Beyond the Now: Building Sustainable OST Programs

FOUNDATIONS

Table of Contents

Why It Matters Now

Every afternoon, programs like yours open doors to belonging, discovery, and a little extra breathing room for families. I've seen a quiet homework corner turn into a confidence boost, and a single robotics club spark a path to college. That impact is real—and it deserves to last. The past few years have reminded us how quickly conditions can change. Sustainability isn't paperwork on a shelf; it's the daily habit of protecting what works and improving it bit by bit.

At Foundations, our purpose is simple: stand with leaders like you so more young people feel seen, safe, and capable—every day. When we talk about sustainability, we're not asking you to do "more." We're helping you name what matters most, strengthen the supports around it, and keep those supports steady through staff changes, budget shifts, and new priorities.

We define sustainability as: **the ongoing practice of identifying what is worth sustaining, what can be sustained, and then maintaining and improving those elements over time.** It's practical. It's doable. And it's already within reach because it builds on the good work you're leading right now.

Think of the work like a web. No single strand carries the load; strength comes from how the strands are interwoven. In this toolkit, we'll help you weave four core strands:

- **Leverage data:** Use evidence to prioritize what's working, refine what isn't, and tell a clear, credible story of impact.
- **Diversify funding sources:** Build a balanced mix—public, private, philanthropic, and earned revenue—aligned to mission and compliant with requirements.
- **Build strategic partnerships:** Engage schools, community groups, higher education, employers, and families to share assets and extend your reach.
- **Train and empower staff:** Invest in people, role clarity, and simple routines that keep quality high through change.

Quick self-check

- What are the **three outcomes** you're determined to preserve next year?
- Do you have **at least one active partner** tied to each priority outcome?
- Is your **funding mix mapped** to specific activities—and compliant?
- What **monthly or quarterly routine** keeps data, dollars, and partnerships aligned?

Bottom line

If you're still figuring out the answers to these questions, this toolkit is for you. Sustainability isn't just keeping doors open; it's protecting and improving the outcomes that matter most to your community. When data, dollars, partnerships, and people are woven together with intention, your web holds—through the busy seasons and the hard ones. I'm glad you're here, and I'm excited for what we'll build together!

Who is This Toolkit For?

This toolkit is written for out-of-school time leaders from non-profits, faith-based organizations, community-based agencies, and local education agencies that work at youth development and education before or after school. This includes both traditional afterschool and camp programs and expanded learning programs that support career development, health and recreation, belonging work, and much more. If you're responsible for keeping high-quality out-of-school time (OST) programming strong across years, funding, and leadership changes, this toolkit is for you. It focuses on practical steps you can implement with your current team and partners, using the resources you already have, engaging community partners, and braiding in additional support where appropriate. You will find clear explanations, decision points, and step-by-step actions designed to help you plan, document, and demonstrate sustainability.

What does this toolkit assume about your role? You are managing funding streams while leading people, partners, and budgets. You need plain-language guidance that helps expand your program's impact while maintaining high-quality instruction and services. You also need to show progress to stakeholders—youth, families, school leaders, community partners, and funders—using evidence that is both meaningful and compliant with your funding rules and organizational policies. The tools and recommendations in this toolkit address a range of sustainable approaches so you can choose what fits your context.

How Do I Use This Toolkit?

Use this toolkit as a working document, not a one-time read. Each section builds toward a durable “web of sustainability” in which multiple strategies interlock to support consistent outcomes for youth and families. You can read this toolkit straight through or jump to the strategy that matches your most urgent need. Throughout, you’ll see concise definitions, approaches, and action planners you can start using tomorrow in your program.

Begin by skimming the introduction to each strategy to get a better understanding of them, then complete the quick self-check at the start of the section you choose. Capture your baseline, pick one or two actions to strengthen a strand this quarter, and schedule a regular review to update your progress and evidence. As you work, keep your sustainability story visible so that data, partnerships, staff, and dollars are always aligned to benefit youth and families.

This toolkit also includes case studies that mirror real program contexts. They illustrate how leaders apply the strategy, document decisions, and communicate results in ways that meet their needs. Treat them as models you can adapt, not scripts you must follow. Your web of sustainability will be specific to your community; the strategies build a web of support strong enough to hold your program.

“

Sustainability:

(v) identifying what is worth sustaining and what is able to be sustained, and maintaining and improving these things.

Leveraging Data

To decide what is worth sustaining, and to improve those elements over time, you need more than spreadsheets. You need a clear, repeatable way to collect the right information, make sense of it with a sustainability lens, and communicate it to the people who make decisions with you and about you. This section lays out that strategy. It goes beyond data collection to emphasize analysis and communication as core management routines that protect quality and help you scale what works.

You'll start by assembling a full picture from multiple sources, so your sustainability choices rest on evidence, not assumptions. We'll guide you through the major data domains so you can see how needs, services, and outcomes align.

From there, you'll organize and analyze the evidence to determine which activities are producing the strongest impact relative to effort and cost. This evidence will inform where you make adjustments and how you decide what to sunset. Finally, you'll translate your findings into concise messages that help stakeholders understand what you're sustaining, why it maters, and how they can support it. This progression of collecting, analyzing, and communicating anchors the strategies and tools in this section.

Data Domains

To see a clear picture of needs and outcomes, look at data across multiple domains. These domains start broad and then narrow toward day-to-day practice. Below is a plain-language description of each domain, the kinds of information it includes, the insight it provides, and a short example from the Brighter Futures Community Center case study that you can explore in-full at the end of this section.

Community-level data

- ***What it is:*** Demographic and contextual information about the neighborhoods you serve—population by age and/or grade bands, languages spoken at home, income and employment, housing stability, transportation access, internet and device access, crime and safety patterns, and public health indicators.
- ***Why it matters:*** It explains **why** families need your program and helps you size services, choose locations/times, and plan access supports (e.g., snacks, translation, transportation).
- ***Example data:*** Census tract data show 41% of households with children are single-caregiver; 28% of families report limited evening supervision due to work schedules. Broadband subscriptions lag behind the county average.
- ***Data insight:*** Offer after-work pickup windows, provide on-site device access, and prioritize homework support and safe spaces until 6:30 p.m.

School-level data

- ***What it is:*** School calendars, bell schedules, attendance and tardy rates, homework completion and missing work reports, grade distributions, benchmark and/or diagnostic results, behavior referrals, and school improvement priorities.
- ***Why it matters:*** It shows **where OST can complement the core day** by targeting grades or subjects, aligning tutoring to units, timing sessions around bus runs, and coordinating with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or attendance teams.
- ***Example data:*** The middle school reports high missing assignments in grades 6–8 ELA and Math during quarters 1–2 and a spike in tardiness after holidays.
- ***Data insight:*** Run a 4-day Homework Lab with a pre-holiday “re-entry” boost and coordinate topics with ELA and Math pacing guides.

Data Domains

Student-level data

- ***What it is:*** Individual attendance and dosage in OST, assignment completion, quick checks, grades, behavior notes, and participation in specific activities (with appropriate privacy safeguards).
- ***Why it matters:*** It tracks **progress for each student**, identifies who benefits most from which activity, and flags who needs outreach or adjustments.
- ***Example data:*** Regular Homework Lab participants (⩾30 days) show an 18% drop in missing assignments and maintain 92% session attendance. Three students with <10 days show no change.
- ***Data insight:*** Target outreach to low-dosage students; keep small-group coaching for regulars.

Student-voice data

- ***What it is:*** Short surveys, exit tickets, focus groups, interviews, suggestion boxes—students' ratings of usefulness, belonging, challenge, and ideas for improvement.
- ***Why it matters:*** It confirms **relevance and engagement**; helps refine activities and increase attendance by centering youth perspective.
- ***Example data:*** 78% of students say the lab "helps me finish work I'd otherwise miss"; requests include more headphones and a quiet zone.
- ***Data insight:*** Add headsets to the wish list; create a designated silent table; keep small-group coaching.

Family-voice data

- ***What it is:*** Family surveys, focus groups, interviews, emails/notes—caregiver perspectives on access (times, transportation, childcare), communication, perceived benefits, and barriers.
- ***Why it matters:*** It surfaces **real-world constraints and benefits**; informs schedules, pickup windows, language access, and family-night topics.
- ***Example data:*** Families cite 4–6 p.m. as the most helpful window; top barriers are transportation and cost of supplies.
- ***Data insight:*** Keep the 4–6 p.m. block, add bus tokens/gift cards via partners, and stock basic supplies through in-kind drives.

Program goals, schedule, and budget

- ***What it is:*** Your written goals/outcomes, weekly schedule (what runs, when, for whom), staffing plan, and budget by activity.
- ***Why it matters:*** It defines **what you aim to achieve**, what you deliver to get there, and **how resources are allocated**; lets you link dollars (and donations) to outcomes and check cost per participant/outcome.
- ***Example data:*** The goal is to reduce missing assignments in grades 6–8 by 15% by June. The program schedule includes: Homework Lab 4 days/week; Family Finance Nights monthly. The budget shows $78/student/semester, a marginal cost for the lab, partially offset by in-kind snacks.
- ***Data insight:*** Protect the lab in sustainability planning; pursue a small grant for headphones and a sponsor for Family Nights.

Quick Self-Check: Are We Ready to Leverage Data?

- Do we have at least a baseline datapoint in each domain (community, school, student, student voice, family voice, goals, schedule, budget)? If not, which gaps must we prioritize?
- Can we trace how each program activity aligns to youth and family needs and our program's goals?
- Do we have a regular routine to convert data into updates for staff, partners, and funders? If not, what can we do to establish one?

Data Collection Tool

Directions: Use the sources below to assemble a clear, current picture of community need, school context, and program demand. Each item notes what it tells you and how to use it in planning and sustainability messaging.

Community need & context

Feeding America — Map the Meal Gap

- **What it provides:** County/metro estimates of overall and child food insecurity, plus meal cost and supply gaps. Data are model-based and typically lag a year.
- **Why it matters:** Food insecurity is a concrete proxy for basic-needs pressure that affects attendance, behavior, and homework completion. Use it to justify snacks, family food tables, or partnerships with local pantries.
- **How to use in sustainability:** Pair the rate with your program's attendance and snack usage to show demand and cost avoidance (e.g., "Child food insecurity above the state average, our program addresses that by keeping snacks fully stocked; we're seeking a grocery partner for weekly donations").

Migration Policy Institute — State Language & Education Profiles

- **What it provides:** Languages spoken at home, Limited English Proficiency rates, newcomer trends, and school-age population snapshots.
- **Why it matters:** Guides translation priorities, bilingual staffing, and family-night topics; helps you plan accessible communications and interpretation.
- **How to use in sustainability:** Cite top languages when proposing bilingual outreach or translated surveys; align in-kind requests (e.g., headsets for interpretation) to the identified needs.

Data Collection Tool

State Education Agency (SEA) School Report Cards

- **What they provide:** Attendance, achievement and growth, graduation, discipline, subgroup data, and school improvement indicators (often with multi-year trends).
- **Why it matters:** Shows exactly where OST can complement the core day—by grade, subject, and timing—and offers credible baseline metrics for your goals.
- **How to use in sustainability:** Quote one or two indicators (e.g., chronic absenteeism or missing work trends) to justify the focus of your Homework Lab, tutoring blocks, or re-entry supports.

National School Lunch Program and Free or Reduced-Price Meals

- **What it provides:** Percent of students qualifying for free/reduced-price meals, a widely used proxy for economic disadvantage.
- **Why it matters:** Helps size access supports (supplies, transportation, fee waivers) and communicate need in grants and donor outreach.
- **How to use in sustainability:** If 100% eligibility is in place, acknowledge it and pair with another indicator (e.g., food insecurity or attendance) to avoid overstating need when writing grants.

School landscape & opportunities

Data Collection Tool

Student supports & vulnerability

ED Data Express — Homeless Enrolled Students (McKinney-Vento)

- **What it provides:** Counts and rates of students identified as experiencing homelessness, with year-over-year trends.
- **Why it matters:** Signals where flexible enrollment, supplies, transportation, and storage for student materials may be essential.
- **How to use in sustainability:** Reference the trend alongside your own supply usage and family-voice data to justify in-kind drives (e.g., hygiene kits, backpacks) and transportation partnerships.

State Juvenile Justice data & OJJDP Youth Arrest Rates by State

- **What they provide:** Population-level youth safety context by offense type and year; useful for understanding neighborhood stressors, not individual risk.
- **Why it matters:** Helps you frame the importance of safe, structured after-school hours without stigmatizing students or communities.
- **How to use in sustainability:** Use sparingly as backdrop (e.g., "County youth arrest rates remain above state average indicating a need to prioritize safe spaces and structured clubs 4–6 p.m."); never use for student-level decisions.

Data Collection Tool

Afterschool Alliance — America After 3PM (state fact sheets)

- **What it provides:** Parent-reported demand, waitlists, barriers (cost, access, awareness), and perceived benefits of OST, with state-level comparisons.
- **Why it matters:** Offers strong language for grant narratives, donor appeals, and corporate pitches about unmet demand and program impact.
- **How to use in sustainability:** Quote a demand or barrier stat to frame your ask (e.g., "X% of parents report cost as a barrier and propose scholarships or a sponsor-underwritten club").

Afterschool supply & demand

Data Collection

Action Planner

Sometimes your key data already exists and only needs to be gathered into one place. Yet we often find that some of the data we need isn't available yet. This action planner is designed to help you collect what's missing.

To use this Action Planner:

1. Find the topic that matches your gap (e.g., "Family focus groups") or add additional lines for "other" needs.
2. Assign tasks, a responsible person, and a timeline that fits your context.

For many of the topics we have we have survey tools that you can customize to fit your programmatic needs. You can find them in Appendix A-F of this toolkit upon full release.

Data Collection

Action Planner

Topic	Tasks	Person Responsible	Timeline	Note
Example: Student Surveys	• *Customize surveys for program and create a Google form* • *Schedule 20 minutes for each group to complete the survey in the computer lab* • *Add survey data to the data collection tool*	• Program Director - customize surveys • Elementary Site Coordinator, Middle School Site Coordinator - schedule surveying and add data to tool	• Customize surveys by October 15 • Collect and add data by November 8	
Student Surveys • Early Elementary • Elementary • Middle/ High School				

Data Collection

Action Planner

Topic	Tasks	Person Responsible	Timeline	Note
Family Surveys • English • Spanish • *Any other languages present in your community*				
Partner Surveys				
Student Focus Groups				
Family Focus Groups				
Partner Focus Groups				

Data Collection

Action Planner

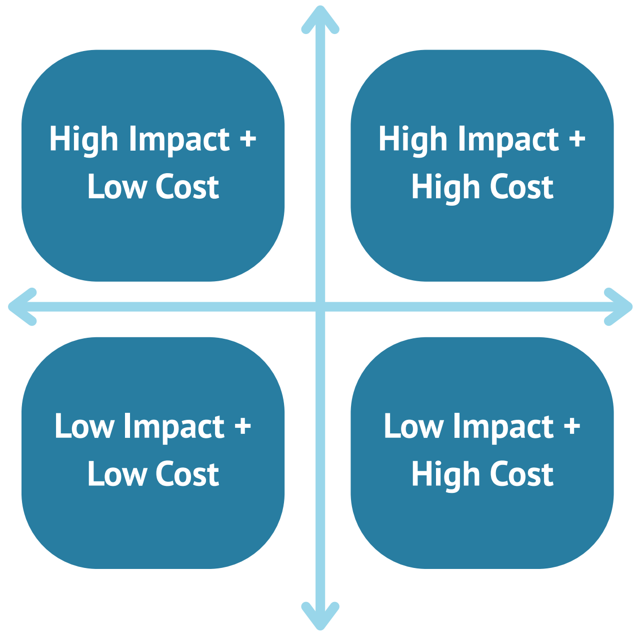
Topic	Tasks	Person Responsible	Timeline	Note
Student Interviews				
Family Interviews				
Partner Interviews				
Other				

Sustainability Data Analysis

You've collected and organized data; now it's time to use it. This tool helps you use your data to look at what you do achieves and what it costs, so you can decide what is worth sustaining. It does not ask for new data. Instead, you will bring forward evidence gathered in the last two tools (your Data Collection Tool and the Data Collection Action Planner) and analyze it side-by-side with each program activity.

The goal is simple: make confident decisions about which activities to protect or scale, and which ones to improve or sunset—and document your reasoning in a format that you can share with staff, partners, and funders.

The Impact + Expense Continuum



Every activity you do within your program sits somewhere on this two-axis grid.

- **High mission impact + Low cost** → These activities have significant data demonstrating their impact and aren't particularly expensive in human, material or fiscal resources. These are the activities you should sustain/scale. Protect these; consider expanding them if you can maintain quality.

