
SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

As the School Lead for a Partnership with a Community Based Organization, use this checklist to identify what steps you have taken to build a sustainable program and partnership and then choose which steps you will take next to strengthen the capacity of your partnership to withstand the inevitable changes it will encounter.

Relationship Building

- Share power and decision-making with your Community-Based Organization (CBO) partner.* Use the [Shared Decision Making Planning Tool](#) to decide how who will make decisions and how you will communicate with each other about decisions.
- Encourage your CBO partner to participate in school-wide events for youth and families.* Partnerships are more likely to sustain when they are visible and accessible and when students and families see the program as a vital part of the community.
- Offer opportunities for your CBO partner to participate in school-wide decision making and leadership.* For example, invite them to join the Building Leadership Team or the Race and Equity Team at your school.
- “How” we do the work is often just as important to the success of our partnership as “what” we are doing.* To create a collaborative culture for partnership interactions and meetings, apply strategies from the [Tip Sheet for Planning for Equitable Collaboration Meetings](#).
- Introduce yourself to CBO partner staff, such as tutors or health professionals who are working directly with students, and introduce CBO staff to leaders and key stakeholders within the school building and school district.* This is one way to show that you value the work of your partners and consider them to be an asset to the school community.
- Facilitate or provide opportunities for CBOs who serve your community to connect, collaborate, and learn from each other.* Map out the [Partnership Ecosystem](#) at your school.

Communication

- Notify the Program Coordinator about what’s happening in the school community.* For example, include them on school-wide e-mails and notifications.
- Take time to see the program in action multiple times per year.* For example, attend a program event or stop by for a 30-minute observation or program tour from the program coordinator.
- Use “our” rather than “their” or “my” when referring to the program and/or partnership, internally and externally.*
- Share program partnership highlights and updates with school staff and families and listen for their feedback.* Stakeholders are more likely to continue supporting the partnership when they are aware of its outcomes and have opportunities to contribute to its success.

- Advocate for your CBO partners within the school district.* Share the successes of the partnership and how collaboration impacts the school community. Learn what challenges CBOs face as they seek to partner with schools and districts, and advocate for policies, funding, or procedures that will improve their experience and open up more opportunities for partnership.

Documentation

- Establish a [Partnership Charter](#) or [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with your partner to document what you expect from each other.*
- Keep a file on the partnership and program.* Prepare in advance for changes in leadership at the school level by keeping a file on the partnership, with documents such as a Memorandum of Understanding, program reports or newsletters, etc. that can be shared with other school staff if you move on from your role as Partnership Lead for the school.

Partnership and Program Quality

- Review the [Checklist of Partnership Elements](#) and assess the status of the partnership.* Choose one area to focus on for partnership growth. These elements provide a strong foundation for effective school-community partnerships and, because they emphasize collaboration and shared leadership, ensure that the partnership's existence is not dependent on a single person or organization.
- Ask your partner how they define and assess program quality.* Find out how they incorporate continuous improvement into their practice and ask if you can support or participate in the process.
- Invest in professional development to align practices and share expertise across the partnership.* Invite CBO staff to a training for school staff or ask the CBO to lead a training or an activity in a staff meeting for the school.

Resource Development

- When possible, [diversify funding sources](#) so the partnership is not dependent on a single source of funding.* Ask each partner to acquire funding or in-kind resources to support the partnership so all partners are invested financially in the program. Be creative in seeking out resources from district, city, or other sources.
- Establish a partnership coordinator role for your school.* A school staff member or a CBO partner may take on this leadership role coordinating all of the partners within the [Partnership Ecosystem](#) at your school.
- Discuss sustainability with your partner(s).* People and funding come and go, so prepare in advance for potential changes. Collaborate by supporting the steps your CBO partner is taking to build a sustainable program and partnership.