



PRACTICE BRIEF: CIAIP GRANTEE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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INTRODUCTION

While many worthwhile projects are short-term by design (capital improvements and disaster assistance, for example), most new initiatives seek to have some lasting presence in the community. In most instances, funders want to know that their investment will have long term benefits; hence, they often evaluate grant proposals on their likelihood for sustainability. While a compelling picture of future sustainability strengthens a grant proposal, actually bringing sustainability into an initiative is an inexact art. There are neither golden rules nor magic elixirs for creating a sustainable project because every project is different, a product of local conditions tied to unique circumstances. Sustaining an initiative over time is a significant challenge, and many community service projects fall by the wayside after their initial funding expires.

Table 1: CIAIP Grantees

Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta, GA
Boston Medical Center, Boston, MA
Catholic Charities, Kansas City, MO
Catholic Charities, Stockton, CA
City of Montpelier, VT
The Coordinating Center, Millersville, MD
Easter Seals New Hampshire, Inc., Manchester, NH
Family Eldercare, Austin, TX
Jewish Family Service of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM
L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, Los Angeles, CA
Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium, Gakona, AK
Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Bellaire, TX
New York City Department for the Aging, New York, NY
Supportive Women's Network, Philadelphia, PA
Center for Home Care Policy & Research, VNSNY (TAG)

Community Innovations for Aging in Place (CIAIP) was funded from 2009 to 2012 by the United States Administration on Aging (AoA) in response to the need for systemic and integrated responses to shifting demographics.

Through CIAIP, demonstration projects were funded in fourteen sites around the country (See

Table 1 for listing of grantees). In addition, the Center for Home Care Policy and Research (CHCPR) of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) was chosen as the Technical Assistance Grantee (TAG) to provide training and other supports focused around program design, program implementation, communication, and evaluation.

The grantees of the Community Innovations for Aging in Place (CIAIP) program have seen successes and challenges. While much can be learned from things that “don’t work,” this brief builds on lessons learned from a sampling of projects that appear to have successfully transitioned from CIAIP grant funding to new sources of support, allowing them to continue the work, albeit sometimes in modified form.

It is fair to say that few of the grantees had a clear picture of their sustainability plan from day one of the funding period. The first year of nearly every project involved significant organizational work and adaptation of the original project goals, recruiting and hiring staff, and initiating outreach to participants. Several projects were humming by the second year, and this factor may have accounted for the tendency to ask: “How can we keep this going?” Reaching the halfway point of any funded project is a “consciousness-raising moment,” which often includes thoughts regarding the potential for sustainability. In addition, at the beginning of the second year of the CIAIP initiative, a meeting for all grantees in Washington, D.C. included workshops on sustainability and provoked some planning on the part of grantees.

Table 2 summarizes the sustainability strategies of selected CIAIP grantees, followed by brief descriptions of these strategies. Clearly, each of these strategies requires what might be called “sub-strategies.” For example, leveraging partnerships as a sustainability strategy requires a good deal of partnership work before and during the development of an initiative. To expect to leverage partnerships as a sustainability strategy without having first invested considerable time and energy in cultivating partnerships is both unrealistic and unlikely to succeed.

Table 2: Six CIAIP Grantee Sustainability Strategies

STRATEGY	Growing the Organization	Developing a Niche	Leveraging Resources through Community Partnerships	Becoming Indispensable to the “Parent” Organization	Becoming a Center of Excellence	Transferring a Program From One Organization to Another
GRANTEES	LA Gay and Lesbian Center, Los Angeles, CA	Philadelphia Supportive Older Women’s Network (SOWN)	Family Eldercare	Atlanta Regional Commission	The Coordinating Center	City of Montpelier, VT

Sustainability Definitions

The Sustainability Planning Workbook states that:

“Sustainability depends on developing a clear, sensible, and convincing plan for putting in place and keeping in place the key elements that make an initiative successful. It inevitably requires

adequate funding to keep it going. But it also requires an array of other resources: political, technical, and administrative. Figuring out what resources you need and how to marshal them is what sustainability planning is all about.” (Sustainability Planning Workbook, Module I: Building a Sustainable Initiative, p. 1).