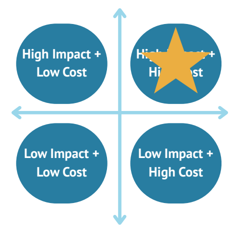
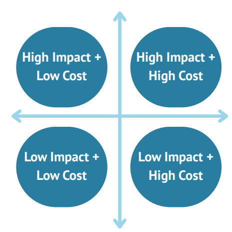
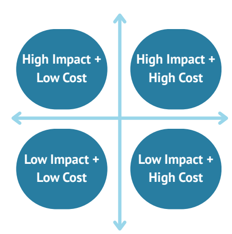
- **High mission impact + High cost** → These activities also have significant data demonstrating their impact, but may be more expensive in either human, material or financial resources. For example, high impact tutoring can be very impactful, as it's name suggests, but is also very expensive as it requires low staff to student ratios and highly qualified staff. These are activities you should protect with a plan. Keep these, but look for efficiencies, partnerships, or dedicated funding to lower the net cost.

- **Low mission impact + Low cost** → Data doesn't indicate that these activities are impactful, but they also have low costs. Because even low-cost activities cost something, staff and youth time at a minimum, it's important to develop a short improvement plan and a clear success threshold; otherwise, you should reallocate these efforts.

- **Low mission impact + High cost** → Activities that are low impact and high cost should be sunset or replaced. Unless there is a compelling equity or strategic reason, these are prime for discontinuation.

What is Quality Data?

Use your existing data—attendance/dosage, academic or developmental skill gains, student/family voice, partner outcomes—and rate how strongly each activity advances your stated goals for youth and families. Then consider the total cost to deliver the activity and cost per participant/outcome (staff time, materials, space, transportation, partner fees, administration, etc.).

Program Activity	Aligned Program Goal	Evidence Applied (Check the categories that inform your rating)	Impact + Expense Rating (Place a mark in the quadrant that the activity falls)	Is this activity worth sustaining	Notes/Action Steps and Person Responsible
Example: Elementary Career Connected Club (Youth learn about a new career each week)	*Youth will expand their knowledge of careers and show an increased sense of future potential.*	☒ *Community* ☐ *School* ☒ *Student* ☐ *Student Voice* ☒ *Family Voice* ☒ *Partner Data*		☐ *Yes, scale* ☒ *With conditions, protect* ☐ *With conditions, improve* ☐ *No, sunset*	*Finding a guest each week is time consuming; consider finding a volunteer to do this or identify a curriculum, moving to monthly guests. Program Director will research potential options.*
		☐ Community ☐ School ☐ Student ☐ Student Voice ☐ Family Voice ☐ Partner Data		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ With conditions	
		☐ Community ☐ School ☐ Student ☐ Student Voice ☐ Family Voice ☐ Partner Data		☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ With conditions	

Tips for Filling in the Chart

- **Be consistent:** Have the same two-three people apply ratings across all activities to reduce bias.
- **Surface equity considerations:** If an activity serves a high-need subgroup or removes a major access barrier, reflect that in the Impact + Expense Rating and Notes.

Quick Self-Check: Are My Decisions Defensible?

- Have we rated **every current activity** with at least two independent evidence sources?
- Do we have **at least one** activity in each of the following action buckets: **protect, improve, scale, sunset**?
- Can we explain any **high-cost** items we plan to keep (funding source, partnership offsets, or equity rationale)?
- Did we record next-step owners and dates so this analysis drives action?

Sustainability Messaging Guide

Sharing your sustainability message is an essential part of leveraging your data. This guide helps you translate evidence into a clear, plain-language one-pager for multiple audiences—funders, school and district leaders, partners, and families. You'll highlight which activities are sustainable, why they matter, and the impact they're having. Use the guided template to draft your message, then hand it to your designer to finalize the visuals.

How to Use the Sustainability Messaging Guide

1. Fill in the key information about your program.

2. Go back to the activities you rated as worth sustaining in your Impact + Expense analysis. For each activity, fill in the key information.

3. Keep language simple and audience-friendly. Avoid jargon and acronyms unless required.

Program Name: *Your official program name*

Vision and/or Mission: *One short sentence that states who you serve and the difference you aim to make*

What We Do

Goal: *Which program goal does this activity advance? Use plain language*

Activity (1-2 sentences): *Name and 1-2 sentences on what happens, when, and for whom*

Impact Data (2-3 bullets):

- *2-3 data points tied to the goal (e.g.*
- *attendance, behavior, satisfaction)*
-

Impact Statement (1 sentence): *One sentence that connects the data to a real benefit for youth/families/partners*

Call to Action: *How stakeholders can support (volunteer, partnership, referrals, funding alignment, space/time)*

Contact: *Name, role, email/phone, website*

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

This case study is designed to help you understand how programs can utilize the data tools to support their sustainability. This is not meant to be replicated, but instead to demonstrate how you can apply the strategy. Each program is unique and so your own use of the strategy will be different.

About Brighter Futures Community Center

Organization Brighter Futures Community Center (BFCC) is a local nonprofit that operates a middle/high school program previously funded by 21st CCLC and an elementary program supported through CBGD vouchers.

Community BFCC is located in an urban neighborhood; many families are low-income, speak multiple home languages, and work shift or seasonal farm-labor schedules.

Campus & services BFCC serves three schools within five blocks and operates after-school programs and camps for elementary and middle grades. They also offer after-after-school activities for middle and high school students from 6:00–8:30 pm. In addition to their youth programming they have an on-site senior center, food pantry, and a community-connected social worker.

Funding change This year, 21st CCLC dollars were disrupted and the state paused new voucher applications (existing vouchers will continue through the year). BFCC conducted a sustainability analysis to determine which activities to protect, improve, scale, or sunset.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

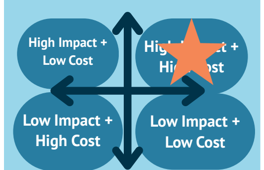
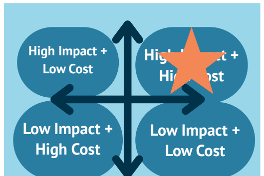
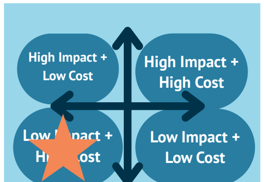
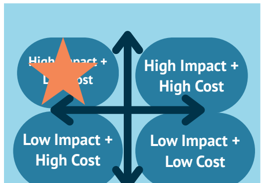
At-a-Glance Data

- **Elementary:** 120 youth are enrolled; Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is 85; languages spoken by Families include Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Arabic.
- **Middle/High:** 160 youth are enrolled; ADA is 110; a late-bus partnership covers two routes after 8:30 pm; rideshare vouchers are being piloted for emergency returns.
- **Family engagement:** 180 unique adult family members participated across the year.

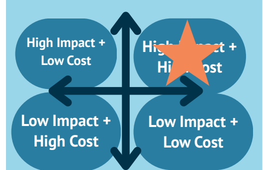
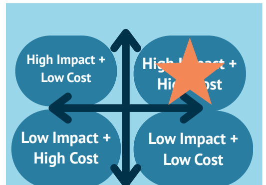
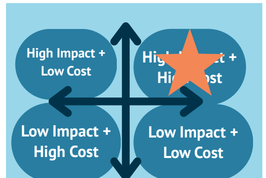
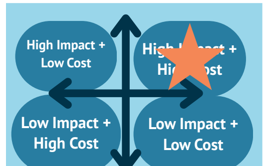
Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Completed Impact + Tool (ratings use 1–5; 5 = very high)

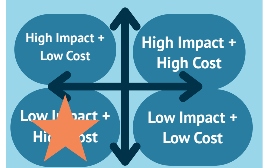
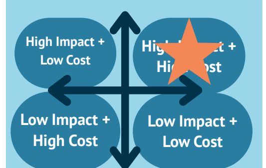
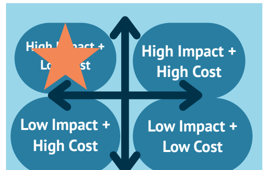
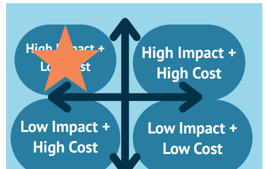
Key: Evidence categories checked when they informed the rating.
Impact considers attendance/dosage, grades, SEL/behavior, satisfaction, partner outcomes. Expense reflects total cost and cost per participant.

Program Activity	Aligned Program Goal	Evidence Applied (Check the categories that inform your rating)	Impact + Expense Rating (Place a mark in the quadrant that the activity falls)	Worth Sustaining?	Notes, Action, & Timeline
Elem: Career & Community Knowledge	Early exposure to careers & pathways	*Community* ***School*** *Student* ***Student Voice*** ***Family Voice*** *Partner Data*		With conditions	Attendance good on themed days; materials/guest honoraria raise costs.
Elem: SEL Block	Improve classroom readiness & peer skills	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* *Partner Data*		With conditions	Teacher ratings show fewer conflicts; staffing drives cost.
Elem: Field Trips	Enrichment & exposure	*Community* *School* ***Student*** *Student Voice* ***Family Voice*** ***Partner Data***		No (pause)	High bus & venue fees; uneven link to goals.
Elem: Literacy Time	Increase reading proficiency	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** *Student Voice* *Family Voice* ***Partner Data***		Yes	+0.4 average reading level; volunteer readers reduce cost.

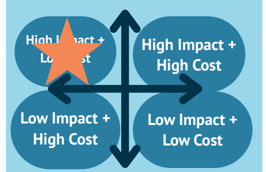
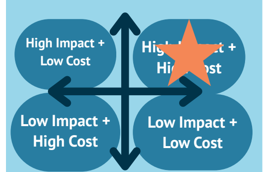
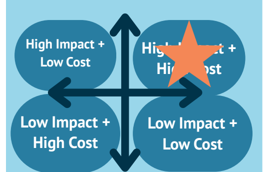
Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Program Activity	Aligned Program Goal	Evidence Applied (Check the categories that inform your rating)	Impact + Expense Rating (Place a mark in the quadrant that the activity falls)	Worth Sustaining?	Notes, Action, & Timeline
Elem: Homework Help	Improve completion & accuracy	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* *Partner Data*		Yes	18% drop in missing work; $78/student/semester
Elem: Tutoring (1:3)	Accelerate growth for below-grade students Improve attendance & routines	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** *Student Voice* *Family Voice* ***Partner Data***		With conditions	Strong gains for targeted group; requires certified tutors.
Elem: Health & Wellness	Improve attendance & routines	*Community* *School* ***Student*** *Student Voice* ***Family Voice*** ***Partner Data***		With conditions	Fewer nurse visits; snack/PE supplies carry costs.
MS/HS: Basketball (after-after)	Engagement & behavior	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* *Partner Data*		With conditions	Behavior referrals ↓12% for regulars; coach stipends & utilities.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Program Activity	Aligned Program Goal	Evidence Applied (Check the categories that inform your rating)	Impact + Expense Rating (Place a mark in the quadrant that the activity falls)	Worth Sustaining?	Notes, Action, & Timeline
MS/HS: Dance	Engagement & attendance	*Community* *School* ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* *Partner Data*		No (pause)	Attendance fluctuates; instructor cost.
MS/HS: Entrepreneurship Club	Career skills & attendance	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* ***Partner Data***		Yes	91% session attendance; 3 student micro-ventures launched; partner mentors offset costs.
MS/HS: Soccer (after-after)	Engagement & teamwork	*Community* ***School*** ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* *Partner Data*		Yes	High demand; minimal equipment; late bus covers transport.
MS/HS: Art Club	Expression & attendance	*Community* *School* ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** *Family Voice* *Partner Data*		With conditions	Low cost; good retention; modest academic link.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Program Activity	Aligned Program Goal	Evidence Applied (Check the categories that inform your rating)	Impact + Expense Rating (Place a mark in the quadrant that the activity falls)	Worth Sustaining?	Notes, Action, & Timeline
Families: Mom's Café	Family networks & resource access	*Community* *School* ***Student*** ***Student Voice*** ***Family Voice*** ***Partner Data***		Yes	Peer-led; referrals to pantry & clinics; very low cost.
Families: Wellness Clinics	Health access	*Community* *School* *Student* *Student Voice* ***Family Voice*** ***Partner Data***		With conditions	High value; rely on clinic partners for staffing/supplies.
Families: Saturday Educational Programs	At-home learning & navigation	*Community* *School* ***Student*** *Student Voice* ***Family Voice*** ***Partner Data***		Yes	Strong turnout on literacy/tech nights; modest stipends needed.

Designated "sustainable now" (≈ two per population):

· Elementary: Literacy Time; Homework Help

· Middle/High: Soccer; Entrepreneurship Club

· Families: Mom's Café; Saturday Educational Programs

Impact+ Rationale: Why These Are “Sustainable Now” at Brighter Futures

How we decided. After the 21st CCLC disruption and the pause on new voucher applications, Brighter Futures Community Center (BFCC) used the Impact+ tool to rate each activity on mission impact and expense, then checked three guardrails: equity (who benefits and who might be left out), operational fit (does it run with our current staff/rooms/hours), and funding readiness (cash, in-kind, or partner support already in motion). “Sustainable now” means the activity is producing clear results, fits the way BFCC already runs, and can be supported this year without crowding out core services.

Elementary (120 enrolled; ADA ≈ 85)

Literacy Time
What it is: Daily small-group read-alouds, guided practice, and fluency games aligned to classroom units.
Why now: Community and family profiles point to multilingual homes (Spanish, Haitian Creole, Arabic) and a need for simple, high-touch literacy practice after school. Teachers report better reading stamina and confidence; students choose this block consistently within the current schedule. The block runs with existing staff and shared book sets; added costs are minimal and often covered by donated leveled readers.
What sustains it: In-kind books/supplies; bilingual volunteer readers; a light data rhythm (minutes read/quick checks) to keep partners and donors updated.

Homework Help
What it is: A structured hour for assignment completion with adults circulating and quick checks for understanding.
Why now: Elementary ADA is steady, and families value reliable time/space before evening shifts. School reports show fewer missing assignments for regular attendees, and staff can run this with current rooms and materials. The model supports working caregivers without new hires or equipment.
What sustains it: In-kind supplies/snacks; small sponsor “station” underwriting per semester; a monthly one-pager (attendance + completion snapshot) for stewardship.

Middle/High (160 enrolled; ADA ≈ 110; late-bus partnership to 8:30 p.m.)

Soccer

What it is: After-school conditioning, drills, and league play that keeps students engaged on campus from 4:00–6:00 p.m., with late-bus coverage extending participation.

Why now: Attendance and student voice show soccer as an engagement anchor—practice days lift overall presence and smooth transitions into evening programming. Field access and donated gear keep expenses low; the late-bus partnership removes a major barrier for teens who stay late.

What sustains it: In-kind uniforms/equipment; shared field agreements; a modest stipend covered by a local sponsor; simple metrics (participation, practice attendance, eligibility to play).

Entrepreneurship Club

What it is: A mentor-supported club where teens design micro-projects (school merch, snack stand, basic services), then budget, market, and pitch.

Why now: High relevance to older youth (choice, autonomy, real-world skills) and strong interest from local businesses make this a low-cost, high-signal activity. It fits evening hours (6:00–8:30 p.m.) in existing classrooms and produces tangible artifacts (budgets, pitch decks) that demonstrate learning.

What sustains it: Volunteer mentors; small in-kind materials; a corporate micro-grant for seed costs; quick "what we built/learned" stories for donor and partner updates.

Families (180 unique adult participants)

Mom's Café
What it is: A monthly, parent-led gathering with childcare, light refreshments, and rotating topics (navigating school, community resources, wellness).
Why now: Family voice highlights shift work and the need for trusted, bilingual spaces; Mom's Café has steady participation and surfaces timely needs BFCC can act on quickly (with the on-site social worker, pantry, and school liaisons). Costs are low thanks to donated space/snacks and volunteer facilitators.
What sustains it: In-kind refreshments and childcare volunteers; a small sponsor aligned to family engagement; two-question pulse checks to keep sessions responsive.

Saturday Educational Programs
What it is: Short weekend workshops for caregivers and students (digital literacy, financial basics, high-school/college navigation) led by BFCC staff and partner experts.
Why now: Weekend timing meets families' work realities; sessions show strong satisfaction and practical carry-over (clearer school communication, smoother homework routines). They use existing rooms and the partner network already active on site (senior center connections, pantry referrals), so marginal cost is predictable.
What sustains it: Partner-provided facilitators and donated materials; small grants or sponsor underwriting when specialized supplies are needed; headcounts plus "intended action" exit slips to show impact.

Brighter Futures Community Center

Our Mission: We partner with local schools and families to help young people learn, stay safe, and thrive—every afternoon and evening.

Literacy Time + Homework Help

Literacy Time + Homework Help runs Monday–Thursday for Grades 3–5. Students read with volunteers, then complete assignments with staff support.

Goal: Improve reading and homework completion for elementary students.

Impact Data:

- +0.4 average reading level growth in one semester (n=86).
- 18% reduction in missing assignments among regular attendees.
- Cost ≈ $78 per student per semester due to volunteer support.

Consistent attendance builds skills and study habits that carry into the school day.

After-Afterschool Soccer

After-Afterschool Soccer meets 2–3 evenings/week with a co-ed league; the late-bus partnership ensures safe rides home.

