



SPRC • Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Promoting a public health approach to suicide prevention

**Leaving a Legacy: Translating
SPRC's Sustainability
Recommendations into Action**

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Background and Purpose of This Document

In 2012, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) contacted former Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) state, tribal, and campus suicide prevention grantees (alumni grantees) to determine (1) what suicide prevention efforts they had been able to continue after funding ended and (2) how they were able to continue their program and/or activities.

The good news was that many alumni grantees continued to advance suicide prevention in their communities one year or more after funding ended. However, no single strategy was sufficient on its own; sites relied on a combination of strategies to maintain efforts after the initial funding ended. Alumni grantees told us they started thinking about sustainability¹ from the beginning of program development and continued through implementation and evaluation of their prevention efforts. Their feedback was summarized in the report [Leaving a Legacy: Recommendations for Sustaining Suicide Prevention Programs](#), which draws key themes from their sustainability stories.

Drawing upon the report, *Leaving a Legacy: Translating SPRC's Sustainability Recommendations into Actions* provides guidelines and worksheets to help you plan how to best continue your suicide prevention efforts (whether or not you are a GLS grantee). It offers key considerations for each of SPRC's five recommendations and work space on each page to help you and your team develop action steps. It is our hope that these recommendations will assist you in building a strong foundation for your suicide prevention program's lasting legacy.

Recommendations

Based on the experiences of alumni grantees, SPRC developed five recommendations for other programs to consider:

1. **Adopt a sustainability mindset:** Maintain a vision of sustainability throughout the program cycle—from design to implementation to evaluation.
2. **Build momentum:** Inspire and catalyze momentum for suicide prevention efforts in your setting and community.
3. **Foster strong leadership:** Deliberately select and/or cultivate a strong leader to spearhead suicide prevention efforts.
4. **Cultivate partnerships:** Identify and establish strong relationships with a variety of partners so they become joint stakeholders with a vested interest in the success of suicide prevention efforts.
5. **Secure additional funding and/or resources** to sustain suicide prevention efforts. Strategically plan how to identify new resources.

¹ *Sustainability* as used here is the ability of GLS alumni grantees to continue program activities beyond the initial funding period.

1) Adopt a Sustainability Mindset

Maintain a vision of sustainability throughout the program cycle—from design to implementation to evaluation.

Create a vision at the start of your program and let it be guided by the [strategic planning approach](#) for suicide prevention. Identify what strategies, partnerships, and policies you want to have in place by the time current funding ends. Use your vision to guide the development of program goals and objectives in the planning stages and influence decision making throughout the program.



As you implement your program and get a better sense of what is working well, asking the following questions may be helpful in making concrete plans for sustaining your efforts:

- Which aspects of the program should we continue? Why?
- What resources, tools, and/or partners do we need to sustain these aspects?
- Is there a way to support an activity, or parts of an activity, through in-kind contributions (e.g., donated meeting space, staff support from other organizations, volunteer time)?
- Which leaders and/or partners could help us find new resources?
- How will we work with existing partners, and are there new partners we should involve?

I didn't just throw something together related to sustainability at the end. It was an effort right from the beginning that, [for] everything we were starting, my intention was to continue it way past the three years. I never had that thought in my head that it would stop once the money stopped.

—GLS Campus Grant Alumni

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Think about ways you can keep sustainability in mind from the start of and throughout your program. For example:

- Create a vision statement with your team and partners that outlines the long-term legacy you want to have in place when your current suicide prevention funding ends. Review this statement regularly with your team and partners.
- When you hit roadblocks in your suicide prevention efforts, consult with your team and partners on how your long-term vision plays into how to proceed.

List 3 potential action steps you can take to promote a sustainability mindset for your program:

2) Build Momentum

Inspire and catalyze momentum for suicide prevention efforts in your setting and community.

Broad buy-in and support for current suicide prevention efforts can help you find the right partners and resources to continue efforts after the grant ends. If broad support for suicide prevention does not already exist in your community, consider how you can engage and inspire stakeholders and partners so that they can't imagine their community without your program's efforts.



Consider appealing to diverse stakeholders (e.g., local coalitions, community groups, university administrators, community advocates, other leaders unique to their setting) to build support for suicide prevention in the community. Once you have community support for your suicide prevention efforts, sustain it by sharing progress and celebrating successes.

Not only do the partnerships provide the potential for sustainability because of what those partners can incorporate into their work, but they also create buy-in. A big part of the reason we got additional state funding was that there were so many people who had bought into this that I know the state felt they couldn't just let it fall by the wayside.

—GLS State Grant Alumni

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Think about ways you can build or maintain momentum for suicide prevention efforts in your community. For example:

- Bring together diverse stakeholders to create a suicide prevention coalition.
- Meet with influential members in the community and ask for their input and public support for your suicide prevention efforts.
- Communicate program successes to leaders in the community (e.g. key legislators, campus administrators, business leaders), as well as to the community itself (through newsletters, Facebook pages, town forums, etc.).

