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**HEALTHY & ACTIVE
COMMUNITIES**



MFH
MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH

Sustainability Assessment Report

.....
YEAR 3

Acknowledgements

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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



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H&AC Program Sustainability Assessment Report

December 2011



The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of findings based on Healthy & Active Communities (H&AC) grantees' responses to a sustainability assessment tool. This report was prepared for Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) staff and Board of Directors to assess accomplishments and challenges in funding, training, and capacity-building activities for H&AC grantees. Results from this report can help to inform the design of funding opportunities and capacity-building activities in the future.

Importance of Sustainability

One of MFH's goals is to "improve the health of the people in the communities it serves". Positive public health outcomes in the communities that H&AC grantees serve can only be achieved if effective programs, policies, and environment changes are sustained over time. Many things can affect sustainability, such as financial and political climates, factors in the organizational setting, and elements of project design and implementation.^{1,2} Research shows that if the right amount of funding, people, and information are made available to a public health program, it will result in positive health outcomes.^{3,4}

The sustainability of H&AC projects beyond MFH funding increases the ability of communities and grantee organizations to continue to work towards improving the health of individuals. H&AC grantees face increasingly challenging environments. Thus, it is important to examine and understand the factors and mechanisms that promote or hinder the sustainability of their programs.

What is program sustainability?

Sustainability is defined as the presence of structures and processes that allow a program to leverage resources to most effectively implement evidence-based policies and activities over time.

The Program Sustainability Assessment Tool

This tool was developed by the Center for Tobacco Policy Research at Washington University in St. Louis in conjunction with an extensive review of program sustainability research. Figure 1 defines the nine program sustainability domains assessed in the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool. All of the domains within the tool are equally weighted and consist of five to eleven indicators. For a list of all indicators included in each domain see Appendix A. *The degree to which the indicators in each domain exist increases the likelihood that a project or program has the resources, skills, capacity, and knowledge necessary to sustain components over time. The stronger the existence of indicators for each of the domains, the more likely a project or program can be sustained.*

Figure 1. Domain Definitions for the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool



Use of the Tool with H&AC Grantees

The Program Sustainability Assessment Tool was designed to help measure the extent to which a project has the necessary structures and processes to sustain obesity prevention efforts. One to three individuals from each H&AC project participated. Respondents reported on a scale of 1 “little to no extent” to 7 “to a great extent”, the degree to which they felt their organization did or had certain things. The tool was developed in 2010. Therefore, the tool was administered to Model Practice Building (MPB) and Innovative Funding (IF) grantees near the end of their funding cycle, and administered to Promising Strategies (PS) grantees towards the beginning of their funding cycle. A total of 99 respondents completed the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool between winter 2010 and spring 2011. For more information on the development of the tool and the evaluation methods see Appendix B.

How to Interpret the Sustainability Findings

The remainder of the report includes the results from the sustainability tool. Over the course of the H&AC Initiative there have been different funding strategies, including MPB, IF, and PS. First, an overall sustainability profile is shared for all H&AC grantees, followed by findings for the MPB/IF and PS grantees. Scores are presented for each of the nine sustainability domains. High scores indicate areas where grantees report their organizations are most successful. Low scores indicate areas of need or gaps in sustainability efforts for H&AC grantees.