Goal: Boost engagement and keep teens connected after 6 p.m.

Impact Data:

- 91% session attendance among rostered students.
- Discipline referrals dropped 12% for regular players.
- Low equipment costs; field access provided in-kind.

Soccer keeps teens active and connected, leading to better attendance and fewer behavior issues at school.

Brighter Futures Community Center

Join as a volunteer reader or mentor; sponsor league fees or provide micro-grants.
Contact: Program Manager, info@brighterfutures.org

Reflection Questions

1. **Context fit.** What features of BFCC's environment (three nearby schools, late-bus routes, multilingual families, shift-work schedules) made the "sustainable now" activities effective?
2. **Evidence strength.** For each "Yes" item, which **two** evidence sources most strongly support the impact rating? What gaps, if any, remain?
3. **Equity lens.** Which activities disproportionately benefit high-need subgroups (e.g., newcomers, students below grade level)? How did that influence ratings and decisions?
4. **Cost clarity.** For items in **HI/HC**, what specific efficiencies, partnerships, or restricted funds could lower net cost without reducing quality?
5. **Replace or redesign.** For **LI/HC** activities (e.g., elementary field trips, MS/HS dance), what redesigns or partnerships would move them toward **HI/LC**—or should they be sunset?
6. **Sustainability story.** Can leaders summarize—in one minute—what they will sustain, why it matters, and how stakeholders can help?
7. **Next 90 days.** What are the first three actions (with owners and dates) that will lock in the wins from this analysis (e.g., volunteer recruitment for Literacy Time, sponsor outreach for Entrepreneurship Club, clinic MOU renewal)?

What Leveraging Data Makes Possible?

Leveraging data is one strand of the web of sustainability. By looking across community, school, student, student voice, family voice, and partner data — and connecting those findings to your goals and daily activities — you can see clearly what is worth sustaining. This isn't data for data's sake; it is a practical way to protect what works, refine what needs improvement, and explain decisions to the people who matter most in the work: youth, families, staff, school leaders, partners, and funders. When your evidence is organized and translated into plain-language messages, your stakeholders understand the "why," not just the "what," of your program.

This layer also sets up the rest of the sustainability web:

- **Diversify funding sources:** Use your strongest impact stories and cost insights to target grants, philanthropy, corporate support, and earned revenue that align with your results.
- **Build strategic partnerships:** Share concise findings with schools, community groups, and employers to co-design roles, secure in-kind support, and close service gaps.
- **Train and empower staff:** Turn key findings into simple routines so quality holds steady through turnover and change.

Together, these strands reinforce one another. Data clarifies priorities, funding sustains them, partnerships expand them, and empowered staff deliver them with quality. As you move to the next sections, carry forward the two or three activities you identified to sustain now and scale, along with any that need improvement or redesign.

Make a Commitment

In the next 30 days, we will:

- Collect your data and analyze the Impact + Expense,
- Share a your Sustainability Messaging Guide with staff and partners, or
- Retire or redesign one low-impact, high-cost activity and document the change.

Write the commitment, assign an owner, and add the date to your calendar — so today's analysis becomes tomorrow's sustained impact.

Diversifying Funding Sources

Now that you have used data to identify what is worth sustaining, the next step is making sure those high impact activities can keep going. The next layer of the web of sustainability is diversifying funding sources. Programs that rely on a single stream, even a strong one, are more vulnerable to shifts in policy, budgets, enrollment, leadership priorities, or local conditions. Programs with multiple, well-aligned revenue streams are better positioned to weather change without cutting the very activities that drive outcomes for youth and families.

This section goes beyond “finding more money.” It will help you build a practical, balanced funding mix that matches your sustainability priorities and strengthens your long-term resilience. You will work across five common pathways: grants, private donors, corporate partnerships, business models, and in-kind giving. Each pathway has its own expectations, timelines, and documentation needs, but all of them are easier when your funding message is grounded in clear evidence. You will use what you built in the Leverage Data section, especially your sustainability messaging guide your understanding of what is worth sustaining, to make strong, credible asks and to align funding to the activities that matter most.

Grant Writing

Grants are time-bound funds awarded to support a specific program or a defined part of a program. They can come from public sources (federal, state, or local government) or private sources (foundations, corporate giving arms, community trusts). Both types can power your sustainability plan — when they're aligned to real community needs, realistic activities, and outcomes you can actually deliver. They differ, however, in structure, management requirements, reporting expectations, and risk. This chapter orients you to those differences, then shows how to craft a clear, consistent message across your needs, activities, and outcomes story using your Sustainability Messaging Guide and a simple Logic Model.

Why grants - and where they fit in your sustainability web

Grants are one strand in your web of sustainability, complementing partnerships, diversified revenue, and strong data practices. Effective grants:

- Target gaps your data has confirmed (e.g., late-evening teen engagement, family navigation supports).
- Add capacity without distorting your core program model.
- Document impact in ways you can communicate to schools, families, partners, and funders.

A grant should never be the story; it should be a tool that funds the story you already tell with evidence.

What's the Difference?

Public Grants
(federal, state, local)

Structure & eligibility: Formal RFPs with strict eligibility, scoring rubrics, and required attachments (e.g., MOUs, work plans, budgets, resumes).

Allowable costs & procurement: Clear cost rules; purchasing may require competitive bids, quotes, or approved vendor lists.

Supplement-not-supplant: Usually must supplement current services, not replace existing funds (see sidebar).

Match requirements: Some programs require a cost share/match; rules define what counts.

Indirect costs: Often capped or tied to a negotiated rate.

Reporting & monitoring: Prescribed performance measures, periodic reports, site monitoring, and audit readiness.

Timelines: Longer cycles; awards tied to fiscal years with start/closeout procedures.

VS

Private Grants
(foundations, corporate giving, community trust)

Structure & eligibility: More flexible formats; may invite proposals or use short online applications.

Allowable costs: Defined by the funder's priorities; procurement is typically your internal policy.

Supplanting: Less likely to include formal "supplement-not-supplant" language, but funders still expect additionality and clear outcomes.

Match/indirect: Varies widely; some restrict overhead; clarify early.

Reporting: Often lighter—brief outcome summaries, stories, and simple financials.

Timelines: Can be faster (quarterly/rolling deadlines); stewardship and relationships matter.

Bottom line: Public dollars are often more prescriptive, with heavier compliance, documentation, and monitoring. Private dollars can be more flexible in format and timeline, but they can still carry required attachments, restrictions, and reporting expectations. Always confirm requirements basked on the specific funder.

The Throughline: A Clear Message from Need to Impact

Winning proposals read like a single, consistent argument:

1. **Need:** Who you serve and what the data shows (community, school, student, student/family/partner voice).
2. **Program fit:** What you will do, for whom, how often, by whom, and where.
3. **Outcomes:** What will change, by when, and how you'll measure it.
4. **Resources:** What you will invest (people, partners, materials, transportation, space), and how funds will be managed.
5. **Credibility & equity:** Why your organization is positioned to deliver and how the plan supports access across diverse needs.

Keep this message identical in your **narrative, work plan, budget, and attachments**. Reviewers notice when the story shifts between sections.

Use your Tools before you Write

Before drafting, read the **Request for Proposals (RFP)** in full—every instruction, attachment, scoring criterion, and deadline. Then pull out two tools you already built in this toolkit:

- **Sustainability Messaging Guide:** This supplies the plain-language description of your sustainable activities and the impact they've had. It becomes your executive summary language and your "case for support."
- **Logic Model (standard format):**
  - **Inputs:** Staff roles, partner contributions, facilities, materials, transportation, funding sources.
  - **Activities:** The specific services you'll deliver (dosage, frequency, group size).
  - **Outputs:** Immediate counts (participants served, sessions delivered, attendance hours).
  - **Outcomes:** Short-term and intermediate changes (attendance, grades, behavior, SEL where appropriate, family engagement, partner outcomes).
  - **Measures:** Data sources and cadence (what, how often, who collects).

Draft your program plan **in the logic model first**. Once it's coherent, integrate it into the narrative and budget. While writing, keep checking every paragraph against the logic model to avoid scope creep.

What Reviewers Look For and Common Pitfalls

Reviewers look for:

- A **data-backed need** tied to the specific population and setting.
- A **feasible plan** with clear dosage, staffing, and partner roles.
- **Outcomes and measures** that match the activities and timeline.
- A **sensible budget**, costs tied to activities, reasonable unit costs, and allowable line items.
- **Capacity and readiness** such as leadership, systems, and a realistic launch plan.

Common Pitfalls

Vague activities ("provide enrichment") with no schedule, group size, or staffing detail.

Outcomes that don't match activities (e.g., expecting big academic gains from low-dosage clubs).

Budgets that don't mirror the narrative (or hide key costs).

Ignoring procurement or match requirements until the end.

Overpromising scale or speed.

Compliance Notes You Should Know Up Front

Reviewers look for:

- A **data-backed need** tied to the specific population and setting.
- A **feasible plan** with clear dosage, staffing, and partner roles.
- **Outcomes and measures** that match the activities and timeline.
- A **sensible budget**, costs tied to activities, reasonable unit costs, and allowable line items.
- **Capacity and readiness** such as leadership, systems, and a realistic launch plan.

Allowable Costs

Align each budget line to an activity and the RFP's cost rules. When unsure, ask for clarification before submission.

*These will be explicitly stated in the RFP or the associated guidance.

Match Requirements

If a match is required, specify the source (cash or in-kind), document valuation (e.g., volunteer hours), and confirm availability during the grant period.

Reporting

Build your data cadence now—who will collect, when, and where data lives—so you can meet reporting deadlines without scrambling.

Sidebar: "Supplement, Not Supplant" — What it Means and How to Avoid Trouble

Many public grants (federal/state) require that funds **supplement** existing efforts rather than **supplant** them.

In plain terms: Use the grant to add services, expand reach, or improve quality—**not** to backfill a hole in your regular budget.

DO

- Add a new service (e.g., late-evening teen programming) or expand to a new population/site.
- Enhance quality (e.g., certified tutors layered onto existing homework help).
- Document what existed **before** the award and what will exist **because of** the award.

DON'T

- Shift current staff salaries to the grant without a change in role or scope.
- Replace local funds with grant funds to continue the exact same service.
- Charge general operating costs unrelated to the approved activities.

Tip:

In your narrative and budget notes, explicitly state how funds **add** and do not **replace**.

Putting it Together:

1. **Map the match** between the RFP priorities and your logic model. If a priority doesn't fit, don't force it—adjust the model or choose a different opportunity.
2. **Write the narrative last.** Outline headers in the order of the RFP, then drop in logic-model language, evidence from your messaging guide, and specific partner roles.

Before You Write: 5-Step Checklist

- [ ] **Read the entire RFP** and scoring rubric; list all required attachments and deadlines.
- [ ] **Complete or update your Logic Model** (inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes → measures).
- [ ] **Pull your Sustainability Messaging Guide** to populate the executive summary and “why now” language.
- [ ] **Confirm compliance parameters:** allowable costs, indirect rate/overhead limits, procurement steps, and any match requirements.
- [ ] **Assign roles and dates:** narrative lead, budget/fiscal lead, data/logic model lead, partner coordinator, and a final reviewer; set internal deadlines a week before submission.

Final Thought

Strong grant writing is less about dazzling prose and more about clarity and alignment. When your needs, activities, outcomes, budget, and management plan tell the same story—and that story is grounded in your data—reviewers can trust you to deliver. Keep your logic model in front of you as you draft, and use the sustainability message you've already honed to make the case for why this grant will matter in your community, this year.

Grant Writing: Logic Model

Needs → Inputs → Outputs → Outcomes

Needs

Summarize the **data-backed needs** your program addresses. Use concise bullets and cite sources in parentheses.

Include: community context, school data, student data, **student voice**, family voice, partner input.

Example: “Evening-hour gaps for teens (late bus ends 5:30); 27% increase in after-6pm referrals (School SIS, 2024).”

Program Goals

Write 2–3 plain-language goals tied to your mission and evidence. Each goal should be about **youth/families/partners**, not internal processes.

Good: “Improve on-time homework completion and core-course grades for grades 6–8.”

Avoid: “Hire two tutors.” (That’s an input, not a goal.)

Inputs

List the resources that make activities possible.

- People (roles, credentials), partners (who/what they contribute), facilities/transportation, materials/equipment, **funding sources** (note any restrictions), and staff time.
- Tip: If a cost or restriction is tied to a funder, note it briefly (e.g., “Grant X cannot pay for food.”).

Outputs

Combine the **what/how** of services with the immediate counts you will track. For each output, include:

- **Service description** (who gets what, when, how often, by whom, where)
- **Participation/engagement counts** (participants served, sessions/hours, attendance/dosage thresholds)
- **Products/artifacts** (projects completed, showcases, certifications)

Outcomes

Use clear, measurable statements. Pair each outcome with how you’ll measure it, how often, who owns it, and your target.

Short-Term (0–6 months) – early changes in skills, attitudes, knowledge, or immediate behaviors.

Intermediate (6–12+ months) – changes in attendance, coursework, grades, behavior/SEL, family engagement, partner follow-through.

Long-Term (12–24+ months) – sustained academic progress, readiness for graduation/college/career, family stability, partner capacity.

Template: Logic Model

Program/ Project Name:

Date/ Version **Prepared by**

A. Goals (2-3 statements | plain language | youth/family/partner focused)

1.
2.
3.

B. Needs (data-backed | cite source and timeframe)

Community
School
Student
Student Voice
Family Voice
Partner Input

C. Inputs (resources invested)

Staff/Roles
Partners/Contributions
Facilities/Transportation
Materials/Equipment
Funding
Sources/Restrictions
Staff Time (hrs/FTE)

D. Outputs

For each output, include both the service description and the immediate counts.
Service = who/what/when/how often/by whom/where.
Counts = participants, sessions/hours, attendance/dosage, artifacts/products.

Template: Logic Model

1. **Service Description**	Target Group	Schedule	Staff/Partner	Location
	Participants	Sessions/Hours	Attendance	Artifacts
2. **Service Description**	Target Group	Schedule	Staff/Partner	Location
	Participants	Sessions/Hours	Attendance	Artifacts
3. **Service Description**	Target Group	Schedule	Staff/Partner	Location
	Participants	Sessions/Hours	Attendance	Artifacts
4. **Service Description**	Target Group	Schedule	Staff/Partner	Location
	Participants	Sessions/Hours	Attendance	Artifacts

E. Outcomes & Measures (optional)

Short-Term Outcomes (0-6 months)	Outcome	Measure
	Frequency	Owner
	Outcome	Measure
	Frequency	Owner

Template: Logic Model

Intermediate Outcomes (6-12+months)	Outcome	Measure
	Frequency	Owner
	Outcome	Measure
	Frequency	Owner
Long-Term Outcomes (12-24+months)	Outcome	Measure
	Frequency	Owner
	Outcome	Measure
	Frequency	Owner

Private Donors

Private giving can provide flexible, mission-aligned dollars that help protect your highest-impact activities—when your organization is legally and contractually set up to accept them. Before you solicit or receive financial contributions, confirm you have the right structures in place (e.g., appropriate nonprofit/fiscal sponsorship arrangements, state charitable solicitation registration where required, and internal gift-handling controls/policies). Many publicly funded entities—including some 21st CCLC subgrantees housed in LEAs or other public agencies—may have restrictions on accepting private cash gifts or may require SEA/LEA approval and specific accounting procedures.
Donors give for many reasons—mission fit, personal experience, social ties, visible impact, and an organization's track record—and they respond to a clear, confident ask backed by evidence.

A durable donor strategy follows a simple progression:

Preparation → Relationship → Present Opportunity → Closing → Follow-up

In practice, that means doing your research, building trust, making a clear ask, confirming logistics (including how the gift can be received and receipted compliantly), and then stewarding the relationship with thanks and impact updates.
For 21st CCLC specifically, it can help to distinguish philanthropic gifts from "program income." ED's 21st CCLC non-regulatory guidance notes that if a subgrantee is offered donated funds to supplement the program, the subgrantee may accept the gift and those funds are not considered program income. (Local policy and grant terms still apply.)
When donors decline, stay positive, thank them, and keep the door open. Gratitude and personalized stewardship are essential.

Sample Private Donor Letter

This is a one-page donor letter you can copy and tailor to your program. It shows how to link one clear goal and activity to 2–3 concise impact data points that matter to donors. The sample highlights a specific, time-bound ask so supporters know exactly what their gift will do. Use the bolded callouts to see why each paragraph works and how to adapt it for Brighter Futures Community Center.

Subject: You can help students finish strong this semester

Dear [Donor Name],
Brighter Futures Community Center serves [neighborhood/area] students after school with safe spaces, homework support, and enrichment families can count on.

(***Opening:*** *plain-language mission; who benefits*)

This fall, our Homework Lab helped students reduce missing assignments by 18% and maintain 92% session attendance across 14 weeks.

(***Impact data:*** *2–3 concise metrics*)

We're inviting you to help us sustain and grow this high-impact program. A gift of $500 keeps one student in the lab for a semester; $2,500 funds a full small-group station with supplies.