While this definition states the obvious challenge to sustainability (i.e. finding the resources), it begs the question as to what sustainability really is. A meta-review of literature on sustainability by the National Opinion Research Center (2010) suggests that definitions fall into two distinct groups. Some would argue that sustainability is about the continuation of **programs** (or organizations and coalitions). Others would argue that sustainability is all about the continuation of a program’s **activities** and **effects**. There is a key difference in these definitions. One focuses on organizational structures and the other on impacts and outcomes. The latter can, theoretically, be sustained whether they remain the province of the originating organization or not. The report’s authors also note that sustainability is not an either/or condition (i.e. there are degrees of sustainability) and that sustainability is a process that occurs over time.

CIAIP Grantee Approaches to Sustainability

A number of CIAIP grantees have found some success in sustaining their programs, activities, and/or their outcomes beyond the grant period. Of these, the Technical Assistance Grantee (TAG) selected a handful of CIAIP grantees to profile in this brief. The selection of grantees was guided, to a degree, by the intent to sample a diverse set of sustainability goals and strategies. The data presented come from grantee reports, interactions with the TAG over the course of the initiative, and interviews conducted with the selected grantees. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix I. Major themes we addressed included:

- Which elements of the initiative are being sustained?
- What was the timeline for sustainability planning?
- How would you define your sustainability strategy?
- What barriers did you encounter in achieving sustainability?
- What were the most important steps to sustainability?
- What would you recommend to other organizations seeking sustainability?

Sustainability Strategy 1. Growing the Organization: LGBT Aging in Place Initiative, LA Gay and Lesbian Center, Los Angeles, CA

Kathleen Sullivan was not the first director of the CIAIP program at the LA Gay and Lesbian Center. When she came on board, 18 months of AoA funding remained, which was a wake-up call to address sustainability. “The first thing I thought of,” said Kathleen, “was the ending, not the beginning.” The primary role of the Center is to provide services to gay and lesbian adults, but there has always been a disinclination to use time-limited grant funding to start services that cannot be sustained. In addition, Kathleen recognized that the fundraising component within her job description was significant. Fortunately, the Center has a development office, but given the range of programming offered by the Center, Kathleen realized she needed to work closely with it to succeed.

And succeed it did. In 2008-09, the Center offered 99 programs and events serving the older gay and lesbian population. In 2012, the Center offered 980 programs! In the face of a clientele that was rapidly aging, the expanding programs were seen to be critical to the future of the Center. Expanding outreach, so as to become a resource for older gays and lesbians more broadly, was seen as a means to grow the organization itself, though there was awareness that training for other organizations was also important so as to ensure sensitivity in service delivery in an increasing number of settings. In addition, the Center wanted to not only position itself as the go-to place for the LGBT community, but to become a national model that might garner support from major donors around the U.S.

Kathleen reports that the Center engaged in sustainability planning for about a year, organized around three key goals:

- Developing relationships
- Learning what works
- Planning for the future

The AoA grant itself was instrumental in allowing the Center to hire staff that could expand case management and other supportive services. By the end of the grant period, the staffing was doubled through additional resources provided by the organization itself. Relationship building with gay and lesbian older adults, partly a result of simply expanding programs and outreach, was an important goal. In addition, the offering of training programs to other human service organizations expanded referrals to the Center. Bringing on

five MSW interns to provide assistance to people “dropping in” helped solidify the attachment of participants to the program and the place. Diversifying the program to serve Spanish-speaking elders facilitated engagement of an entirely new population of participants.

In short, the Center took the risk to become an indispensable resource to the community, including individuals and human services entities, thus ratcheting up the development needs of the organization. It should be noted that this was feasible because the program is housed within a large and experienced organization with a well developed infrastructure. Still, to meet those development needs, multiple strategies had to be used. The provision of psychotherapy on site has provided operating revenue. Cultivating relationships with HUD and City government, along with \$300,000 in new foundation funding, has led to the creation of plans for new construction of LGBT housing, a stone’s throw from the Center. The housing development strategy will bring about new relationships with the health care community, given the desire to organize medical and social services around the residents. A contract as a training provider for the Academy for Professional Excellence will give the Center statewide reach as it trains individuals in the field of adult protective services.