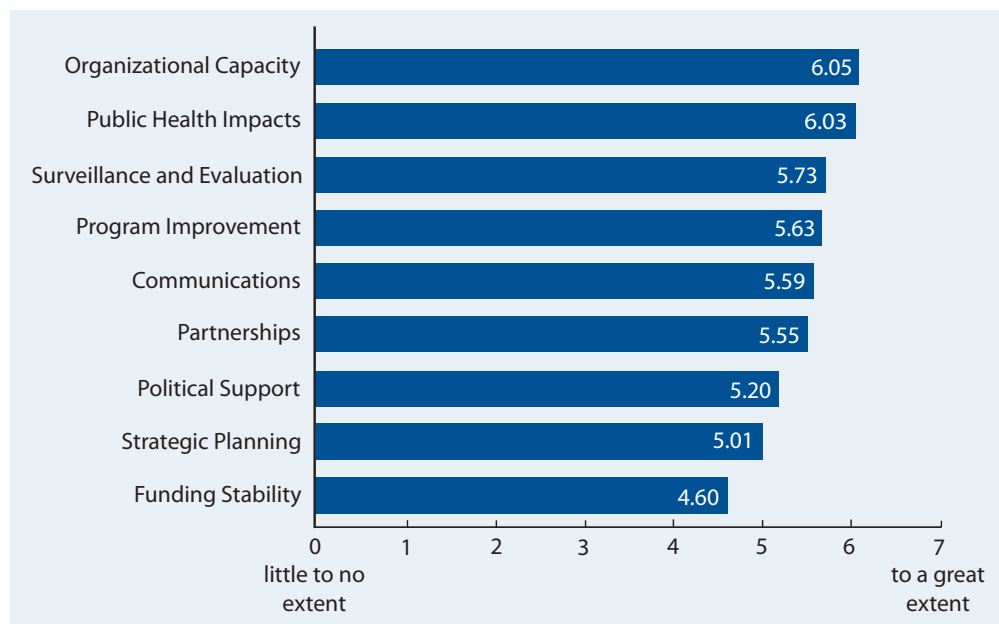
There is no minimum rating that guarantees the sustainability of a project. However, higher ratings reflect greater capacity to respond to potential sustainability threats (*e.g.*, funding loss), which increases the likelihood of continued H&AC project components. This was the first administration of the sustainability tool to H&AC grantees. The evaluation team intends to survey H&AC grantees at the beginning and end of their funding cycles in the future. Patterns from this administration of the survey are highlighted, but results from future administrations of the survey will allow the evaluation team and MFH to assess changes in these trends over time.

Overall Sustainability Profile of H&AC Grantees

As shown below in Figure 2:

- The three highest rated domains for all H&AC grantees were: **Surveillance and Evaluation** (5.73), **Public Health Impacts** (6.03), and **Organizational Capacity** (6.05).
- The three lowest rated domains were: **Funding Stability** (4.60), **Strategic Planning** (5.01), and **Political Support** (5.20).

Figure 2. Overall Sustainability Profile Scores for H&AC Grantees



Organizational Capacity was the highest rated domain for all H&AC grantees indicating that grantees feel they have committed leadership, appropriate skills, and necessary systems in place to reach the goals of their H&AC projects. High scores in Public Health Impacts demonstrate that grantees feel confident that their H&AC projects meet community health needs and they successfully demonstrate the value of the project to the population they serve. High scores in Surveillance and Evaluation are most likely reflective of the intensive level of individualized technical assistance H&AC grantees receive on collecting data, reporting outcomes and results, and using internal evaluation results for program planning and improvement purposes.

MPB/IF Sustainability Profile

Below are the findings for MPB and IF grantees. Because MPB/IF grantees were nearing the end of their formal funding cycle at the time they completed the tool, these results show where funding and capacity-building activities provided to H&AC grantees have been the most successful. Findings also provide specific examples of areas where grantees reported being less successful with regards to sustainability efforts.

- The highest rated domains for MPB/IF grantees were **Public Health Impacts** (6.17) and **Organizational Capacity** (6.22).

These same two domains were the two highest domains for all H&AC grantees and, therefore, many of the same assumptions outlined above apply to MPB/IF grantees. Table 1 describes the highest rated indicators within these two domains and provides specific examples of these successes from grantees’ work.

Table 1. Examples of Most Successful Indicators from MPB/IF grantees

Domain	Indicator	Mean Score	Examples from H&Ac Projects
Public Health Impacts	The program takes into account the needs of the population it is designed to serve.	6.70	<i>Trailnet</i> - Grantee engaged taskforces in each of the project communities to inform the development of local action plans. Grantee also solicited public input through forums and incorporated local community members’ suggestions into bicycle and pedestrian master plans.
	The program meets a community health need.	6.62	<i>Polk County Health Center</i> – Grantee facilitated needs assessment process in 18 communities to identify gaps in physical activity and healthy eating opportunities and targeted H&AC activities based on the results of the assessments.
Organizational Capacity	The program uses time and money efficiently.	6.66	<i>Forest Institute of Professional Psychology</i> – Grantee maximized use of full-time employees by supplementing staff time and resources through utilization of community members to lead healthy eating and physical activity activities and volunteers to assist with project marketing activities.
	Leadership is committed to the goals of the program.	6.56	<i>Pulaski County Health Department</i> - Grantee implemented worksite wellness policies within their own organization after doing policy related work with other organizations as part of its H&AC project.