(***The Ask:*** *clear amounts tied to outcomes; be direct and specific.*)

Your support ensures students arrive ready to learn—and families get reliable after-school care.

(***Impact statement:*** *why it matters to youth/families*)

I'd welcome a 15-minute visit to see the lab in action next month. Could we schedule a time that works for you?

(***Call to action/next step***)

With appreciation,
[Name], [Title]
Brighter Futures Community Center | [Phone] | [Email] | [Website]

A. Donor Conversation Checklist

1.) Prepare – before you begin the conversation research & plan

- Review prospect notes: interests, community ties, past giving, and any connection to your program.
- Example: "*Alumni parent; values homework support and safe spaces.*"
- Draft your 30-second story using your Sustainability Messaging Guide. Be sure to include the **Goal → Activity → Impact Data → Impact Statement**.
- "*Our goal is on-time homework. The Homework Lab runs 4 days/week. Missing assignments dropped 18% and session attendance is 92%. That means students arrive ready to learn.*"
- Decide the requested contribution tied to outcomes.
- "*$500 keeps one student in the lab for a semester; $2,500 funds a small-group station (8–10 students).*"
- Assign roles so the conversation flows:
  - **Lead Asker** (makes the ask)
  - **Storyteller** (shares the 30-second story)
  - **Note-taker** (captures questions, next steps).
- Print a one-pager that includes your program name, goal, activity, 2–3 data points, how to give.

2.) Build Rapport – open the conversation and learn

- State the purpose in one sentence.
- "*We're excited to share the impact you can help sustain this semester.*"
- Ask 1–2 interest questions and listen.
- "*What outcomes matter most to you—attendance, grades, or reliable after-school care?*"
- Bridge to your story using what you heard. Take this opportunity to customize your response so that they feel heard and make the connection between your work in theirs for them.
- "*Since you mentioned grades, here's how our Homework Lab helps students improve their grades through consistent homework completion.*"

How this maps to your Messaging Guide:

- **Goal** → “Improve on-time homework completion and core GPA (grades 6–8).”
- **Activity** → “Homework Lab, 4 days/week.”
- **Impact Data** → “18% fewer missing assignments; 92% attendance.”
- **Impact Statement** → “Students complete more coursework and arrive ready for class.”

Watch a short demo that models the full flow: prepare, build rapport, make the ask, close, and follow up. The script cues are simple and repeatable, so new staff can practice quickly. Pay attention to the pauses after the ask—listening is as important as speaking. Use this with your team before donor visits to build confidence and consistency. Strong results open doors, but relationships oven wallets—start building them well before you make an ask. Invest early in rapport through, listening, follow-through, and sharing timely impact updates so potential donors trust your leaderships and undertsand the need before you ever discuss a gift.

Ask Planning Tool

What this tool is: A one-page playbook you use so your request is clear, confident, and respectful. There are five simple steps detailing what you will do before, during, and after any donor conversation. If you’ve never asked for a gift before, follow the steps in order and read the examples in italics.

1. **Prepare**
2. **Build Rapport**
3. **Make the Ask**
4. **Close**
5. **Follow Up**

3.) Make the Ask – be clear, direct, and time-bound

- Name the project, the amount, and the impact in one sentence.
- "*Would you consider donating **$2,500** to fund one small-group station that will support 8–10 students over 14 weeks this fall?*"
- Pause here to allow the donor space to think and respond. Provide concise answers to any questions, avoiding jargon and acronyms.

4.) Close – confirm details and next steps

- Confirm how they prefer to give and the date on which they will make their contribution.
- Restate the impact of their specific gift.
- "*This keeps the lab open four days a week through December.*"
- If the answer is "not now," thank them sincerely, keep the door open, and ask for advice.
- "*Thank you for considering. What would make this case stronger for you next time?*"

5.) Follow Up – move from "ask" to relationship

- Send a same-day thank-you, even if they haven't decided.
- Log the outcome. Include the amount, timing, interests, and questions.
- Schedule the next touch. This may be a photo and two-sentence update next week, or an invite to observe an activity next month.

B. Run-of-Show (how a 45-60 minute visit typically unfolds)

- **0–5 min | Welcome & purpose**
  - *Set expectations: "We'll visit the lab, share outcomes, and discuss how you might help."*
- **5–20 min | Observe an activity**
  - *E.g., Homework Lab station; brief student/teacher interaction if appropriate.*
- **20–30 min | 30-second story + 2–3 impact data points**
  - *Keep it crisp; stop for questions.*
- **30–40 min | The Ask + questions**
  - *State amount, impact, and timing; then listen and respond.*
- **40–55 min | Confirm method/timing; discuss recognition or future visit dates**
  - *Make giving easy; avoid over-negotiating recognition.*
- **55–60 min | Next steps & thanks**
  - *Who will follow up, when, and with what.*

Phase	Steps	Owner	Notes/Script Cues
Prepare	Prospect research; 30-sec story; define ask amounts; assign roles; print one-pager		*Goal → Activity → Impact (2–3 data points) → Impact Statement*
Build Rapport	Warm open; 1–2 interest questions; listen; connect to story		"Which outcomes matter most to you?"

Donations

Phase	Steps	Owner	Notes/Script Cues
Make the Ask	Clear, direct, specific, time-bound		"Would you consider $2,500 to fund one station for the fall (8–10 students, 14 weeks)?"
Close	Confirm method & timing; restate impact; if "not now," thank and ask advice		*"What would make this case stronger for you?"*
Follow Up	Same-day thanks; log outcome; schedule next touch		*Photo + two-sentence update next week; invite to observe in M2*

Common pitfalls (and quick fixes)

- **Too vague:** If the donor can't repeat what you asked for, you weren't specific.
    - *Fix: name the project, amount, and impact in one sentence.*
- **Talking too long:** If you speak for more than two minutes without a question, you're lecturing.
    - *Fix: ask one interest question early and let them talk.*
- **No next step:** If you leave without a date or action, momentum fades.
    - *Fix: agree on a follow-up time before you say thank you.*

Sample Donor Follow-Up Letter (after an ask/visit)

Send this brief message after any meeting or call where you discussed support. It thanks the donor, recaps the need and the outcomes, and provides easy giving options. The tone is professional and warm, keeping the door open even if the answer was “not now.” Use it to maintain momentum and make the next step explicit.

Subject: Thank you for considering support for Brighter Futures

Dear [Donor Name],

Thank you for meeting with us to discuss sustaining the **Homework Lab**. We appreciated learning about your interest in **[donor interest]**. As shared, the lab reduced missing assignments by **18%** this fall and maintains **92%** attendance—a strong return for students and families.

Per our conversation, I’ve attached a one-page summary and giving options. If you prefer, we can set up your gift by phone or online—whatever is easiest. I’ll follow up next week to answer any questions.

With appreciation,

[Name], [Title]
[Company] | [Phone] | [Email] | [Website]

(Follow-up emphasizes thanks, staying connected, and ROI.)

Donor Visit Planner

Use this agenda to design a 45–60 minute visit that shows impact without overwhelming the donor. It outlines who to meet, what activity to observe, and which materials to share. The schedule includes time for questions and a clear moment to make the ask. A closing checklist ensures you capture next steps, responsibilities, and timing.

- **Goal of Visit:** e.g., confirm support for Homework Lab expansion next semester
- **People to Meet:** student ambassador, lead teacher, program manager
- **Activity to See:** Homework Lab small-group station (20 minutes)
- **Materials/Information to Share:** one-pager; giving options; short agenda
- **Visit Schedule (45–60 min):**
  - 0–10: Welcome & introductions
  - 10–30: Observe activity; brief student/teacher chat
  - 30–40: 30-sec story + data snapshot
  - 40–55: Present opportunity & questions
  - 55–60: Next steps & thanks
- **Visit Coordinator:** [Name, phone]
- **Visit Action Plan:** who logs notes, sends thank-you, and schedules follow-up

Donor Outreach Calendar

This rolling 12-month rhythm balances stewardship and asks so donors see impact regularly, not just at year-end. It prompts a monthly touch, a quarterly update, and timely invitations to observe key activities. The cadence is easy to start in any month and adjust to your program's cycle. Use it to prevent long gaps in communication and to plan renewals well before deadlines.

- **Monthly:** one stewardship touch (impact photo + 2–3 sentences)
- **Quarterly:** outcomes update; invite to observe an activity
- **Biannual:** donor pulse check; refresh giving options
- **Annually:** personalized year-end gratitude + impact summary; renewal plan

Example 12-month sequence (start any month M = number of months since you started): M1 welcome/impact note → M2 visit invite → M3 observe + ask → M4 thank-you + update → M5 pulse check → M6 student story → M7 mid-year data brief → M8 fall showcase invite → M9 observe + renewal → M10 holiday volunteer invite → M11 year-end impact brief → M12 gratitude + plan next year.

Corporate Partnerships

Corporate partners can contribute **money and services**—and many will do both. Cash support might fund a specific activity; in-kind support can include volunteer time, space, transportation, technology, supplies, or pro bono expertise. Most companies organize giving through three channels: **corporate giving priorities** (topics they support), a **corporate foundation** (a grantmaking arm with an application process), and **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** initiatives (employee volunteering, cause campaigns, sustainability goals, etc.). Understanding each channel helps you match your request to how a company actually gives.

Definitions:

- **Giving priorities:** The issues a company publicly supports (e.g., youth success, STEM, workforce readiness).
- **Corporate foundation:** A separate charitable entity funded by the company; usually has guidelines, cycles, and required documents.
- **CSR initiatives:** Programs that engage employees or customers in doing good (volunteer days, donation matching, cause-marketing, sustainability projects).

Start Local: businesses with a physical presence in your community are most likely to engage. Regional and national brands can work, too—especially if they employ local residents or serve your families.

Corporate Partnerships Research Guide

Purpose: Identify and qualify potential partners before you reach out. Fill in what you know, then assign someone to gather missing pieces.

How to use it (step-by-step)

1. List **any large company or chain** in your city/county (banks/credit unions, hospitals/health systems, grocers, pharmacies, utilities, manufacturers, logistics/distribution, retail, tech).
2. Visit their website (Giving/Community/CSR/Foundation pages) and note **priorities, programs, guidelines, and contacts.**
3. Match each company to **your program goals/activities** (use your sustainability messaging guide).
4. Flag **warm connections**—if anyone on staff knows someone at the company (see Section 4: Train & Empower Staff).
5. Decide your approach: **grant-style package** or **donor-style ask** (see Decision Tree below).

Potential Partner	What They Do	Corporate Foundation (requirements)	CSR Initiative? (engagement)	Direct Donations? (request rules)	Giving Priorities	Known Contact	Match with Program Goals/Activities
River City Credit Union	Local financial services; branches in program neighborhood	**Yes.** Small grants up to $5k; 2 cycles/yr; logic model + budget	**Yes.** Employee volunteer days; financial literacy workshops	**Yes.** Employee volunteer days; financial literacy workshops	Youth success, financial education, neighborhood vitality	Brighter Futures board member's employer (Ms. L.)	Homework Lab (financial coaching add-on), Family Financial Nights
FreshMart Grocery – Southside	Regional grocer; stores near schools served	No formal foundation	**Yes.** Food donations, healthy eating demos, store tour	**Yes.** Gift cards, event sponsorships; manager discretion	Food security, healthy families, local schools	Site Coordinator knows store manager	Snack Support for Homework Lab, Family Nutrition Night

Picking the Right Approach (quick decision tree)

Q1. Do they have a public application (foundation or formal sponsorship portal)?

- **Yes** → Build a **grant-style package** in accordance with the application requirements which may include but not limited to: cover letter, logic model, budget, outcomes, timeline, stewardship plan.
- **No** → Treat as a **donor-style ask**: request a meeting; bring a one-page case (Goal → Activity → Impact Data → Impact Statement) and a specific dollar/in-kind request with timing.

Q2. Are employee volunteers central to their CSR?

- **Yes** → Pair a **service day** or ongoing **skills-based volunteering** with a modest cash or in-kind request.
- **No** → Lead with cash or goods/services that directly sustain your priority activity.

Q3. Is your activity a strong match to their priorities?

- **Yes** → Emphasize **mission fit** and **local impact data.**
- **No/unclear** → Consider another activity or a different company.

How Corporate Partnerships Feel in Practice

With corporate partnerships, you submit an application with a strong **logic model** and clear outcomes, then report back on results. Next, you schedule a visit, make a clear ask (cash or in-kind), and confirm next steps on the spot. With this process, your **Sustainability Messaging Guide** keeps the story tight: name the goal, describe the **activity**, show **2–3 impact data points**, and end with a one-sentence **impact statement** that says why it matters for youth and families. For Brighter Futures Community Center, that might mean a grant-style proposal to **River City Credit Union** for the **Homework Lab**, and a donor-style request to **Fresh Mart Grocery** for **weekly snacks and a healthy-eating demo**—both anchored in the same outcomes.

SOP Norms & Compliance Reminders (short list)

- **No endorsements by students.** Partner recognition should be limited to approved name/logo placement in program materials, events, and reports, consistent with your organization's policies. Students may help promote attendance within the program community, but they should not be used in marketing or promotional efforts for corporate partnerships.
- **Brand safety check.** Confirm the company's reputation aligns with your mission.
- **Conflict of interest.** Follow your organization's policies when a staff/board member has ties to a company.
- **Data privacy.** Do not share personally identifiable information; use aggregate or de-identified data in all materials.
- **Documentation.** Keep copies of applications, emails, in-kind valuation, and restrictions/terms in your shared drive.

Quick Self-Check

- Do we have at least **5–7 local companies** identified across different sectors?
- For each, determine if you are seeking a grant or a donation next step.
- Does every pitch use our Goal → Activity → Impact Data → Impact Statement structure?
- Are SOP and compliance boxes checked (recognition boundaries, certificate of insurance , privacy, documentation)?

Business Models (Earned Revenue)

A business model is a mission-aligned way to generate earned revenue from things you already do well. It is unique to your program and should not add a whole new workload. Instead, it capitalizes on existing strengths—your program structure, facility assets, and staff expertise—to create offerings people value enough to pay for (directly or through a sponsor). The goal is to protect and extend high-impact activities while keeping access equitable for marginalized populations.

Business Models

Guiding Principles

Start where you're strong and build outward. These principles keep ideas tethered to your mission, sized to your current capacity, and grounded in assets you already control. Following them helps you avoid scope creep and preserve access for all families.

- **Unique to you:** Build around what your families, partners, and community already trust you for (e.g., reliable homework support, dynamic arts clubs, strong family workshops).
- **Not additional:** If an idea requires a new team, new space, and new supplies, it's probably scope creep. Start with light-lift adaptations of what exists.
- **Use existing assets:** Leverage three pillars:
  a. **Program structure** (schedules, clubs, showcases, summer weeks)
  b. **Facility structure** (classrooms, gym, kitchen, makerspace, computer lab)
  c. **Staff expertise** (STEM, arts, SEL facilitation, college/career, family engagement)

Quick Asset Scan

Before designing anything, take stock of your current program structure, facility access, and staff expertise. This table helps you spot "low-effort, high-value" opportunities hiding in plain sight. Use it to prioritize options that require minimal new spending or staffing.

Asset Area	What we already have	Light-lift ways to offer value	Guardrails/notes
Program Structure	e.g., Tuesday/Thursday clubs; summer week in July	Fee-supported "Plus" sections; Saturday intensives; vacation-day mini-camps	Scholarships/sliding scale; no barriers to core free services
Facility Structure	e.g., kitchen; gym; two classrooms after 6 pm	Evening family classes; space rental to mission-aligned partners	Clear usage policy; custodial/security coverage
Staff Expertis	e.g., robotics coach; art teacher; college essay mentor	Paid community workshops; PD for partner staff; youth micro-credential badges	Contract rates; scheduling; conflict-of-interest policy

Common, Low-Lift Business-Model Patterns

You don't have to invent a new concept to earn revenue. These proven formats—premium club editions, break-day mini-camps, family/community classes, space use, and partner PD—fit naturally into most OST schedules. Each pattern can be adapted to your context with scholarships to protect access.

1.) Premium Versions of Existing Clubs

- Example: A Saturday Skill Lab (2 hours, 6 weeks) that extends your weekday robotics club; fee-supported with scholarships so no one is turned away.

2.) School-Break Mini-Camps

- Example: One-day or three-day holiday camps using your gym/makerspace when school is closed.

3.) Family/Community Classes

- Example: College Essay Bootcamp or Digital Safety Night—sponsored by a local employer or offered with a modest fee.

4.) Space/Facility Use

- Example: Evening rental of the computer lab to a workforce nonprofit (mission-aligned, supervised, and insured).

5.) Staff Expertise to Partners

- Example: Your STEM lead provides training to two partner sites at a per-session rate; revenue helps underwrite your supplies.

Keep Pricing Simple: cost-aware, community-sensitive, and communicated with scholarship language up front (e.g., "Pay what you can; full scholarships available—no questions asked.")