Greatly expanding programs for older adults and building relationships with clients, providers, and the city has helped the LA Gay and Lesbian Center grow as an organization and become more competitive for major funding from government and philanthropies.

The last year of CIAIP funding has enabled the Center to evaluate program impact and contribute to an evidence-based model of service, which, it is anticipated, will be a key to reaching new donors. In the past, the Center felt like the “token” recipient of individual donor funds

rather than an innovative investment with (and for) new major partners. With these new initiatives, senior services and outreach to the community are growing and making the Center even more able to compete for major new funding opportunities.

Strategy 2. Developing a Niche: Growing Healthy Lives Together, Philadelphia Supportive Older Women’s Network (SOWN), Philadelphia, PA

With a venerable 30 year history, SOWN has been a vital force in linking older women for mutual support, education, and practical assistance. Yet, the organization has always been small. The CIAIP grant was huge, relative to SOWN’s other funding sources, so its receipt provided challenges and

opportunities not encountered by large organizations. The pressure to perform responsibly was great.

Growing Healthy Lives was the program name and the goal for the new CIAIP grant, which enabled SOWN to bring on Arlene Segal as a full time health educator. As a place-based program, the idea for Growing Healthy Lives was to bring a community organizing model focused on health to five senior housing buildings in the city. As the grant ends, these activities successfully remain in four of the five buildings (in the fifth building, the lack of a budget for Korean language interpretation has resulted in a termination of services). Nutrition, exercise, and peer health navigation have been the key components of the Growing Healthy Lives initiative, which involved multiple educational interventions, grandparent supports, and the development of a telephone buddies program, called Health Talk, that regularly connected individuals with vital information on health topics and resulted in the development of telephone friendships outside of the program itself.

Consciously reflecting on two program development successes has provided a basis for sustainability planning. As SOWN's Arlene Segal puts it:

"We discovered what we were really good at. We came to be seen in the community as the people that know about this stuff – helping low income elders become healthier."

In short, the AoA grant helped SOWN develop its niche in the wide and confusing array of programs serving older adults in Philadelphia, and this positioned SOWN to take advantage of opportunities that arose in their community. Wrapping their newly cultivated skill set around nutrition, grandparenting, and health, for example, provided the basis for new partnerships with food-related organizations and resulted in a new grant from the Aetna Foundation called Philly Families Eat Smart, which focuses on grandparent-headed households.

Identifying what SOWN does well helped the agency define its niche. Identifying how these strengths dovetail with new funding trends in the community helped the agency develop its sustainability plan and find opportunities that would allow it to apply its strengths in new contexts.

The recent focus on food-related issues in Philadelphia (and nationwide) has helped pique interest in the idea of bringing food programs into buildings where people live—such as the locales where SOWN has been running its

health promotion programs. Tying the work of SOWN into concrete medical issues, like diabetes and chronic illness, as well as grandparenting, has been important as well. For SOWN, flexibility to try new things and go where the action is—such as the nutrition arena—has been essential.

When asked about her recommendations to other organizations focused on sustainability, Arlene suggests:

- Stick to your mission, but be flexible enough to see how it applies to a new problem.
- Build upon the strengths of your organization.
- Build up your donor base over time.
- Frame the issues you address in useful and compelling ways.
- And always remain passionate about your work.

Strategy 3. Leveraging Resources through Community Partnerships: Living Well, Family Eldercare, Austin, TX

In Austin, Texas, the CIAIP initiative involved the development of a new partnership between the Family Eldercare human services agency and the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA). The essence of the program was to embed service coordinators from Family Eldercare in HACA's public housing buildings.

While Family Eldercare of Austin saw the CIAIP project as an opportunity to grow the organization, the grant was perceived not as an end in itself, but more as a powerful tool to mediate effective partnerships with other community organizations. Hence, attention to the quality of the partnerships, as well as “spreading the money around,” were key factors in sustainability planning from the beginning.