- The lowest rated domain and four lowest indicators for MPB/IF grantees fell within the **Funding Stability** domain (4.53).

Low scores within the Funding Stability domain is not surprising considering MPB/IF grantees were near the end of their MFH grant cycle. Evaluation monitoring data collected through HAPPE also confirmed that MPB/IF projects generally were not funded through a wide variety of sources.

PS Sustainability Profile

Below are the findings for PS grantees. PS grantees were much earlier in their funding cycles when they completed this tool. Sustainability profiles for the PS funding strategy are shared to highlight sustainability challenges grantees are currently experiencing. These findings can be used to inform targeted technical assistance, training, or resources provided to grantees.

- The three highest rated domains for PS grantees were **Partnerships** (5.61), **Public Health Impacts** (5.95), and **Organizational Capacity** (5.94).

High scores in Partnerships most likely reflect the requirement of PS grantees to demonstrate multi-sectoral partnerships prior to the launch of their projects. Connections with diverse community partners can support program sustainability by increasing community support for the project, building the community’s capacity for action, and leveraging greater resources to support change.⁵

- The lowest rated domains for PS grantees were **Funding Stability** (4.64) and **Strategic Planning** (4.96).

Despite having two to three more years of PS funding from MFH, grantees still reported Funding Stability to be the lowest rated domain. Table 2 shows the six lowest rated indicators for PS grantees. Four of the six indicators were within the Funding Stability domain. This demonstrates grantees’ need to have more diversified, stable, flexible, and long-term funding plans. Additionally, two of the six lowest indicators fall within the Strategic Planning domain. Specifically, grantees reported a lack of strong long-term financial and sustainability planning.

Table 2. Examples of Least Successful Indicators for PS grantees

Domain	Indicator	Mean Score
Funding Stability	The program is funded through a variety of sources.	3.88
	Program has a combination of stable and flexible funding.	4.03
	The program has sustained funding.	4.15
	The program exists in a supportive state economic climate.	4.38
Strategic Planning	The program has a long-term financial plan.	4.19
	The program has a sustainability plan.	4.55

- There was greatest variation in scores across PS grantees in the **Political Support** (range= 5.40) and **Surveillance and Evaluation** (range= 5.40) domains.

The wide range in scores in these domains indicates that grantees have the greatest differences in the level of knowledge and expertise around garnering political support and conducting surveillance and evaluation at the start of their grants. Because Political Support and Surveillance and Evaluation have the most variation,

this suggests that many grantees continue to need support to build capacity in these areas.

Comparison of MPB grantees to PS Grantees

Besides funding, H&AC grantees receive other types of support from MFH, including workshops on communicating with policymakers, and networking and training opportunities at the MFH annual summit. However, there are some differences in the funding, and technical assistance provided to MPB versus PS grantees. For example, MPB grantees had access to implementation, dissemination, and evaluation capacity-building experts, whereas PS grantees only had access to an evaluation capacity-building team.

- The MPB grantees had higher scores for nearly all domains when compared to PS grantees, including: **Political Support, Strategic Planning, Organizational Capacity, Communications, Surveillance and Evaluation, Program Improvement, and Public Health Impacts.**

Part of the difference in scores may be attributed to PS grantees being earlier in their funding cycle and, therefore, participated in less training, H&AC Summits, and capacity-building activities compared to MPB grantees. To date, MPB grantees have received the most technical assistance, which implies funding, training, and capacity-building activities are enhancing the sustainability of H&AC project components. MFH provided technical assistance and training specifically targeting many of these areas starting in 2008. At this time, the evaluation team is unable to assess the degree to which individual grantees, or funding strategies, scores changed for specific domains, but will have the ability to report on this in the future.

Recommendations

These results can be used to guide sustainability planning for grantees and provide guidelines for future funding. Domains with relatively lower ratings indicate there is room for technical assistance and training. Assessing sustainability on an ongoing basis provides MFH with immediate feedback on domains where assistance may be provided. This information may help inform capacity-building, training, and technical assistance provided to grantees in the future. There are three main recommendations based on the results of this administration of the survey.