6-Step Feasibility Screen

Pressure-test your idea before you commit resources. This checklist validates mission and community fit, operational practicality, financial viability, compliance, and measurement. If an idea can't clear these steps, refine it or pick a better option.

1. **Mission Fit:** This directly supports outcomes you plan to sustain.
2. **Community Fit:** This is what families/partners have asked for – verify the demand quickly.
3. **Operational Fit:** Use the current schedules, rooms, and staff; this should be low additional prep.
4. **Financial Fit:** Can you recover marginal costs; this includes scholarships.
5. **Compliance & Risk:** Pinpoint clear policies for fees, facility use, insurance, and data privacy.
6. **Measurement:** Identify one or two metrics you'll track such as participation, satisfaction, cost recovery, etc.

90-Day Pilot Plan

Weeks 1-2	You want to confirm the offer, schedule any meetings, establish the price/scholarship plan, coordinate rooms and staff as well as publish a one-pager.
Weeks 3-6	Use this time to run the pilot and capture attendance and a quick 1-3 question satisfaction survey.
Weeks 7-8	This is the time in the plan where you want to tally the costs and feedback you have gathered. Then decide what you want to **keep, adjust, or stop**.
Weeks 9-12	If all works out and you are keeping the plan, you want to then publish the next cycle and seed 1-2 new sponsors.

The 90-day pilot plan is the connective tissue between your sustainability vision and day-to-day execution. Over three short cycles, you move from set-up to proof to scale: first you choose one high-impact focus, clarify roles, and set a simple baseline for participation and results; then you run the pilot consistently while documenting what is happening, what barriers show up, and what adjustments improve quality; finally you package what you learned into a funder-ready summary with early outcome evidence, implementation notes, and a clear, realistic plan for what it would take to continue or expand.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

See the concepts in action with a real-world example. Brighter Futures leverages existing structure, spaces, and staff to run a Saturday “Plus” lab, underwrite Family Finance Nights, and offer partner PD. Each move is tied to outcomes and designed for low additional lift.

Context: Brighter Futures wants to sustain the **Homework Lab (Grades 6–8)** and expand **Family Engagement Nights**, using models that rely on assets they already have.

1.) Saturday Homework Lab “Plus” (Market-style with scholarships)

Brighter Futures extends its weekday Homework Lab into a six-week Saturday “Plus” series without inventing anything new. **Existing resources** do the heavy lifting: the same classroom, the same trusted staff, and the same small-group routines, now scheduled for a two-hour Saturday block that blends quiet work time with targeted coaching. **Access and equity** are built in from the start: a modest $40 per series is paired with “pay what you can” language and full scholarships, and seats are prioritized for students with low weekday dosage or frequent missing assignments. Families receive clear information in multiple languages, and simple transportation supports (for example, bus tokens) are set aside for those who need them. **Lift and cost** stay low because materials already exist and staffing mirrors weekday ratios; the revenue target is only cost recovery for weekend hours. **Measurement** is practical: 30 seats, at least 90% session attendance, a three-question satisfaction check, and a quick look at missing-assignment trends for Saturday participants. The result is a model that **protects the core** (weekday lab remains free) while adding time that helps students finish work and start the next week prepared.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

2.) Family Finance Night Series (Underwritten proposal)

This series uses what Brighter Futures already has: staff expertise, the cafeteria for workshops, and the gym for childcare, and invites a corporate partner to underwrite the direct costs. River City Credit Union aligns the series to its community priorities and contributes both volunteers and a small grant for materials, keeping out-of-pocket expenses near zero. **Access and equity** are front of mind: sessions run in the early evening, childcare is available on site, interpretation is offered in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Arabic, and there is no fee for families. The **ask and stewardship** are straightforward: three nights serving about 40 families in total, with an intent-to-use survey at the end of each event and a one-month follow-up text asking which tools families tried. Because the program relies on **existing facilities and staff routines**, operational lift is minimal; the sponsor's support turns a high-value offering into a sustainable fixture that reinforces family engagement and strengthens the case for continued partnership.

3.) Partner PD: "Running a Homework Lab That Works" (Fee for partner)

Here, Brighter Futures monetizes **staff expertise** rather than student seats. The program lead delivers a two-hour training, scheduled during off-peak hours, to neighboring sites that want to replicate the Homework Lab model. The package is **priced at $300 per site** and includes a compact toolkit (checklists, sample schedules, data tips). **Access and equity** show up indirectly: revenue is earmarked to **underwrite supplies and scholarships** for Brighter Futures' own lab, keeping the core service free and well stocked. **Operational fit** is strong because the trainer, content, and materials already exist; the PD sessions require only a room, projector, and handouts. **Measurement** focuses on bookings (two per quarter), participant satisfaction, and a light follow-up on adoption (for example, "Did you pilot exit slips or set up a quiet zone?"). This fee-for-partner model diversifies revenue, builds regional capacity, and reinforces Brighter Futures' credibility, all with very low additional lift.

1. Saturday Homework Lab "Plus" (Market-Style with Scholarships)	2. Family Finance Night Series (Underwritten Proposal)	3. Partner PD: "Running a Homework Lab That Works" (Fee-for-Partner)
Uses existing program structure: Builds on the weekday lab; same staff, same room.	**Uses staff expertise + facility:** Evening workshops in the cafeteria; childcare in the gym.	**Uses staff expertise:** Program lead delivers a 2-hour training to two neighboring sites.
Offer: 6-week Saturday series (2 hours); small-group coaching + quiet work time.	**Buyer: River City Credit Union** (from the corporate-partnerships section) underwrites three sessions as part of its priorities.	**Price:** $300 per site; includes a simple toolkit.
Price/Access: $40 per series; **"Pay what you can"** with full scholarships available; goal is cost recovery for weekend staffing.	**Value:** Families receive budgeting tools and resources; the sponsor provides volunteers and a small grant for materials.	**Measurement:** Two bookings per quarter; revenue covers lab supplies.
Measurement: Target 30 seats; maintain ≥90% session attendance; collect a 3-question satisfaction check.	**Measurement:** 40 families served across 3 nights; post-event intent-to-use survey.	

Early results to watch:

- Total revenue vs. marginal cost
- Scholarship uptake
- Family satisfaction
- Weekday lab outcomes (e.g., fewer missing assignments) hold steady or improve.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Business Models that Fit, Not Burden

An earned-revenue model works when it fits your mission, your families, and your existing capacity. The strongest ideas rarely add something brand-new; they package what you already do well—your schedules, spaces, and staff expertise—so community members or partners can opt in, and sponsors can underwrite access. When designed this way with clear scholarship language and no-displacement safeguards, business models protect core services, help sustain high-impact activities, and keep equity front and center.

- Treat each concept as a hypothesis, not a promise
- Use the feasibility screen to test fit
- Launch with a 90-day pilot
- Evaluate with a few simple metrics (participation, satisfaction, and cost recovery)

If an idea strains staff time, crowds out free programming, or confuses families, adjust or stop it—quickly. Document what you learn so the next cycle is easier.

The **Brighter Futures** case study shows how this looks in practice: a Saturday "Plus" lab that extends an existing activity; underwritten **Family Finance Nights** using the same spaces after hours; and **partner PD** that monetizes staff expertise. Each move starts from assets the program already has, pairs revenue with safeguards, and ties results back to the outcomes you chose to sustain.

SOP & Equity Guardrails

These guardrails protect the mission, keep access fair, and prevent unintended harm as you test earned options. First, earned offerings cannot displace core free services; schedule and staff the essentials before adding fee-based or sponsor-funded activities. Second, access must be transparent. Publish scholarship or fee-waiver language with every offer, and make the process simple and stigma-free. Third, operate with clear written policies for facility use, staff time, safety, and insurance so everyone understands the rules and risks. Finally, maintain brand integrity by avoiding student endorsements and following your recognition standards for partners and sponsors. When these practices are in place, revenue strategies strengthen the program without compromising trust or equity.

Action Wrap-Up

- **Write it down.** Capture the essentials in one place so your team can act without confusion. Start with a one-sentence value statement that explains what the offering is, for whom, and why it matters. Add your pricing and scholarship policy so access is clear. Finish with the room and staff plan and a 90-day pilot timeline so logistics and deadlines are visible.

- **Mind the guardrails.** Protect trust by following your standard operating procedures from day one. Do not use student endorsements, and keep recognition for sponsors within your existing guidelines. Make sure facility use, supervision, safety, and insurance requirements are written, shared, and followed. If a detail is unclear, pause the launch until the policy is in place.

- **Close the loop with data.** Decide in advance which two or three outcomes you will report, such as attendance, satisfaction, or cost recovery. Share those results, along with any pivots you make, in staff meetings, partner updates, and donor or corporate touchpoints. Use one slide or a short paragraph so the message is consistent everywhere.

- **Decide and scale.** At the end of the 90-day pilot, make a simple decision: keep, tweak, or stop. If you keep it, publish the next cycle dates and open seats early so families and partners can plan. Secure at least one sponsor to underwrite access, and confirm scholarships so the earned option does not crowd out free services.

With a few disciplined pilots, you'll know which models truly add staying power without adding burden.

Next up: *In-Kind Giving*—how to value, document, and integrate non-cash support so your sustainability plan captures the full web of resources around your program.

In-Kind Donations

In-kind support comes in two forms goods and services. Goods are supplies, equipment, or other tangible items your program needs. Services are time, skills, and professional expertise that enhance your program offerings. This section focuses on both, with a note that services and skills-based volunteering are explored in more depth in the Strategic Partnerships section.

In-kind giving often activates supporters who are passionate about your work but don't see themselves as financial donors. It engages businesses that can provide resources directly aligned to your needs (e.g., snacks, equipment, space, translation, printing). Done well, in-kind donations expand capacity, reduce cash costs, and invites new partners into your mission.

In-Kind Action Step Tool

This tool turns good intentions into a manageable plan. You'll assign an owner, set a timeline, and track status for each step so donations don't slip through the cracks. It also bakes in quarterly refresh points, making it easy to update your wish list, outreach, and recognition cadence. Use it on a rolling 12-month cycle so you can start any month and keep momentum.

In-Kind Action Step Tool

Step	Explanation	Person Responsible	Timeline (rolling 12 months)	Status
1.) Develop a Wish List	List consistent (always needed), near-term (this semester), and long-term (capital/rare) needs. Align each item to a program activity (e.g., Homework Lab, Family Nights)		Publish v1 by M1; refresh M4, M8, M12	
2.) Establish a Valuation & Recording Plan	Define how you'll record fair market value (FMV) for goods (receipt, retail link, price list). Note that donors determine their own tax deductions; you acknowledge what was given, not the value. Track pro bono services hours separately (not always counted as revenue, but reportable as support).		Draft SOP by M1; train staff M2	

In-Kind Action Step Tool

SOP/Compliance reminders:

- Use aggregate/de-identified data in stories; do not share personally identifying information.
- Follow your organization's receipt policy; donor determines tax value, not the program.
- Keep copies of acknowledgements, emails, and valuations in your shared drive.

Step	Explanation	Person Responsible	Timeline (rolling 12 months)	Status
3.) Promote In-Kind to Supporters	Post the wish list on your website; include a short "how to donate" blurb. Share monthly highlights in newsletters and at events.		Launch M2; monthly posts M3–M12	
4.) Partner with Companies	Use your Corporate Partnerships Research Guide: identify local businesses; match needs to Corporate Social Responsibility or store-level donation programs; request gift cards, supplies, or services.		2 new outreach attempts per quarter	
5.) Show Appreciation	Send same-week thank-you notes; include a photo/one-line impact. Recognize donors in newsletters, signage (as appropriate), and annual summaries. Provide a non-cash gift acknowledgement template.		Ongoing; monthly roll-up in M3–M12	

In-Kind Giving

Wish List Template

A clear, segmented wish list helps supporters match their resources to your real needs. By grouping items into consistent, near-term, and long-term categories, you make giving simple for families and businesses. Tying each item to a program activity and outcome also shows impact at a glance. Keep the list short, specific, and updated quarterly.

- **Consistent (always needed):** healthy snacks for Homework Lab; lined paper; pencils; printer ink; basic hygiene kits.
- **Near-Term (this semester):** headphones; calculators; binders; family-night childcare supplies; gift cards for student incentives.
- **Long-Term (capital/rare):** 2 laptops for student stations; lockable storage cabinet; rolling whiteboards; projector replacement.

Tip:

Tie each item to an activity and outcome—e.g., "Snacks (Homework Lab): supports 92% session attendance across 14 weeks.")

	Consistent (always needed)	Near-Term (this semester)	Long-Term (capital/rare)
Examples of items	Healthy snacks; lined paper; pencils; printer ink; basic hygiene kits	Headphones; calculators; binders; family-night childcare supplies; gift cards for student incentives	2 laptops for student stations; lockable storage cabinet; rolling whiteboards; projector replacement
Activities they are for	Homework Lab snacks and supplies; daily clubs and small-group work; printing family notices and homework trackers; family support via hygiene kits	Homework Lab quiet work and audio supports; math and STEM help; organization workshops; Family Nights with on-site childcare; attendance and positive behavior incentives	Homework Lab digital stations; secure storage for supplies and devices; mobile teaching surfaces for classrooms; clearer instruction and events with updated projection
Outcomes they support	Steady attendance and focus; reduced missing assignments; student readiness for class; dignified access to basics; reliable family communication	Improved task completion and fewer disruptions; stronger math problem-solving; better organization and follow-through; higher family participation; increased on-time attendance and engagement	Higher instructional quality and visibility; increased access to digital learning; safer, more organized spaces; durable, professional presentations for classes and family events

Donation Value Tracker

Capturing what arrives, who sent it, and its fair market value (FMV) protects your program and honors donors. This one-page table makes it easy to record goods, note FMV, and log acknowledgements sent. Track pro bono services separately so you can report hours without confusing financial statements. Use the tracker as your single source of truth during audits and annual reporting.

Items Donated	Donor Name	Donor Company (if applicable)	Donor Contact	Donation Value (FMV)	Date Received	Program/ Activity	Acknowledgement Sent (Y/N, date)

FMV Guidance:

- Use a retail price, recent invoice, or reputable online listing.
- For pro bono services, record hours and role (e.g., 3 hrs graphic design) in a separate internal log;
- Consult your accountant before assigning a dollar value in financial statements.

Non-Cash Gift Acknowledgement (donor receipt template

Timely, accurate receipts build trust and reduce headaches. This simple acknowledgment covers what was given, when it arrived, and where it will be used—without stating a dollar value. It also reminds donors to consult their tax advisor and reinforces your professionalism. Send it the same week the gift is received to close the loop.

Subject: Thank you for your in-kind contribution to Brighter Futures Community Center

Dear [Donor Name],

Thank you for your generous non-cash gift received on **[date]: [brief description of items/services]** for **[program/activity]**. No goods or services were provided in exchange for this contribution. Please consult your tax advisor regarding any deduction.

With appreciation,

[Name], [Title]
[Company] | [Phone] | [Email] | [Website]

(Note: Describe the gift; do not state a dollar value.)

Outreach Scripts (email, one-on-one, social media)

Not every supporter can give cash, but many can provide items you need right now. Outreach scripts provide plain-language asks tailored to different channels, with a QR placeholder that links to your live wish list. Each message keeps the request specific and the tone appreciative, making it easy for people to act. Rotate them monthly so your audience sees fresh, timely needs.

A) Email to Supporters (adaptable)
Subject: Help students finish strong—see our wish list

Hello [Name],

Because of you, students at **Brighter Futures** have a safe, steady place to study after school. If you'd like to help this semester, we keep a simple **Wish List** of items that directly support the **Homework Lab** and **Family Nights**—from headphones and calculators to snacks and childcare supplies. You can drop items at [location] or ship directly. If you have access to bulk discounts or store credits, that helps too.
Thank you for any support you're able to provide—every item keeps our focus on students.

With appreciation,

[Name], [Title]
[Company] | [Phone] | [Email] | [Website]

[QR Placeholder → Online Wish List]

B) One-on-One Ask (in person or phone)
"Thanks for everything you do for the neighborhood. We're stocking the **Homework Lab** for the next 14 weeks and could really use **[specific items, e.g., 20 headphones]**. Would you be open to helping with that? We'll send a short thank-you and a photo so you can see the impact." (Pause. Listen. Offer drop-off details and receipt.)

Outreach Scripts (email, one-on-one, social media)

C) Social Post (short, with photo)
The **Homework Lab** is running 4 days/week and students are showing up ready to work. If you'd like to help, scan the QR to see options. Our **Wish List** includes headphones, calculators, and snacks. Thank you for keeping the lab strong!

[QR Placeholder → Online Wish List]

Sample Donation Request Letter

When approaching a business, a focused, respectful letter works best. This sample shows how to combine a short impact story, a precise ask, and gratitude—while aligning with the company's priorities. The margin arrows explain why each part matters, so your team can adapt it quickly. Pair the letter with a brief follow-up call to secure details and timing.