Family Eldercare's partnership with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin opened new doors for the agency and expanded the services the Housing Authority could provide in their buildings—a win-win collaboration for these two organizations.

Following the cessation of CIAIP funding, 1 ½ FTE (full time equivalency) on-site service coordinators remain working in the HACA buildings, with one FTE funded by Family Eldercare, with support from a local foundation, and one half time equivalent

funded by the Housing Authority. With the original CIAIP funding, a Wellness specialist was hired, with responsibilities that included training and support

of volunteers who would provide education and prevention services to the residents. The Wellness specialist has been retained by HACA utilizing Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The on-site volunteer program has also been absorbed by HACA, using multiple program tools developed through the original CIAIP grant (e.g. job descriptions, service protocols, forms, logs, external contacts, etc.). In addition, the CIAIP grant enabled the project to draw in other community partners who remain on board after the grant period, delivering programs to residents such as Mind Fitness, yoga, and exercise. Some of these partners found their own funding to continue the programs. For example, “Brain Boosters,” a game for sharpening memory and attention, was funded through a partnership of AGE of Central Texas and the non-profit, New Connections. A fitness organization (WeVivo) found funding to continue delivering its programs as well.

The key to drawing in partners that would remain committed, even after the end of the CIAIP grant, was a careful mix of good management and leadership, resident engagement, evaluation, and communication. Partner agreements and contracts were set up on a reimbursement basis for services provided, which engaged providers in an effective relationship of mutual responsibility. Family Eldercare exercised leadership by convening monthly meetings of all the partners, which consistently included sustainability as an agenda item, and communicating effectively and regularly with all of the partner organizations. At the end of the first year, Family Eldercare and HACA, the key project partners, sat down to evaluate the quality of their relationship and agreed to move forward together.

Family Eldercare fostered participant engagement in programs by conducting focus groups and evaluation activities with elders and shared that data with the partner organizations. In focus groups, participants were asked for input on programming and feedback about current offerings, including the programs’ significant strengths. An explicit attempt was made to link evaluation data with the sustainability plan. An external evaluator was originally hired to conduct this effort but the model was overly academic and rigorous. Learning from this, Family Eldercare employed an MSW intern to work on evaluation activities, which proved to be more than sufficient.

Nearing the end of the grant period, a meeting was called to discuss how the initiative could move forward. The meeting was designed for the chief decision makers of the partner organizations, not the front line program providers – an important distinction. Family Eldercare and HACA announced

their commitment to the future of the initiative. Activity data from all the programs was shared with the executives and agreement was established on priorities moving forward. As mentioned above, several partners (though not all) signed on to continued collaboration, and the partnerships remained strong. Joyce Hefner of Family Eldercare, who directed the CIAIP project, sees this collaborative approach, which effectively leverages resources from different sectors, as a natural fit in the field of aging. The fact that “aging is everywhere” means that resources are also everywhere, just not in huge amounts. Leveraging, then, is critical to success. Yet challenges remain. Organizations that are essentially competing for the same, limited resources may have difficulty moving into a lead role, or even a partner role. Family Eldercare was successful because it developed trust among the partners. Though a direct service provider, it has always valued community development, planning, and partnerships as a *modus operandi*. It has sustained its leadership role through careful and proper management of resources, fairly shared among the partners.

Family Eldercare used lessons learned from the CIAIP project to successfully extend their reach to a second community in the area, Georgetown, Texas, where staff members have developed a data-driven and participatory planning process for one of the most rapidly aging cities in the country. Other successes followed: HACA received a HUD Choice Neighborhood planning grant, with Family Eldercare as a Task Force member. Family Eldercare’s CIAIP project, *Living Well!* was awarded a prize for Innovations in Service Coordination by the American Association of Service Coordinators. Joyce Hefner notes: “The prize may have been awarded to Family Eldercare as the employer of the service coordinators providing services, but HACA was our co-nominee,” underscoring again the durability of their partnership.

(For more information about the Family Eldercare CIAIP project, *Living Well! (A Better Way to Live At Home: Education, Resources, and Supports for Older Adults)*, see the Case Study prepared by the CIAIP TAG.