- 1. IDENTIFY SPECIFIC SUSTAINABILITY GAPS.** While each grantee faces organization-specific challenges to sustainability across different domains, the findings above suggest key domains that grantees as a whole saw as challenging and may require more intensive training and assistance across grantees.
 - A. Funding Stability** was a challenging domain for all H&AC grantees. The ability to secure long-term funding requires knowledge of funding streams and how to access them. Therefore, continue to offer training and technical assistance opportunities around identifying and securing federal and other funding opportunities.⁶

- B. PS findings further indicate a need for capacity-building opportunities for grantees in the **Surveillance and Evaluation** and **Political Support** domains. Continue to provide technical assistance in a variety of areas, including evaluation, and communicating with policy makers.

2. CLEARLY DEFINE SUSTAINABILITY EXPECTATIONS AND COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS TO GRANTEES. Identify and communicate sustainability expectations to grantees from the start, including how their capacity for sustainability is affected by many factors, as outlined in the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool.

3. PLAN FOR AND ASSESS SUSTAINABILITY EARLY, BROADLY AND OFTEN. Adoption of an approach that assesses sustainability early, broadly, and often can help MFH better understand the effectiveness of certain types of supports and challenges at different points in a grantee's funding cycle. To increase the likelihood of H&AC project components being sustained beyond MFH funding, grantees should plan for and assess sustainability in the beginning, middle, and end of their funding cycles.

- A. **Beginning:** Encourage grantees to develop comprehensive sustainability plans early in their funding cycle, if not before funding begins, and provide support and technical assistance around development of such plans. Provide training on building structures and processes that support sustainability efforts.

- Starting early will give grantees time to develop their partnerships, capacity, and strategies needed to sustain project components.^{4,7}
- Organizations often focus on finding funding to sustain programmatic activities, and focus less on the structures and processes that support community organizing and planning, such as identifying advocates or brokers for the community.⁶
- One potential strategy would be to identify specific objectives for institutionalization (e.g., organizational) and developing and implementing a marketing plan for achieving those objectives.⁸

- B. **Middle:** Assess sustainability on an on-going basis, and track grantees' progress towards meeting sustainability goals and plans. One strategy may be to require grantees to have sustainability objectives or plans across several domains and report progress towards and achievement of such efforts (e.g., in interim reports to MFH). Ensure grantees develop action plans around sustainability that extend beyond securing additional funding.

- C. **End:** Allocate resources and develop a system to support data collection from grantee organizations after funding cycles have ended to further assess sustainability after they no longer receive formal MFH funding. Also, plan to revisit grantee-level data and determine which project components should be sustained. Not all project components will be successful and, therefore, may not need to be sustained.

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Appendix A: Program Sustainability Assessment Tool

Program Sustainability Assessment Tool

Welcome to the Program Sustainability Survey for the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) Healthy and Active Communities (H&AC) Initiative. The purpose of this survey is to collect information about your [insert *Model Practice Building, Promising Strategies, or Innovative Funding*] project regarding key elements that contribute to sustaining your obesity prevention efforts. The results of this survey will provide important information about the factors that are likely to help sustain the Missouri obesity prevention efforts beyond the H&AC Initiative. These results will also be used to inform future sustainability planning efforts for organizations and MFH.

When completing the survey, please answer the questions based on your [insert *Model Practice Building, Promising Strategies, or Innovative Funding*] project – [insert project name]. The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. After completion of the survey, you will receive an email summary report of your answers.

Your participation is completely voluntary. All of your responses will remain confidential and will not be reported in a way that will identify you.

Completing the Survey

When completing the survey, you have the option to save your work and come back to it later. To save your work, click the “Next” button at the bottom of the page. When you want to finish the survey, just click on the survey link you received in your invitation email to access the survey again. If you need to return to a previous page, please use the back button at the bottom of the page.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Robichaux at 314-935-3648 or crobichaux@wustl.edu.

Definitions for HAC grantees

For clarity, we have included the following definitions of terms that are used throughout the survey:

Program refers to your [insert *Model Practice Building, Promising Strategies, or Innovative Funding*] project funded by the Missouri Foundation for Health.

Organization refers to the parent agency or organization in which your MFH project is housed.

Community refers to the target population and/or stakeholders involved with your MFH-funded project.