Subject: Can you help stock the Homework Lab this semester?
Dear [Store Manager/Community Relations Lead],

Powerful story

Last fall, students in our **Homework Lab** reduced missing assignments by **18%** and maintained **92%** session attendance across 14 weeks. Families tell us the lab is a lifeline on busy afternoons.

To keep momentum this semester, we're seeking **20 pairs of wired headphones** and **6 scientific calculators** for small-group stations.

Specific ask

We know **FreshMart/TechTown** supports local schools and youth programs; these items map directly to your priorities of **[list: education, healthy families, workforce readiness]**.

Audience understanding

We would be grateful for any support—donation or store credit. We can pick up items at your convenience, and we'll provide a non-cash gift acknowledgement.

Gratitude & logistics

Your help keeps students focused and ready to learn in a safe, reliable space after school.

Impact close

With appreciation,

[Name, Title] | Brighter Futures Community Center | [Phone/Email]
[Website]

In-kind giving adds strength to your funding web by reducing cash costs and inviting new champions into your work. When you publish a clear wish list, track FMV accurately, and thank donors promptly, you convert community goodwill into tangible support that keeps classrooms stocked, family nights running, and youth activities on track. Over time, well-managed in-kind streams can evolve into deeper partnerships—store managers become advocates, volunteers become skilled pro bono contributors, and local companies underwrite events they've already helped equip.

Most importantly, in-kind broadens who can participate in your mission: supporters who may not see themselves as "financial donors" still get to make a direct, meaningful contribution. That diversity of support matters. Diversifying funding sources is another layer that supports the web of sustainability; when you increase both the number and types of resources—cash, goods, and services—your program is less vulnerable to any single change. If one source ends, the entire program isn't at risk, because other strands—grants, private donors, corporate partners, earned revenue, and in-kind—are already woven together to hold.

How to Build Strategic Partnerships

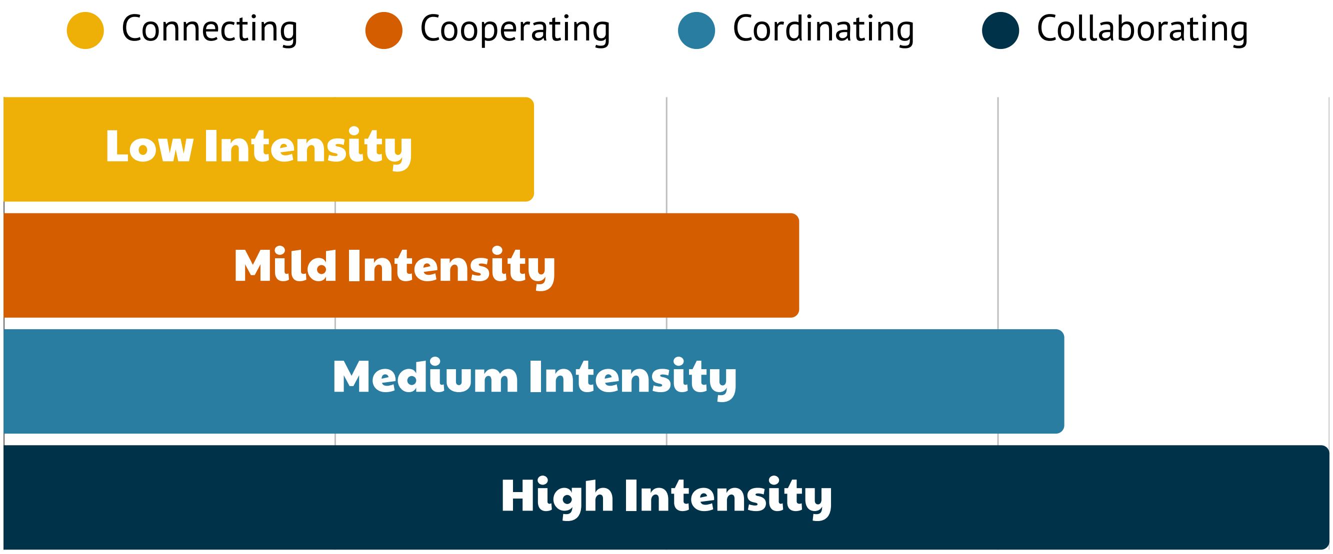
Sustainability in youth development and out-of-school time programming is not achieved in isolation. It is strengthened and sustained through meaningful partnerships with local organizations, schools, families, and community leaders. These connections are essential to maintaining and improving what is worth sustaining because they bring resources, knowledge, and guidance that extend well beyond a single program's capacity.

True sustainability lies in the flow of support that comes from these relationships and the ability to leverage a wider network. When programs intentionally nurture partnerships, they expand their impact, deepen community trust, and position themselves as integral contributors to the ecosystem that supports youth.

The Partnership Continuum

Partnerships exist on a continuum that can range from initial connections to full on collaboration. Understanding this continuum helps organizations assess where their current relationships fall and where there may be opportunities to grow.

Partnering Continuum



- **Networking/Connecting** – This is the entry point. Networking partnerships are about building relationships and opening communication channels. It's at this stage that programs/schools and potential partnering organizations connect, exchange information, and establish points of contact. The focus is on building trust, clarity, and consistent communication.

- **Cooperating** – At this stage, partners work together to informally achieve shared objectives. This may include attending one another's events, sharing updates, or even providing operational and logistical support when needed. Cooperation builds familiarity between each party and starts to align goals in practice.

- **Coordinating** – This stage goes deeper by aligning efforts so that activities and services are complementary rather than duplicative. For example, a program may adjust its schedule to fit within school hours, align messaging to families, or synchronize supports to meet student needs more effectively.

- **Collaborating** – Collaboration is the final stage and represents the deepest form of partnership. It involves intentional joint planning and execution of strategies. Here partners co-design interventions, align curricula with school/state standards, or develop shared goals and outcomes to maximize impact for youth and families. Collaboration requires trust, shared accountability, and a commitment to long-term impact.

Building strategic partnerships requires both identifying new allies and enhancing existing ones:

- **Identifying New Partners:** Consider what resources, perspectives, or networks are missing from your current partnerships. This might include reaching out to local businesses, cultural organizations, health providers, or civic leaders who can bring unique value to your program.

- **Enhancing Current Partnerships:** Review your existing relationships through the lens of the partnership continuum. Ask: Where does this relationship fall now? Where could it go next? What intentional steps could move it toward deeper collaboration?

Use the following questions to assess your approach to building partnerships:

Self-Check Reflection

- Have we mapped out our current partners and identified where they fall on the partnership continuum?
- Are there opportunities to move key partners toward deeper collaboration?
- What gaps exist in our network, and which organizations or community leaders could fill them?
- Do we have systems in place for clear, ongoing communication with all partners?
- How are we ensuring that partnerships are mutually beneficial and rooted in shared outcomes?

Partnership Continuum Worksheet

Use this worksheet to map out your current partners, reflect on the partnership depth, and set action steps for strengthening relationships.

Step 1: Map Your Current Partners

Partner	Networking	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating	Notes/ Examples
Example: Local School			X		Shared schedules and aligned messaging
Example: Community Center	X				Attended each other's events
Example: Local Business				X	Co-designing student internship program

Step 2: Reflect on Partnership Depth

Which partners are clustered at the **networking** stage? Are there key partners who could move toward **coordination** or **collaboration**? Where are your strongest relationships, and how can they be celebrated or maintained?

Step 3: Set Next Steps

Partner	Current Level	Desired Next Level	Action Step	Timeline
Example: Community Center	Networking	Cooperating	Invite them to co-host a family event	Within 3 months
Example: Local Business	Coordinating	Collaborating	Formalize partnership with MOU	This year

Self-Check

- Are you balancing new partner outreach with strengthening existing relationships?
- Do action steps reflect mutual benefit for both your program and the partner?
- Is there a plan for regular communication and feedback to keep the partnership alive?

Community Asset Mapping

Community asset mapping is a powerful tool for identifying the resources, organizations, and individuals that already exist in your community and could serve as strategic partners. Rather than focusing solely on the gaps or needs, asset mapping shifts the perspective toward recognizing the strengths and capacities that can be utilized to support your growth and sustainability.

Assets can take many forms. They may include formal organizations such as nonprofits, businesses, schools, public services, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs). They may also include informal groups like neighborhood associations, parent networks, or grassroots initiatives. Just as importantly, asset mapping highlights the role of individual community leaders whose skills, influence, and relationships make them valuable contributors to collective efforts.

An effective asset mapping process goes beyond a directory of names, it considers:

- Physical assets: Spaces, facilities, and infrastructure that can be used for programming or partnerships.
- Institutional assets: Organizations, agencies, and systems with expertise, resources, or services.
- Human assets: The talents, skills, knowledge, and networks of individuals across the community.

By identifying these diverse resources, community asset mapping provides a foundation for building partnerships that are grounded in existing strengths, creating more resilient and sustainable programs.

Community Asset Mapping Tool

This tool helps you spot the strengths your community already has. By mapping resources across multiple categories, you can find new opportunities for collaboration, sustainability, and growth.

Step 1: Map Out Community Assets

Category	Examples	Our Community Assets	Notes/Opportunities for Partnerships
Physical Assets	Libraries, community centers, parks, religious buildings, local business, vacant lots		
Institutional Assets	Schools, nonprofits, govt. agencies, healthcare facilities, faith-based organizations, businesses		
Human Assets	Community leaders, volunteers, parents, local experts, cultural leaders, retirees		
Economic Assets	Local businesses, credit unions, developmental corporations, employment centers		
Associational Assets	Clubs, associations, cultural groups, informal networks, resident groups		

Step 2: Reflection Questions

- Which categories of assets are the strongest in our community?
- Which categories need further exploration?
- How might these assets support sustainability and long-term partnerships?
- Who do we need to build relationships with to turn assets into active collaborators?

Step 3: Next Steps

- Prioritize 3-5 key assets to engage with first.
- Assign a point of contact for outreach.
- Develop a plan to connect with asset holders (i.e. informal meetings, community events, joint project, etc.).

Tip:

Pair this tool with a **community walk** or a **mapping session** where staff, youth, and families physically explore the community, take photos, and add new discoveries to each asset category.

Community Asset Mapping Worksheet

Utilize this worksheet to further identify the assets in your community. Pair this with the Community Asset Mapping Tool.

Asset Name/ Description	Category	Contact Information	Current Partnership	Potential Partnership Opportunities	Alignment with Program Goals	Next Steps for Engagement
Example: Townsville Public Library	Physical	John Smith, 123-456-7890, j.smith@abc.org	Cooperating	Working to complement each other's events with our services	Improving literacy amongst the youth in our program	Set up a meeting to discuss upcoming events and how to be involved

Sample MOU

A Memorandum of Understanding or an MOU is a document that formalizes partnerships while also providing clarification on the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each involved party. These documents are particularly important for coordinating and collaborating levels of partnerships. It is important to note that while MOUs are not legally binding documents, they do demonstrate a commitment to the partnership and provide a clear structure for activities.

Below is a Sample Memorandum of Understanding. The template provides a starting point that can be customized based on your specific partnership needs.

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

____

and

____

Effective Date: [Date of Creation]

I. Introduction
This MOU is necessary and has been created to address:

- Item 1: Description
- Item 2: Description
- Item 3: Description

II. Purpose and Goals
The goals of this MOU include (these should be clear statements of the partnership objectives and outcomes):

- Goal 1: Description
- Goal 2: Description
- Goal 3: Description

Goal 1 will be carried out by (how and when)

Goal 2 will be carried out by (how and when)

Goal 3 will be carried out by (how and when)

III. Roles and Responsibilities

Individual roles and responsibilities include (these should be specific and highlight each organization's contribution):

Organization 1 agrees to:

- Role and responsibility 1
- Role and responsibility 2
- Role and responsibility 3

Organization 2 agrees to:

- Role and responsibility 1
- Role and responsibility 2
- Role and responsibility 3

Shared roles and responsibilities include:

- Role and responsibility 1
- Role and responsibility 2
- Role and responsibility 3

Both parties will collaborate in good faith to meet the partnership objectives.

IV. Resource Sharing

Each partner will contribute the following resources to support the partnership:

Financial Contributions:

- Organization 1 Contributions:
- Organization 2 Contributions:

In-Kind Contributions (i.e., staff time, materials, facilities, equipment):

- Organization 1 Contributions:
- Organization 2 Contributions:

V. Communication Protocols

To ensure smooth communication, the partner agrees to the following protocols (these should be holding regular meetings on a monthly/quarterly basis, submitting progress reports, etc.):

- Protocol 1
- Protocol 2
- Protocol 3

Key Contacts

- Organization 1: [Name, Title, Email, Phone]
- Organization 2: [Name, Title, Email, Phone]

VI. Data and Information Sharing

The parties agree to share the following types of data:

- [Type of data or reports shared]

To protect privacy and confidentiality, the following protocols will be followed:

- Adherence to applicable data protection laws (HIPPA, GDPR)
- Data will be anonymized/de-identified where applicable
- Consent will be obtained using [specify the method/procedure]

VII. Duration and Renewal

This MOU is effective from [Start Date] to [End Date], unless terminated earlier as described below

Evaluation checkpoints will occur at [indicate how often these will be, i.e. 6 months, 12 months, etc.]

Renewal of this partnership will be based upon a mutual agreement and documented in writing no later than [date or number of days before the end of the MOU].

VIII. Evaluation and Assessment

Partnership effectiveness will be measured using the following criteria:

- [Outcome or performance metrics]
- [Evaluation tools, i.e., surveys, performance review]

These partners will jointly review progress at scheduled evaluation points and adjust the partnership as needed.

IX. Modification and Termination

The MOU may be modified by mutual written agreement. Either party may terminate the MOU with [number] days' written notice. Upon termination, both parties will:

- Complete outstanding obligations where feasible
- Share a final report or summary of activities

X. Signatures and Dates

This MOU reflects a mutual understanding between the parties and is not legally binding.

Organization 1:
Signature: ___________
Representative Name: [Printed Name]
Title:
Date: ________

Organization 2:
Signature: ___________
Representative Name: [Printed Name]
Title:
Date: ________

MOU Sample - *The following sample memorandum can be adapted to help you outline who will be responsible for what activities. Make sure that the signers are people with authority to commit the time or resources of each entity.*

Sample MOU

Memorandum of Understanding

Between
Brighter Futures Community Center
and
Lincoln Elementary School
October 15, 2026

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the partnership between Brighter Futures Community Center (BFCC) and Lincoln Elementary School (LES) to provide coordinated after-school programming and family engagement activities for students and families in our community. The purpose of this partnership is to enhance student learning and well-being through structured after-school opportunities and to strengthen school, family, and community relationships.

Our Partnership Goals are:

- Provide academic support and enrichment activities to students in grades K-5
- Increase family participation in school and community events
- Support student development through mentoring and recreational programming
- Improve student attendance and engagement

Brighter Futures Community Center agrees to:

- Design and deliver after-school programs (Monday-Friday, 3:30-6:00pm)
- Provide trained staff and volunteers to lead activities
- Coordinate monthly family engagement events in collaboration with school staff
- Collect participation data and share outcomes with LES

Lincoln Elementary School agrees to:

- Provide classroom and gymnasium space for after-school programming
- Support recruitment of students through school communications
- Designate a liaison staff member to coordinate with BFCC
- Encourage teacher participation in planning family events

Both partners agree to collaborate regularly to ensure the quality and relevance of programming.

Financial Contributions:

- BFCC will fund program materials, staff stipends, and event costs through grants and donations

In-Kind Contributions:

- BFCC will provide program staff, enrichment materials, snacks, and event planning support
- LES will provide facility space, student recruitment, custodial services, and access to school communications

Regular Meetings: monthly coordination meetings, scheduled on the first Thursday of each month at 3:00pm.

Reporting: BFCC will submit a quarterly report on student participation and family engagement metrics. LES will provide feedback on student outcomes and school alignment.

Key Contacts:

- Brighter Futures Community Center
  - Maria Rodriguez, Executive Director
  - mrodriguez@brighterfutures.org | (123)-456-7890
- Lincoln Elementary School
  - Jason Kim, Vice Principal
  - jkim@lincolnschool.edu | (098)-765-4321

Data Shared:

- Student attendance in after-school programs
- Family participation rates in events
- Summary of academic and behavioral outcomes

Privacy Protections and Consent Procedures: All data shared will be de-identified and comply with FERPA guidelines. Parent/guardian consent will be obtained during program enrollment. These consent forms will be distributed by LES and collected prior to student participation. BFCC will maintain records and only share aggregated reports.
This MOU is effective from October 15, 2026 to June 30, 2027. There will be a mid-year review in January 2027 with an end-of-year assessment in June 2027. Partners will meet by May 15, 2027 to discuss renewal for the 2027-2028 school year.