Strategy 4. Becoming Indispensable to the “Parent” Organization: Lifelong Mableton, Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta, GA

Starting a new service or program is a relatively clear undertaking. You identify a need, design an intervention, render a service, and reduce the need, if you have done well. Community development, on the other hand, is an unending and often unpredictable process. When the Area Agency on Aging

(AAA) in the Atlanta region took on the broad goal of community development, the instigators knew it would take them into new territory – beyond the usual boundaries of the traditional aging network. Yet, being situated within the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)—a regional planning council—the instigators also realized that they had the potential to impact some of the big issues that AAAs often advocate for (and complain about) – housing, transportation, and disease and disability prevention. Playing an important role in addressing these major issues transformed the in-house AAA into an indispensable player and representative for ARC, its parent organization.

With its Lifelong Communities initiative, the Atlanta region's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) raised its profile not only in the region's communities but also within its own parent agency, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the area's planning council. The AAA's CIAIP pilot project, Lifelong Mableton, exemplified important aspects of ARC's mission, thereby making the project a model demonstration for the agency and worthy of support.

Addressing these big issues called for a comprehensive initiative, not just a program. As the recipient of multi-year funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Partnerships for Older Adults program, the ARC was able to bring together major stakeholders to conceptualize aging as a broad community issue and begin to break down planning and service silos. The place-based outline of the initiative came about through the use of standard planning tools available from ARC staff, located "down the hall" from the AAA staff. Using GIS mapping and Census data, the AAA created visual renderings and needs studies that illustrated the geographic disparities in services and supports for older

adults in the Atlanta region. This very compelling data provided the foundation for a major fundraising effort to underwrite the cost of a twelve day "charrette" (community design workshop) to be led by the nationally known design firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk. This massive charrette, focusing on six Atlanta area neighborhoods and communities and involving hundreds of citizens, public officials, and private development interests, enabled ARC to roll out the concept of the "Lifelong Community."

It was assumed that with the financial investment of a handful of local developers, armed with data from the charrette, individual private sector development projects would move forward, with public support. Unfortunately, the sudden downturn in the economy and the unavailability of financing stopped Lifelong Community development projects in their tracks. Thus, it was a blessing that the receipt of CIAIP funds would enable the unfolding of the process in at least one community – Mableton, an Atlanta suburb – that could

serve as a model for the region.

Keeping a focus on services and policy, the Lifelong Mableton project reflected four main themes or strategies:

- Developing innovative partnerships through collaboration
- Integrating the Lifelong Community framework into local planning
- Engaging the community through citizen participation
- Meeting the needs of people

From these themes and strategies, specific infrastructure projects emerged: Community gardens, a farmer's market, sidewalk connections, a complete street initiative, and more. One of the greatest achievements was the adoption of Form Based Code by the Cobb County Board of Commissioners, which will facilitate the creation of a pedestrian-friendly town center that connects the library, post office, and arts center, and creates a public town square that should attract new business. It will also shift zoning ordinances to allow for a mixture of single and multi-family housing, so that older adults might downsize without leaving their neighborhoods.

Going into the third year of CIAIP funding required some reflection on successes and some planning for the future. Clearly, the successful adoption of Form Based Code (with specific reference to Mableton) will pave the way for twenty years of transformative development, as a new town center develops, anchored by existing and future community institutions. Engaging Mableton's town planner has shown early successes, with the acquisition of major funding for the community's first Complete Streets project on a dangerous thoroughfare that bisects the town, and funds for future sidewalks, key elements in connecting the Lifelong Community components that will be developed in the future.

Conducting some due diligence at the very beginning of the initiative, including identification of a key local group —the Mableton Improvement Coalition that could lead the work down the road—was a critical early step towards sustainability, according to Project Director Laura Keyes. The Coalition provided legitimacy for the Lifelong Community initiative, as well as significant expertise and advocacy, and will remain in a position of ownership going forward. Two sub-committees have been established (mental health and farmer's market) to carry on work around these issues in the future. In addition, an effective partnership with the local AARP established during the CIAIP funding period will, with state office support, provide a constant stream

of volunteers to help with Lifelong Mableton efforts.

