

Sustainability Basics:

How to Develop a Funding Strategy for Your Reentry Program

An effective sustainability strategy can increase your program recognition, expand your program partners and champions, and help secure reliable and consistent funding. Achieving program sustainability is an ever-evolving process. It includes developing a strategy about how you will build and maintain program capacity through effective **communications**, **branding**, and efforts to secure **funding**. This tip sheet focuses on **funding**. Please see the companion tip sheets for [communications](#) and [branding](#).

Funding

Getting Started

Before trying to secure additional funding for your program, ask yourself these questions:

Who



Who needs to be involved in efforts to pursue funding?

What



What do you need to accomplish?

How



How will you use data and evaluation findings in these efforts?

Step 1

Once you have your team, funding mapping is an exercise that can help identify and assess program needs, how effective your current funding is at meeting those needs, and where to focus efforts to secure additional funding. The first step is to review your program's existing needs and funding. Ask yourself:

Program Needs



What are your current program needs?

Funding Sources



What are your current program funding sources and how long will they last?

Program Budget



What is the current program budget? Are all program needs being met with this budget?

Resource Gaps



What gaps need to be filled immediately and in the future?

Step 2

Next, think through what type of funder might be interested in funding some of your resource gaps. Don't limit yourself to only funders with a reentry focus. You might consider funders that would be interested in supporting specific components of your program like housing stability or employment. Now, make a list of potential funders and answer these questions:

Funder Category



What category of funder are they (e.g. government, private)?

Program Alignment



What other programs do they currently fund? Does your program align?

Funder Relationship



Do you already have a relationship with this funder?

Step 2 (Cont.)

Outreach



Who from your planning team should reach out to this funder and how?

Securing Interest



How might you secure their interest in your program (e.g. geographical location, target population)?

Application Process



What does their funding application process and cycle look like?

Step 3

Next, think about your program partners. Are there are ways to leverage those partnerships to support components of your program or fill some of your resource gaps? Try to get creative. For example, does a partner have a community space you might use for low or no cost?

Existing Partnerships



Leverage existing partnerships.

New Partnerships



Seek out new partnerships.

Step 4

Reviewing all the information you have collected, decide which potential funders and partners are most promising and focus efforts accordingly. Prioritize the funders that are most likely to be interested in your program, whose application process you can meet, and funding cycle aligns with your budget needs. Leverage or develop partnerships with organizations that have a similar mission or values. Include Steps 1- 4 on a list, spreadsheet, or tracker that you can continue to use as you refine and make progress on your funding strategy.

Data & Evaluation Findings

Data and evaluation findings can be a compelling point to many potential funders and partners. As early in your planning process as possible, answer key questions related to how data and evaluation findings can be used to set your program up for sustained funding. **Be sure you are capturing the data that will:**

Answer Questions



Answer the questions your funders will have about your program

Tell Your Story



Provide a compelling narrative or tell a story with your data

Keep in mind that it is never too late to collect and analyze data. Even if your program is up and running, evaluation findings can help you understand how effectively your program operates and whether there are opportunities for improvement and growth.