Program effectiveness will be assessed using a joint review of reports, surveys, and feedback at the mid-year and end-year meetings. The evaluation criteria includes:

- Student participation rates (target – 75 students per session)
- Family event attendance (target – 50 families per event)
- Teacher and parent satisfaction surveys
- School-reported student engagement and attendance improvements

This MOU may be modified at any time by mutual written agreement. Either party may terminate this agreement with 30 days' written notice. In the event of termination, both parties agree to:

- Communicate with families and staff promptly
- Complete any activities already underway where feasible
- Provide a final summary of participation and outcomes

Brighter Futures Community Center
Signature: Maria Rodriguez
Name: Maria Rodriguez
Title: Executive Director
Date: October 10, 2026

Lincoln Elementary School
Signature: Jason Kim
Name: Jason Kim
Title: Vice Principal
Date: October 10, 2026

Partner Engagement Action Planner

When discussing sustainability, it is important to maintain strong partnerships that have been cultivated. It requires intentional and ongoing engagement to ensure that these partnerships are nurtured and that they flourish. One of the tools that can be used to ensure partnership sustainability and growth is a **Partner Engagement Action Planner** and a **Calendar**. This tool can help you plan regular touch points with your partners throughout the year and help to create a consistent communication schedule. Consistency and shared activities overview will strengthen partnerships over time. Utilize these templates to balance partner meetings, joint activities and appreciation events; doing so will strengthen partnerships you've worked hard to maintain.

Goal: What do you want to achieve with each partner?			
Action Steps: *What are some specific activities to strengthen the partnership?*			
Timeline: *When will each action be completed?*			
Person Responsible: *Who is the person responsible for leading each of the actions?*			
Resources Needed: *What are the resources needed to complete these actions (i.e. staff, time, materials, budget, etc.)?*			
Success Indicators: *How will you know that the action was effective?*			
Status: *What is the status of each action; not started, in progress, completed?*			

Partner Engagement Calendar

Partner Name:
Partnership Level:
Engagement Activities:
Frequency:
Lead Person Responsible:

Month

Year

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes:

Outcomes:

Partner Engagement Calendar

Partner Name: Lincoln Elementary School
Partnership Level: Coordinating
Engagement Activities: meetings, events, joint programming, communications
Frequency: Weekly and Monthly
Lead Person Responsible: Maria Rodriguez, Executive Director

November

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Weekly Communication: Email	3	4	5 Monthly Coordinating meeting at 3pm	6	7
8	9 Weekly Communication: Email	10	11 Quarterly Joint Programming Student & Family event at 3:30pm	12	13	14
15	16 Weekly Communication: Email	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 Weekly Communication: Call Joint Community Thanksgiving Event at 4:30pm	24	25	26 Programming Closed (Holiday)	27 Programming Closed	28
29	30 Weekly Communication: Email					

Notes: *Our coordinating meeting helped us plan for the next month as well as pick a date for our annual partner appreciation dinner. We will have that on* ***December 15th at 5:30pm.***

Outcomes: *This month was our first full month since we partnered together, and it went rather well. Programming had great turnouts, and word is beginning to spread for recruitment and involvement*

Partner Survey

Receiving quality feedback is essential for sustaining strong partnerships. It provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of the collaboration and helps identify areas for improvement. One effective way to gather this input is by creating a Partner Survey.

This survey should be conducted annually or at key evaluation points in the partnership. When designing the survey, keep it brief and focused—shorter surveys are quicker to complete, which encourages participation while still capturing the critical information you need.

Once you receive the survey results, use them strategically to strengthen partnership processes and uncover new opportunities for collaboration. Thoughtful analysis and action based on partner feedback will help ensure long-term success and mutual benefit.

Partner Survey Template

Partnership Satisfaction: *Circle the response that best characterizes how you feel about each statement; where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.*

	Strongly Disgree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The partnership is effective overall.	1	2	3	4	5
We communicate well with your organization.	1	2	3	4	5
We are satisfied with the level of collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization's contributions are valued.	1	2	3	4	5

Partner Survey Template

For each of the following three sections, please share detailed responses to the best of your ability.

Partnership Impact:

1.What specific benefits has your organization gained from this partnership?

2.How has the partnership helped you achieve your organization's goals?

3.What impact have you observed on youth and families we serve together?

4.What evidence of success can you share?

Partnership Operations:

1.How effective are our regular meetings and communication?

2.Are roles and responsibilities clear and appropriate?

3.What resources or support do you need to strengthen our partnership?

4.How can we improve coordination of joint activities?

Partner Survey Template

Future Partnership:

1. What new opportunities for collaboration do you envision between our organizations?

2. What barriers to this partnership should we address?

3. How can we deepen our partnership in the coming year?

4. Would you recommend our organization as a partner to others?

When administering this survey, you should be sure to include a set of instructions for your partnering organization including timing, how the survey is being distributed, and any of your follow-up procedures.

Example: Our Partnership Survey will be distributed to all our partnering organizations at each quarterly meeting. This survey will be distributed as a Google Form for ease of accessibility for all our partners. A follow-up email communication will be sent two weeks post distribution as a reminder and thank you for completion.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Case studies are important and designed to help you see how a program effectively uses the toolkit. Read the following case study and answer the reflection questions to understand how strategically built partnerships strengthen sustainability.

When Brighter Futures Community Center faced funding challenges with its 21st CCLC grant and changes to state voucher programs, the team realized that long-term sustainability depended not only on diversified funding streams but also on building a strong foundation of community partnerships to provide support and resources. To address this, the center conducted a comprehensive community asset mapping process, which helped identify key local resources and potential collaborators.

The results of this process were as follows:

Community Asset Mapping Results	
Physical Assets	3 schools within five blocks, a public library branch, a community health clinic, and the local parks
Institutional Assets	The Senior Center (in the same building), the food pantry, local faith organizations, and a few small businesses
Human Assets	A bilingual social worker, retired teachers, parent volunteers, local artists, and community health workers
Economic Assets	The local credit union, farmers market vendors, and small restaurants
Associational Assets	Parent networks, local cultural groups, the neighborhood watch, and youth sports leagues

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Using the results from the asset mapping and the partnership continuum, Brighter Futures developed different levels of engagement for each of their identified assets.

Partner	Networking	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating	Notes
Nonna's Italian Restaurant	X				They provided information about catering for events that we have planned for this quarter
Eaglewood Youth Football League	X				We have shared with the league information about potential collaborative opportunities
Eaglewood Little League Softball	X				We have shared with the league information about potential collaborative opportunities
The Eaglewood Neighborhood Watch	X				We want to continue to maintain open lines of communication about ensuring community safety
The Eaglewood Public Library		X			Students visit monthly; the library promotes center programs such as the elementary literacy program

Partner	Networking	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating	Notes
Eaglewood Hispanic Society		X			We have attended each other's events before and have shared our promotional materials for programming and events
The Eaglewood Korean Cultural Foundation		X			We have attended each other's events before and have shared our promotional materials for programming and events
The Mainstreet Boutique		X			The local boutique provides work experience opportunities for high school students
Eaglewood Farms Market		X			The market provides work experience opportunities for high school students

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Partner	Networking	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating	Notes
Eaglewood Community Health Clinic			X		We schedule wellness clinics at the health center; we have coordinated family health education programming, including our SEL program in coordination with the clinic's mental health services
The Eaglewood Manor (Senior Center)			X		We have coordinated intergenerational programming; we also share space for large events. Due to the shared space, we have been able to reduce family costs through deeper coordination
1st Methodist Fellowship			X		Together we have aligned family programming schedules, they have helped to coordinate volunteer efforts

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Partner	Networking	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating	Notes
Our Lady of Hope Church			X		Together we have aligned family programming schedules, they have helped to coordinate volunteer efforts. Some of the volunteers happen to be retired teachers who assist with our elementary literacy program
Lincoln Elementary School				X	We have engaged in joint curriculum planning, shared student assessments, and coordinated family engagement
Eaglewood Credit Union				X	We have co-designed a financial literacy curriculum and created a joint college savings program. The credit union has also worked with us in expanding our entrepreneurial club

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

By utilizing the partnership continuum, Brighter Futures was able to:

- Maintain their elementary literacy program through collaboration with retired teachers and the library.
- Continue SEL programming through coordination with the health clinics mental health services.
- Sustain Mom’s Café through cooperation with local cultural groups who provide programming.
    - Mom’s Café is a monthly, parent-led gathering with childcare, light refreshments, and rotating topics (navigating school, community resources, wellness).
- Expand their entrepreneurial club through collaboration with the Eaglewood Credit Union.
- Reduce family costs through deeper coordination with the senior center.

To help manage and maintain these partnerships, Brighter Futures did the following:

1. Held monthly partner meetings with all of their collaborating partners
2. Set up quarterly check-ins with each of their coordinating partners
3. Held an annual partner appreciation event and sent out a partner survey
4. Created formal Memorandums of Understanding with all collaborating partners
5. Regularly conducted asset mapping updates to identify new partnership opportunities

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

After reviewing the Brighter Futures case study, answer the following reflection questions.

1. How did asset mapping help brighter futures identify partnership opportunities they might have missed?
2. What factors contributed to certain partnerships being more successful than others in supporting sustainability?
3. How did the partnership continuum help the center manage different types of relationships appropriately?
4. What role did the center's existing community connections (like the bilingual social worker) play in partnership development?
5. How do you believe these partnerships will help Brighter Futures navigate future funding challenges?
6. What partnerships exist in your community that you haven't fully explored?
7. How could you move some of your current partnerships to deeper levels of collaboration?

Strategic Partnerships

Building strategic partnerships is the third layer of the web of sustainability. When programs cultivate relationships across the partnership continuum - from networking to collaboration - they create a support system that extends far beyond their organization's walls. These partnerships provide not just resources and funding diversification, but also expertise, credibility, and community ownership that makes programs resilient and sustainable. The strongest sustainability webs are built when community assets are mapped, partnerships are intentionally developed and managed, and when organizations recognize that their success is interconnected with a broader community ecosystem.

Train and Empower Staff

The fourth and final layer of the Web of Sustainability is training and empowering staff. Staff are the backbone of our programs, driving implementation and fostering sustainability. They lead activities, build essential relationships, and represent your program within the community. When staff understand the importance of sustainability and are equipped with the tools and confidence to support it, they become powerful advocates and partners in your work. Sustainability is not solely the responsibility of program leadership—every staff member can contribute to building and maintaining the Web of Sustainability through their networks, communication skills, and program knowledge.

This section will focus on four key areas to empower staff to support sustainability. Those sections are as follows:

1. **Network Mapping** – Helping staff to identify and leverage their personal and professional connections
2. **Talking Points Development** – Developing organizational talking points ensures that all staff can communicate your program's values and impact clearly and compellingly
3. **Professional Development Planning** – Building staff capacity to support sustainability efforts
4. **Leadership Development** – Creating internal capacity for sustained program excellence

Train and Empower Staff

When staff are trained and empowered, they will assist in expanding your program's reach through their personal networks. They can better communicate your program's values both consistently and effectively. Staff will be able to identify new partnerships and funding opportunities for the program. They will feel empowered enough to take ownership of sustainability efforts. And finally, staff will have the tools to become ambassadors for your program in the greater community that they serve.

Use these self-check reflection questions to look at your program, identify strengths and weaknesses, and what you can do to further train and empower your staff.

Self-Check Reflection

1. **Staff Understanding** – Do staff understand what sustainability means for our program and their role in supporting it?
2. **Empowerment** – Have I provided staff with the tools, knowledge, and confidence they need to actively contribute to sustainability efforts?
3. **Communication Skills** – Can staff clearly articulate our program's values and impact to others using organizational talking points?
4. **Networking and Partnerships** – Are staff able to identify and leverage their professional networks to support program sustainability?
5. **Leadership and Growth** – Have I created opportunities for staff professional development and leadership that build internal capacity for long-term program success?

Network Mapping

Every staff member has a unique network of personal and professional connections that can be of great benefit to any program. Through the use of the Individual Network Mapping Tool, staff will be able to identify these connections that they have and to understand how they might support sustainability efforts. Staff networks often reach different communities and sectors than those of leadership networks. This can help to expand your program's potential web of partnerships. When staff begin to fully understand the value of their network, they become more confident in making connections and referrals on behalf of the program.

Individual Network Mapping Tool

This tool is to help you as an individual identify and organize the people and groups in your network, both personal and professional, that can support your goals, growth, and sustainability. Mapping out your networks allows you to see where your connections are strong, where there might be gaps, and how you can build new relationships.

Step 1: Overview

Draw yourself in the center of a page, you can simply write your name or draw a small circle labeled "me". Then, create five surrounding circles or sections representing the five types of networks listed below.

Step 2: Explore Each Network

i. Personal Networks

Who do you turn to for personal support, encouragement, or even advice?
Examples include: family members, friends, neighbors, community members, cultural/religious groups.

Name/Group	Type of Relationship	How do They support You	How do You support Them	Strength (1-5)

ii. Professional Networks

Who helps you grow or stay connected in your professional field?

Examples include: former colleagues, professional associations, alumni networks, training/workshop contacts.

Name/Group	Role/ Connection	Area of Expertise	How to Reconnect/ Engage	Strength (1-5)

iii. Service Networks

Who provides essential services or supports that benefit you or your work?

Examples include: healthcare providers, social services, education professionals, other youth serving organizations.

Organization /Individual	Type of Service	Point of Contact	Frequency of Interaction	Strength (1-5)

iv. Business Networks

Who do you connect with through business, operations, or partnerships?

Examples include: local business owners, vendors or contractors, service providers (IT, marketing, etc.).

Business/ Contact	Service or Product	Mutual Benefit	How to Strengthen the Relationship	Strength (1-5)

v. Digital Networks

Who do you engage with online that influences your thinking, learning, or opportunities?

Examples include: social media connections, online professional groups, virtual communities.

Platform	Group/ Individual	Focus Area	Value/Influence	Strength (1-5)

Step 3: Reflect and Act

1. Where do you have the most active, supportive, and reciprocal relationships?
    a. Which networks could be expanded and strengthened?
2. Who are **3** people or groups you want to reconnect with or engage with more intentionally?
3. What are **2** new relationships or networks you'd like to build in the next **3-6 months**?
4. How can you give back or contribute to your existing networks?

Step 4: (Optional) Visual Mapping Template

On the original blank page with your individual "me" circle, begin to map out your networks in those blank circles/sections. Draw connecting lines between networks to show where overlaps may exist. For example, a friend who is also a colleague or a community member who also owns a local business. You can also color-code your map by assigning a specific color for each network (Blue=Personal, Green=Professional, Orange=Service, Purple=Business, Yellow=Digital).

Team Network Mapping

After each staff member has completed the ***Individual Network Mapping Tool*** come together as a team and facilitate a group discussion to identify any overlaps and unique connections. Once you have done this, create a master network map that highlights any priority connections. You can map this out by using the ***Network Mapping Worksheet***. With this complete worksheet, develop a plan as a team for how to leverage these network connections strategically. Finally, establish any protocols for staff to make connections on behalf of the program. This ensures that there is a process, all staff are on the same page, and everything is uniform.

Network Mapping Worksheet

Contact Name and Relationship	Network Categroy	Their Role/ Organization	Potential Connection to Program	Comfort Level Making Connection	Best Approach for Outreach	Next Steps
		☐ Personal ☐ Professional ☐ Service ☐ Business ☐ Digital	☐ Funding ☐ Partnerships ☐ Volunteers ☐ Resources ☐ Referrals	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low		
		☐ Personal ☐ Professional ☐ Service ☐ Business ☐ Digital	☐ Funding ☐ Partnerships ☐ Volunteers ☐ Resources ☐ Referrals	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low		
		☐ Personal ☐ Professional ☐ Service ☐ Business ☐ Digital	☐ Funding ☐ Partnerships ☐ Volunteers ☐ Resources ☐ Referrals	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low		

Organizational Talking Points Development

It's essential for every staff member to confidently communicate the organization's value and impact. Organizational talking points provide a concise, consistent way to share who we are, what we do, and why it matters. These points should be brief, easy to remember, and adaptable for different audiences. When staff use these talking points in conversations with community members, parents, and professionals, they turn everyday interactions into opportunities to build awareness, strengthen partnerships, and attract funding. Consistent messaging helps open doors to collaboration and reinforces our organization's credibility and mission.

Organizational talking points serve as the foundation for a strong elevator pitch. They provide clear, consistent messaging about your mission, impact, and unique value. When crafting an elevator pitch, select the most relevant talking points and weave them into a short, compelling narrative that can be delivered in 30–60 seconds.

Every staff member for your program should be able to articulate your program's value clearly and confidently. An effective elevator pitch helps to open the door to new partnerships, funding opportunities, and community support. Having a well thought-out and developed elevator pitch will help staff when they encounter community members, parents, and professionals, utilizing each encounter as an opportunity to build up program awareness and support.

Elevator Pitch Framework

When developing an elevator pitch, it is key to building it with these components:

1. **Hook** – This is an attention grabber opening that highlights the need or opportunity.

2. **Program Description** – Lead with a concise statement of what your organization does and why it matters. This should be no longer than 1-2 sentences.

3. **Impact Statement** – How is your program impactful and what difference do you make? Make sure to include any key data points when possible.