As the Mableton project moves forward on its own, the ARC AAA has turned its attention to several other municipalities and state-level policy changes and programs. These will affect community development in other locales and influence the character of transportation planning and housing design in particular. A volunteer certification program for builders (“Easy Living”) and insertion of visitability policies into the Georgia housing code are also in the works.

In accounting for the success in Mableton, Laura and her colleagues would argue for the importance of their Lifelong Communities Framework as an educational tool to explain and spread the word about the Lifelong Communities concept. This helped them to stay on message, explain the approach, and even get a foot in the door of potential backers. (See [Lifelong Community Development: Lifelong Communities A Framework for Planning](#)). In addition, having products and tools emerge from the work (a Lifelong Community Handbook; walkability audit tools, etc.) facilitated replication of the work in other communities and with other partners, which is being supported in part by grant from the organization, Grantmakers in Aging.

For more detailed information about the Lifelong Mableton project, see [Lifelong Mableton: A Pilot of Building Lifelong Communities in South Cobb County](#), the case study prepared by the CIAIP TAG.

Strategy 5. Becoming a Center of Excellence: Opting for Independence (OFI), The Coordinating Center, Howard County, MD.

Translating a best practice to a new setting and clientele was the intent of The Coordinating Center, a disability organization in Howard County, MD. Seeing that a person-centered care management model employed in the disability arena had potential relevance for older adults, the Center developed a significant partnership with the local provider of services to the aging population, the Howard County Office on Aging and its effective Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

The Coordinating Center’s Opting for Independence care management project involved a process of:

- Taking referrals,
- Identifying best candidates for services,

- Developing a clear plan of care involving the consumer and family members,
- Providing options counseling,
- Coordinating and linking the client with services,
- Monitoring health conditions, and
- Closing the case after 120 days with a set of supports in place that the older consumer and his/her family could use to handle future changes and needs.

With funding from an earlier program, occupational therapists were often involved with assessment and restorative care, which proved to significantly enhance the overall service.

In the process of working together on the Opting for Independence (OFI) CIAIP project, The Coordinating Center and the Howard County Office on Aging exchanged knowledge about the person-centered model of care for people with disabilities and best practices in serving older adults. But the sustainability plan for OFI was to maintain a model of care, not sustain the intensive partnership between the two agencies.

As the OFI intervention was designed to be time-limited, the issue of sustainability with respect to individual clients was not relevant, although, in many cases, consumers served by OFI continued to receive services from providers who were linked to them through the program, including the Howard County Office on Aging, hospice, and others. As such, the sustainability plan for the initiative was focused on the activity rather than the program configuration funded through CIAIP. It was felt that, once the aging network learned the OFI person-centered model, it would be able to better serve its clientele and, at the same time, The Coordinating Center would be better able to expand its own clientele to serve older adults and not just people with disabilities.

The strategic goal—an exchange of knowledge, approach, and skills—was therefore met.

While the strategic goal was met, sustainability of the organization remained a concern. Indeed, expanding the population served and reaching into new revenue streams had been a goal of the Center from the start of the CIAIP initiative. With technical assistance from Mike Burns, one of the CIAIP consultants, the Center created a “business-to-business” development strategy. Rather than take on the role of providing services to individuals, the Center would contract with service-providing organizations to assist them in applying the OFI care model to their clientele.

Paying close attention to the Affordable Care Act and trends in the care transitions movement, the Center saw an opportunity to move into the discussion of hospital/community relationships and assist hospitals with their goal of reducing readmissions through improvement of care coordination. Having developed a practice model (based on Eric Coleman's Care Transitions Program), care coordination software, and evaluation methodology, the Center was approached by a Baltimore hospital and its partners to develop a proposal for a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Care Transitions grant. The community-based research the Center conducted through the CIAIP project identified three substantive areas to be addressed in care transitions planning contracts: Access to food, short-term transportation, and user-friendly telephone communication. The successful acquisition of the CMS funds has provided a significant infusion of resources into the Center and, as originally designed, it positioned itself not as a service-providing organization but as a "center of excellence" in care coordination for the community.