Sustainability Assessment Tool

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to funding stability. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

FUNDING STABILITY	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program exists in a supportive state economic climate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The organization provides budgetary management support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. Program implements policies to help ensure sustained funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program is funded through a variety of sources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. Program has a combination of stable and flexible funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. The program has adequate funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. The program has sustained funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to political support. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

POLITICAL SUPPORT	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. Political champions advocate for the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The program has strong champions with the ability to garner resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. The program has political support within the larger organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program has political support from outside of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. The program has strong advocacy support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to community partnerships. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program has community buy-in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The program reaches out to key stakeholders from a variety of disciplines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. Diverse community organizations are invested in the success of the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program communicates with community leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. Community leaders are involved with the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. The program builds strong collaborative partnerships among federal, state, and local public health agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. The program makes use of local resources and services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8. Community members are passionately committed to the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9. The community is engaged in the development of program goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to strategic planning. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

STRATEGIC PLANNING	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program plans for future resource needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The program has a long-term financial plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. The program has a sustainability plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program's goals are understood by all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

5. The program clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Strategic planning is done in coordination with partners and other programs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to organizational capacity. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	To little or no extent To a very great extent						
1. The program's vision, mission, and goals are aligned with the larger organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The program is well integrated into the operations of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Organizational systems are in place to support the various program needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Physical and technological infrastructure supports the needs of the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Leadership is committed to the goals of the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Leadership effectively articulates the vision of the program to external partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Leadership efficiently manages staff and other resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Staff is committed to the goals of the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. The program has adequate staff to complete the program's goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Staff possess the necessary skills to implement the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. The program uses time and money efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to communications. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

COMMUNICATIONS	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program has communication strategies to secure and maintain public support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. Program staff communicate the need for the program to the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. The program is marketed in a way that generates interest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program increases community awareness of the issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. Program staff communicate the benefit of the program to policymakers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. The program has a dissemination plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. The program garners positive media attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to surveillance and evaluation. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

SURVEILLANCE AND EVALUATION	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program has the capacity for quality program evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The program reports short term and intermediate outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. Evaluation results inform program planning and implementation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. Program evaluation results are used to demonstrate successes to funders and other key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. The program provides strong evidence to the public that the program works.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to program improvement. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program has defined processes for quality improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The program uses evaluation results to make improvements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. The program periodically reviews the evidence base.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program adapts strategies as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. The program adapts to new science.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. The program proactively adapts to changes in the environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. The program makes decisions about which components are ineffective and should not continue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

This section of the survey will help you understand your program's sustainability as it relates to public health impacts. For the following statements, please indicate the extent to which your program has or does the following things.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS	To little or no extent							To a very great extent
1. The program meets a community health need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. The program takes into account the needs of the population it is designed to serve.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. The program focuses on policy and environmental change.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. The program reaches enough people to improve measureable health outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. The program demonstrates its value to the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. The program demonstrates its value to stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Demographic

1. How long have you worked at your current organization?

Time spent in years:

Appendix B: Program Sustainability Assessment Tool Methods

Appendix B: Program Sustainability Assessment Tool and Methods

The Program Sustainability Assessment Tool includes indicators that comprise nine sustainability domains. Figure 1 in the report includes a definition of each of the nine sustainability domains. Both external and internal environments contribute to sustainability efforts. Therefore, the domains are organized from external environments (e.g. funding stability) to internal environments (e.g. strategic planning) in Figure 1. This tool was developed in conjunction with an extensive review of program sustainability research and concept mapping processes involving 112 scientists, funders, and practitioners. Each item in the scale had to be supported by the literature and have above-average ratings of importance and modifiability to be included in the tool. All of the domains and items within the tool are equally weighted.

The survey asked individual respondents to indicate on a 7-point scale the degree to which they felt their program did certain things, such as “The program demonstrates its value to stakeholders” or “Evaluation results inform program planning and implementation”. A rating of 1 indicated project staff felt their program did or had this to a little or no extent, whereas a rating of 7 means meant they felt their program did or had this to a great extent.

The tool was distributed to all H&AC grantees in year 3 of the evaluation contract (July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011). It was administered to at least one participant from each Model Practice Building (MPB) and Innovative Funding (IF) grant in fall/winter 2010. For the Promising Strategies (PS) grantees, the program coordinators identified 2 to 3 additional individuals whose input would be useful in completing the survey. These individuals could have been other program staff, board members, or external evaluators. The survey was distributed to the PS grantees in March 2011. Of the 76 invited participants, 63 completed the survey with at least one person representing each of the PS grantees, up to 3 individuals per grantee. In the future, the evaluation team plans to administer the survey to PS grantees at the beginning and end of their funding cycle. This will allow the team to track changes in the sustainability domains over time.