4. **Call to Action** – You want to end your pitch with this. What do you want the listener to do and how can they get involved?

Remember that you only have a short amount of time to sell your program to the listener and leave an impactful impression that will leave them wanting to connect further with your program.

Example Structure:

"Brighter Futures strengthens community resilience by providing high-quality afterschool programs that empower youth and families. Last year, we served over 500 students and partnered with 20 local organizations to expand resources. Our focus on sustainability ensures long-term impact. We're always looking for partners who share our vision—could we explore ways to work together?"

Elevator Pitch Worksheet Template

When you go to develop your Elevator Pitch, utilize this worksheet and answer the following questions to help you draft it out.

1. Who is your target audience and who will you be speaking to? Is it parents, funders, partners, community members, etc.?
2. What hook opening will best grab their attention?
3. How will you describe your program in 1-2 sentences?
4. What specific impact will you highlight?
5. What is your call to action for the listener and what do you want them to do?
6. Now, write out your full 30-60 second pitch:
7. What are any notes you have about the pitch? Are there any areas to improve? What questions could you anticipate?

Consider repeating this process and building out several pitch variations based on different audiences.

a. **For Parents:** Focus on youth outcomes and family benefits.
b. **For Potential Funders:** Emphasize community needs, program effectiveness, and sustainability.
c. **For Potential Partners:** Highlight mutual benefits and collaboration opportunities.
d. **For Community Members:** Connect to the overall community values and the local impact.

Now, let's put this into practice

With your pitches developed, it's time to practice delivering them. You can do this on your own or as a team. The more you practice the more these elevator pitches will become second nature.

1. **Practice Delivery Techniques** – Practice making eye contact with the listener, play around with the pacing to see what is most comfortable without going too slow or too fast, practice different levels of enthusiasm when delivering the pitch.

2. **Prepare for Common Follow-Up Questions** – These questions may look like requesting more information regarding your program, or the listener may express a specific interest in a particular area you mentioned. Start thinking about these questions and prepare answers for them so you are well prepared.

3. **Role-Play Scenarios** – Below are a few scenarios that you and your team can use to practice delivering your elevator pitches.
   a. **Networking Event:** You're at a professional networking mixer for educators and youth development professionals. Someone turns to you and says, "So, what do you do?"
   b. **Chance Meeting:** You bump into a representative from a local foundation in the elevator on the way to a community event. You have 30 seconds to explain your program, and why it's worth supporting.
   c. **Meeting a Local Business Owner:** You're at a community event and meet a business owner who often sponsors youth programs. You want to pitch a possible partnership.
   d. **Virtual Meeting Introduction:** You're joining a new professional networking group online. Everyone is going around and giving brief introductions. You have about 45 seconds to make yours memorable.

4. **Record and Review** – During your practice sessions make sure to record and review each of them, what worked and what didn't?

5. **Develop Comfort** – With each time you give the pitch, see what feels the most comfortable and most natural; be adaptable with the audience's interests while still explaining how you both can benefit from working together.

Professional Development Planning

Investing in staff professional development strengthens program sustainability by building internal capacity. Staff professional development is crucial to continuing the growth of the organization and ensuring staff have the tools they need to be successful in your program. When staff are given opportunities to grow in their skills and knowledge, they become more effective in supporting all aspects of the sustainability web. When planning out professional development, align it with both individual career goals and program sustainability needs. When staff are invested in and well-trained, they are more likely to stay with the organization; reducing overall turnover costs and maintaining program continuity.

Build your PD plan around relevance. Not every sustainability skill needs to be learned by every staff member, and trying to train everyone on everything usually leads to low uptake. Grant writing, budgeting, and fundraising training tend to have the highest return for program leaders and staff who own partnerships, compliance, and resource development. Communication and marketing, especially telling your program's story with clear outcomes and student and family impact, is often more relevant to the full team because everyone shapes the day-to-day experiences that become your best evidence and your most credible message. Align PD topics to role, keep expectations clear, and make sure every session ends with a specific action staff can apply immediately.

Areas of Sustainability-Focused Professional Development

1. **Grant Writing and Fundraising:** Building skills to support funding and diversification for the program.

2. **Partnership Development:** Training in relationship building skills and collaboration.

3. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Strengthening capacity for leveraging data.

4. **Communication and Marketing:** Enhancing ability to tell your program's story.

5. **Program Evaluation:** Building skills to demonstrate impact and effectiveness.

6. **Leadership Development:** Preparing staff to take on increased responsibilities.

Template: Professional Development Planning

When beginning to plan for staff professional development, think about staff capacity, reflect on the areas of sustainability-focused professional development, and utilize this template to develop a Professional Development Plan.

Staff Member Name/ Role	Current Strengths & Weaknesses	Sustainability Areas for Growth	SMART Goals	Development Activities	Timelines and Milestones	Resources Needed	Success Indicators	Connection to Program Sustainability Goals

Team Professional Development Calendar

When further planning for your staff professional development, be sure to map it out on a Team Professional Development Calendar. This provides a clear overview for staff and helps to create transparency. When developing this calendar, keep the following in mind:

1. Highlight any monthly internal training topics you wish to cover.
2. Outline quarterly skill-building workshops for staff to participate in.
3. Schedule annual conferences or training opportunities that staff can attend.
4. Detail ongoing mentorship pairings amongst staff.
5. Identify cross-training initiatives for your staff that would benefit the program.
6. Organize leadership rotation opportunities.

Month	Monthly Internal Training Topic	Quarterly Skill-Building Workshop	Annual Conferences / Trainings	Mentorship Pairings and Check-Ins	Cross-Training Focus	Leadership Rotation Opportunity
July	Orientation, SOPs, program safety overview		New-staff onboarding; required policy reviews	Pair mentors and mentees; set goals	Safety procedures and incident reporting	Staff A facilitates week-one huddle
August	Behavior systems, routines, and de-escalation		CPR/First Aid renewal window	Check-in on goals; classroom walk-throughs	Attendance and data systems (rosters, sign-in)	Site Coordinator leads monthly PD
September	Academic support strategies (literacy, math)	**Q1:** Trauma-informed practice lab	State Afterschool Network conference (fall)	Goal-setting review; observation and feedback	Homework Lab facilitation and small-group rotation	Staff B hosts Family Night agenda
October	Family engagement basics and communication			Mentor shadowing of family calls and conferences	Snack service, inventory, and allergy compliance	Safety drill captain for the month

Team Professional Development Calendar

Month	Monthly Internal Training Topic	Quarterly Skill-Building Workshop	Annual Conferences / Trainings	Mentorship Pairings and Check-Ins	Cross-Training Focus	Leadership Rotation Opportunity
November	Inclusion and accommodations			Data talk: progress notes and supports	Data entry, dashboards, and simple analysis	Lead partner coordination meeting
December	Midyear reflection, data use, and adjustments	**Q2:** Data storytelling and outcome reporting		Budget basics: shadow supply ordering	Purchasing and petty cash procedures	MC for midyear student showcase
January	Youth voice and choice in activities		CPR/First Aid makeup window	New-year reset; goal check-in	Front desk, arrivals, and dismissal systems	Lead weekly team huddle sequence
February	STEM and arts facilitation refresh		National OST symposium (winter)	Role-play: difficult parent calls	Field trip planning and risk forms	Facilitate cross-site PLC session
March	College and career readiness for MS/HS	**Q3:** Family engagement design sprint		Classroom management clinic and peer feedback	Translation and interpreter coordination	Host community partner walk-through
April	Safety refresh and incident documentation		Regional quality forum (spring)	Prep performance reflections and growth plans	Building summer schedules and staffing grids	Lead summer planning meeting
May	Summer program design and logistics			Final observation and debrief	Materials ordering and vendor relations	Lead onboarding for summer staff
June	Year-end evaluation and sustainability planning	**Q4:** Risk management and crisis response		Celebrate wins; set next-year goals	End-of-year inventory and space reset	Present year-end data to leadership

Train and Empower Staff

Leadership Development

It's not only important to make sure your program staff have growth and professional development opportunities, but it is crucial that the same staff understand that they can grow as leaders within the program. Sustainable programs develop leadership at all levels, not just at the top. Leadership development strengthens succession planning and minimizes reliance on any single individual. When multiple staff members can represent the program, make decisions, and drive initiatives, the program becomes more resilient. Leadership skills include both formal management abilities and informal influence and relationship-building.

When planning for leadership development there are 3 key factors to consider.

1. Leadership Competencies for Sustainability. What competency areas does your program lack and which staff would be best suited to fulfill these leadership needs?
2. Leadership Development Pathways, which pathway is best suited for each of your staff members?
3. Leadership Development Activities. How can your staff engage in specific activities to grow and develop their leadership skills within your program?

Take a look at each section below and utilize each of these sections when you begin mapping out your leadership plan on the Leadership Development Tracking Tool.

Leadership Competencies for Sustainability

- **Strategic Thinking:** Understanding how daily work connects to long-term sustainability.
- **Relationship Building:** Developing and maintaining partnerships and networks.
- **Communication:** Articulating program value to diverse stakeholders.
- **Problem-Solving:** Addressing challenges creatively and proactively
- **Team Development:** Supporting and empowering colleagues.
- **Change Management:** Leading program adaptation and improvement

Leadership Development Pathways

- **Emerging Leaders:** This pathway is best suited for new staff or those ready to take on additional responsibilities.
- **Developing Leaders:** This pathway can be for staff who have some leadership experience, and they are ready to expand their skills.
- **Established Leaders:** Experienced staff who are ready for formal leadership roles may be best suited for this pathway.
- **Senior Leaders:** This path is for the staff who are ready to mentor others and drive strategic initiatives.

Leadership Development Activities

- **Mentorship Programs:** Pairing emerging leaders with experienced staff.
- **Project Leadership:** Giving staff opportunities to lead specific initiatives.
- **Cross-Functional Teams:** Involving staff in sustainability planning and implementation.
- **External Representation:** Having staff represent the program at community events.
- **Decision-Making Involvement:** Including staff in strategic planning and problem-solving.
- **Leadership Training:** Formal workshops and skill-building sessions.

Leadership Development Tracking Tool

Now that you've looked at each leadership development section, it's time to begin mapping out your staff leadership plan using the tracking tool template below.

Staff Member & Current Role	Leadership Competencies Assessment	Development Goals & Activities	Progress Milestones	Mentorship Assignments	Leadership Opportunities Provided	Growth Outcomes & Impact

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

The purpose of case studies is to show you how programs effectively use the tools and resources given to them. Read the case study below and answer the reflection questions at the end to understand how training and empowering staff strengthens the entire web of sustainability.

Staff Empowerment at Brighter Futures Community Center

When Brighter Futures Community Center began their sustainability planning process, Executive Director Maria Rodriguez realized that sustainability couldn't rest solely on her shoulders. With funding uncertainties and growing community needs, she knew the center's long-term success depended on empowering her entire team to support the sustainability web.

The center employed eight staff members:

1. **Maria Rodriguez** - Executive Director
2. **James Chen** - Program Coordinator
3. **Sofia Martinez** - Elementary Program Lead, bilingual social worker
4. **Marcus Thompson** - Middle/High School Program Lead
5. **Elena Vasquez** - Family Engagement Coordinator
6. **David Park** - Part-time Art Instructor
7. **Angela Foster** - Administrative Assistant
8. **Carlos Rivera** - Maintenance/Security, part-time

Maria recognized that while she handled most external relationships and funding, her staff had untapped networks and skills that could significantly support sustainability efforts. Maria worked with her team and had them complete an Individual Network Mapping tool to highlight each of these untapped networks. Below are some of the results:

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Sofia Martinez's Networks	Marcus Thompson's Networks	Elena Vasquez's Networks
Professional: Local social work association, bilingual healthcare providers, immigrant services organizations	Professional: Former high school where he taught, youth basketball league coaches, local college contacts	Professional: Adult education providers, community college staff, parent education specialists
Personal: Parent networks from her children's schools, church community with many farming families	Personal: Military veteran networks, neighborhood association, family business connections	Personal: Single mother support groups, local business owner (sister runs catering company)
Digital: Spanish-language community Facebook groups, professional social work forums	Digital: Education technology groups, youth development professionals	Digital: Parent advocacy groups, community organizing networks

Key Discoveries

- Sofia's connection to the local credit union president through her church led to the financial literacy partnership.
- Marcus's relationship with his former principal opened doors for the middle school tutoring collaboration.
- Elena's sister's catering business became a key in-kind donor for family events.
- David's art network connected the center to local galleries for student art shows and fundraising events.

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Elevator Pitch Development

Sofia's Pitch for Healthcare Providers

"Many of the families I work with are dealing with multiple stressors - language barriers, work instability, and limited resources. At Brighter Futures Community Center, we provide a safe, supportive environment where their children can succeed academically while families build connections and access resources. Last year, 89% of our elementary students improved their reading levels, and 95% of families reported feeling more connected to their community. We'd love to explore how we can work together to support these families more comprehensively."

Marcus's Pitch for Education Professionals

"Our middle and high school students face significant challenges - 78% are from low-income families, and many are first-generation college hopefuls. Through our after-school and evening programs, we're not just providing homework help - we're building futures. Our students show 25% higher graduation rates than district average, and 85% of our high school participants enroll in post-secondary education. We believe in partnerships that have multiple impacts and we'd love to have a conversation with you about the possibilities."

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

Professional Development Implementation

Based on their sustainability needs, The Center invested in several targeted professional development areas, each with specific staff members who would focus on these areas of growth:

1. **Grant Writing Training** - James and Sofia
   a. Attended 3-day grant writing workshop
   b. Participated in monthly grant writing peer group
   c. ***The Result:*** Successfully wrote $15,000 state workforce development grant

2. **Partnership Development** - Elena and Marcus
   a. Completed nonprofit partnership management certificate
   b. Job-shadowed experienced partnership coordinator
   c. ***The Result:*** Formalized MOUs with three key community partners

3. **Data Analysis** - Angela and Maria
   a. Enrolled in online data visualization course
   b. Attended evaluation training specific to youth programs
   c. ***The Result:*** Created compelling data stories that improved funding proposals

Leadership Development Outcomes

After identifying areas for staff professional development, Maria looked towards areas of growth for leadership development amongst her team. She began tracking staff's goals, milestones, growth outcomes and impact.

1. **James Chen - Project Leadership:**
   a. Led the center's first major fundraising event, raising $12,000
   b. Developed systems for volunteer coordination
   c. Now mentors newer staff in program management

2. **Sofia Martinez - External Representation:**
   a. Became center's primary spokesperson for Spanish-language media
   b. Joined city's youth services advisory committee
   c. Leads center's family engagement strategic planning

Case Study: Brighter Futures Community Center

3. **Marcus Thompson - Strategic Initiative Leadership:**
    a. Designed and implemented the entrepreneurship club
    b. Developed partnership framework with local businesses
    c. Leads staff professional development planning

Sustainability Impact

Through staff empowerment with professional development and leadership opportunities, Brighter Futures Community Center achieved the following:

1. **Expanded Networks:** Staff connections led to 12 new partnership relationships.
2. **Increased Funding:** Staff-led initiatives generated $87,000 in new funding.
3. **Enhanced Capacity:** Multiple staff can now represent the program professionally.
4. **Improved Retention:** Professional development opportunities increased staff satisfaction and reduced turnover.
5. **Distributed Leadership:** Sustainability efforts no longer depend solely on executive director.

Staff Feedback

The commitment to sustainability through staff development and leadership growth deeply resonated with staff. The Center received positive feedback highlighting the improvements:

1. "*I never realized how many connections I had that could help our families. The network mapping made me see that I'm not just a program coordinator - I'm a community connector.*" - **James Chen**
2. "*Learning to tell our story clearly and confidently has made me a better advocate for our kids and families. I feel empowered to speak up in any setting.*" - **Sofia Martinez**

Train and Empower Staff

Reflection Questions

After exploring each of the previous sections, reflect on your experiences through these questions:

1. How did network mapping reveal resources that Brighter Futures hadn't previously recognized?
2. What role did targeted professional development play in building the center's sustainability capacity?
3. How did empowering staff to take on leadership roles strengthen the overall program?
4. What connections do you see between staff empowerment and the other layers of the sustainability web (data, funding, partnerships)?
5. How might your own staff's networks contribute to your program's sustainability?

5\. What professional development would most benefit your staff in supporting sustainability efforts?

7\. How could you begin developing leadership capacity within your current team?

8\. What barriers might prevent staff from fully engaging in sustainability efforts, and how could you address them?

Train and Empower Staff

Training and empowering staff is the final layer of the Web of Sustainability. Staff are not just program implementers—they are the multipliers of impact and reach. When team members understand their role in sustainability and are equipped with the tools, skills, and confidence to support it, they become ambassadors and champions for your mission. Through strategies like network mapping, professional development, leadership building, and clear organizational messaging, staff transform into advocates who strengthen partnerships and community engagement. The most resilient programs are those where every team member sees how their contributions connect with data-driven decision-making, diversified funding, and strategic partnerships to create a thriving, sustainable organization that serves youth and families year after year.

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