Developing substantive partnerships in the community of non-profits can be a challenging proposition, and this example was not an exception. The perception that one organization is colonizing another's territory can be a barrier to effective working relationships. While these tensions emerged between the disability agency and the aging agency, in the end the resolution that the two agencies were not in direct competition resulted in a continuing positive relationship. The Center continues to provide some care coordination to people with disabilities and there remains some overlap with older adults, but the OFI model, with its time limited method, helps assure that clients will be "returned" to providers of their choice, such as the Office on Aging.

Phyllis Madachy, the coordinator of the CIAIP OFI initiative, offers some key recommendations regarding sustainability, drawn from her experience with this project:

- Use time limited grant funding to develop real excellence in a circumscribed area and try to sustain **that**.
- Use this excellence to add value to your larger organization and sustain **that**.
- Develop a best practice (e.g. the use of occupational therapy in care coordination) and market that to business partners who can benefit.
- Look at your organizational structure beyond the grant period and figure out where you fit, including the possible proposal of a new, revenue-producing division.

Strategy 6. Transferring a Program From One Organization to Another: Reach (Rural Elder Assistance for Care and Health), City of Montpelier, Montpelier, VT

Even as they wrote their proposal for the CIAIP program, the City of Montpelier knew that, if selected, their proposed project would in time become part of another existing organization in the region. The City planned to start the initiative, but maintaining it over the long term was not deemed to be part of their mission. Consequently, a plan was developed to eventually merge the initiative with a related program that had been operative for about a year before the start of the CIAIP program.

The City's initiative, called the *Reach* (Rural Elder Assistance for Care and Health) service exchange network, was a variation of the Time Bank model. In a Time Bank, members provide services to one another; the time spent in providing those services is "banked" and can be redeemed for services offered by other Time Bank members. Each hour devoted to helping a Time Bank member is an hour that can be "spent" to "buy" services offered. But *Reach* added a twist to this traditional Time Bank model. It sought to actively engage and support older adults and people with disabilities in the Time Bank, helping them identify ways that they could give to other Time Bank members and regain roles as active citizens, while connecting them with the Montpelier formal service network, if needed. *Reach* also sought to encourage younger people to join the network, so as to facilitate increased engagement with older adults and people with disabilities, and to provide services that these populations so often need, such as transportation, in-home assistance, yard work, snow removal, and so on. The long-term goal was to establish a "social assurance infrastructure" that would complement existing public and non-profit programs and extend the ability of elders and people with disabilities to remain living at home as they age.

The original plan was to have *Reach* operate through the Onion River Exchange (ORE), an existing Time Bank in the area. But all did not go according to plan. For a variety of reasons, it took a full three years for the consolidation to be finalized, because "the melding of the two programs' operations [was] complex," says Gwendolyn Hallsmith, the City's Director of Planning and Community Development and original Director of the CIAIP project. Furthermore, merging with ORE, did not "solve the fundamental issue of financial sustainability," says Hallsmith. She notes that:

Coordinating a member network takes time and specific skills, and the viability of a Time Bank is strongly linked to the quality of member experience and the ease of exchanging [services]. But maintaining a large staff is expensive, and Time Banks throughout the United States struggle because they cannot earn enough revenue to retain the staff required for effective member coordination services. Typically, they reach a low ratio of paid staff to members that results in poorer quality of service and communications. This leads to declining network activity, member dissatisfaction, and too often, organizational collapse.

Fortunately, the merger is proceeding well and the Time Bank has succeeded in obtaining new grant funding for Reach services. However, Reach might ultimately end up elsewhere since Hallsmith believes that the best home for a Time Bank may be an organization with “deeper pockets” that could maintain it over the long term:

It's not often that a program is transferred wholesale from one organization to another, but in the case of the Reach service exchange network, incorporating it into an existing Time Bank in the community made perfect sense.

Those interested in starting a Time Bank in their region would do well to begin by first exploring the potential for hatching the Time Bank within an existing, self-sustaining institution with the desire and means to integrate a mutual exchange system into its operations [such as] an existing organization that provides aging, disabilities, or health-related services. Building toward such a relationship is one of Reach's key strategic objectives for the future.

