient management of its resources.

**Elements of Sustainability**

Many analysts divide sustainability into components, including *organizational, financial, programmatic or technical, and even community sustainability.* Almost all agree that eachorganization’s path to greater sustainability is unique and dependent on the organization’scurrent structure, track record, staff competencies, image, professionalism, and levels ofcommunity support. Also, it is clear that sustainability depends on the following beliefsamong stakeholders: that the organization is providing beneficial, desired, and high qualityservices; that financial stability and growth are feasible; that leadership and management areexcellent and motivated; and that sustainability initiatives are in harmony with stakeholderinterests.



**Conclusion**

A clear mission and vision; relevant and effective projects and activities; good planning, management and evaluation; committed leadership; strong relationships; and a diverse base of financial support are the building blocks that sustain an NGO over time. From the moment you found an NGO, think about sustainability at every step. For example, when you carry out strategic planning, assess your NGO’s strengths and set goals for improving its weaknesses to promote the organization’s long-term viability.