In the meantime, Reach has found other approaches to promote sustainability, such as:

- Reducing paid administrative staff and replacing them with member participants (member participants, of course, get bankable credit hours), although this solution may only go so far—as Hallsmith points out, “...very few Time Banks have shown the ability to survive with an entirely voluntary staff.”
- Creating small project-specific groups of members that can be self-organizing around specific tasks. An example is the weatherization-repair group that was organized to work on members' homes in Reach's Vermont Seniors' Home Repair and Weatherization Program.
- Becoming more specific in defining the client population by relating

programming to specific interests or needs. For example, instead of defining the client population generally as “older adults” or “people with disabilities,” using more specific terms such as “elder veterans” or “grandparents raising grandchildren” may help in recruitment and fundraising: When *Reach* launched a program targeting returning and older veterans (rather than simply “older adults”), for example, it received generous funding support. “Service specificity provides similar advantages by enlisting the interests, affinities, and skills of community members,” says Hallsmith, “rather than their identification with an age group.”

- Becoming more specific in defining the services. The Home Repair and Weatherization Program attracted people interested in carpentry, environmental stewardship, and housing-related issues as well as older adults who needed home repairs more than other types of services. Hallsmith says: “By launching it as a home weatherization program, Reach could request funding from entities with areas of interest outside the social services sphere, such as housing, environmental protection, energy efficiency, and home safety,” and the program won immediate funding support from corporate philanthropies.

As this example shows, a variety of approaches may be needed to promote sustainability, even when a program is transferred wholesale from one organization to another.

For more detailed information about the Reach project, see [Reach: Rural Elder Assistance for Care and Health](#), the case study prepared by the CIAIP TAG.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this brief, we noted that few of the grantees, if any, had a clear picture of their sustainability plans at the start of their CIAIP initiatives. Grantees certainly did not consciously set out to be the examples of particular sustainability strategies, and we venture to guess that some of the grantees were surprised by how and where their projects ended up as the CIAIP grant program came to a close. The seemingly neat division into six sustainability strategies, described in the preceding pages, was a retrospective effort by the TAG Team, meaning that we reviewed grantees’ three plus years of work on their projects, interviewed them about the sustainability of their projects, and then devised a typology of strategies

based on what they told us about their projects' outcomes. The typology of sustainability strategies we started is undoubtedly not comprehensive, and other successful strategies could be added to it in due course. We hope in the meantime that it will give organizations similar to the CIAIP grantees a *vocabulary and set of approaches* to consider as they undertake their own discussions about sustainability.

REFERENCES

The Sustainability Planning Workbook, found at the Finance Project Sustainability Resource Center: <http://www.financeproject.org/index.cfm?page=28>

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APPENDIX 1: SUSTAINABILITY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Before we start, can you tell me a little bit about what elements of your initiative are still going forward at the end of the federal funding cycle?

- When, during the 3 year period, did you start thinking about sustainability?
- How did that come to the surface?
- How did you first organize your sustainability effort?
- Who was involved? (Just your organization? Your coalition?)
- Did you develop a formal plan?
- How did you decide what you were going to sustain?
- How did you define sustainability at that phase of your development?
- How did you decide what elements of the project you wanted to sustain? (How was that framed – as sustaining the organization’s program or as sustaining the impacts?)
- Did you develop another vision for the program that might have differed from the first one?
- Did you involve new players in the sustainability planning?
- Did you conduct and record a formal sustainability plan? (May I see it?)
- So what were going to be the elements or actions you planned to make your initiative sustainable?
- Did your sustainability plan then go according to your expectations?
- If you were going to label your sustainability strategy, would you say it was...
 - Seat of the pants (organic, ad hoc)?
 - Systematic?
 - Collaborative?
 - Focused on new funding?
 - Focused on spinning things off?
 - Focused on mergers?
- What were the major barriers you encountered in trying to sustain your initiative, and how did you overcome them (if you did)?
- For those things you are sustaining, what were the most important steps that you took for success?
- What would you recommend to other organizations that seek to sustain some aspect or impacts associated with their initiatives?