List 3 potential action steps you can take to build momentum for suicide prevention in your setting (e.g., campus, tribal community, state health department, local suicide prevention coalition):

3) Foster Strong Leadership

Deliberately select and/or cultivate a strong leader to spearhead suicide prevention efforts.

The right leader(s) can help sustain suicide prevention efforts by establishing the program's vision, mission and goals; thinking strategically; building partnerships and buy-in; and planning for the future.

When selecting leader(s), think about who can help lead the program, both during and potentially after the initial funding ends. Identify potential gaps in current leadership, and commit time and resources to ensuring leadership can deliver (either through learning or by partnering with the right people and/or organizations) the following important skills and traits:



- Development and grant writing
- Communications
- Community organizing
- Strategic planning
- Coalition building
- Passion for suicide prevention

The person that you hire at the head of your programming has to be a person with passion, persistence, and come with a wealth of prevention skills.

– GLS Tribal Grant Alumni

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Think about ways you could strengthen your program leadership for sustainability. For example:

- Create a written succession plan to ensure a smooth transition when there is a planned or unplanned change in the leadership.
- Cultivate management and leadership skills among partners and staff.
- Prioritize fundraising efforts to support leadership beyond current funding.

List 3 potential action steps you can take to foster strong leadership in your setting (e.g., campus, tribal community, state health department, local suicide prevention coalition):

4) Cultivate Partnerships

Identify and establish strong relationships with a variety of partners so they become joint stakeholders with a vested interest in the success of suicide prevention efforts.

Ensure that your suicide prevention efforts engage diverse partners with various strengths. The partners that help you launch your suicide prevention efforts may be different from the partners that help you sustain the work.

Develop a clear purpose and vision for your partners' roles. Partners can support sustainability in many ways, such as generating community buy-in, raising awareness of successes and impact, generating support, and sharing resources.



As you near the end of funding and begin considering what strategies to sustain beyond the end of the program, identify the role each partner serves and which community partners might be missing from the table.

You always have to be searching for ways through partnering to maximize resources and new funding sources to continue your efforts.

Working in Indian Country, all successful efforts are based on relationship building.

—GLS tribal grant alumni

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Think about how you can strengthen partnerships to support your efforts in the future, for example:

- Identify new potential partners for your coalition or advisory board who may not traditionally be part of suicide prevention efforts (e.g., Indian Child Welfare, injury prevention, mental health treatment, violence/domestic violence prevention, substance abuse prevention and treatment, housing), and create a plan for engaging them in your program.
- Consider partner perspectives and priorities and highlight shared benefits or common areas of interest.
- Ask partner agencies to include suicide prevention-related goals and objectives in their grants and program proposals.

List 3 potential new partners who could help sustain your efforts and how your program might benefit their priorities.

| Potential Partners | How Your Program Would Benefit Their Priorities |
|---------------------------|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |

5) Secure Additional Funding and/or Resources

Programs should strategically plan how their program will identify new resources to sustain suicide prevention efforts.

To sustain suicide prevention efforts beyond grant funding, at least some level of additional funding or support will be necessary. Identify how much funding your program will need to sustain the strategies that are central to your vision of sustainability (see recommendation #1), then explore how your program can secure this funding. For example, what in-kind contributions can your partners make (staff time, technology, materials) that will help continue priority efforts.



You may find that since the initial funding developed the suicide prevention infrastructure and capacity, you can sustain activities with fewer resources moving forward.

Once you've built the system, it doesn't require the same kind of funding to keep it going. It's one thing to maintain a house as opposed to building the home. We had the money to build the house [from the GLS grant] and now we are maintaining it. We don't do anything as a standalone program. [Suicide prevention] is a piece of almost everything we do now.

—GLS campus grant alumni

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Think of ways you could secure additional resources to sustain specific elements of your suicide prevention program. For example:

- Take a course on proposal writing or shadow an experienced writer to gain fundraising skills.
- Draft clear, agreed-upon partner roles from the start which include the expectation that partners will help cultivate resources to sustain suicide prevention efforts (e.g., providing in-kind donations, partnering on grant proposals)
- Develop a strategy to approach public and private community partners to ask for in-kind and funding resources (e.g., work with advocates to secure a suicide prevention line item in the state budget).

List 3 potential action steps you can take to secure additional funding and resources for your suicide prevention efforts:

Sustainability Resources

Community Tool Box Sustainability Resources

(<http://ctb.ku.edu/en>)

The Community Tool Box is a global resource for free information on essential skills for building healthy communities, including the following:

- Getting Grants and Financial Resources:
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1042.aspx
- Planning for Long-Term Institutionalization:
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1046.aspx

Sustainability Planning Guide for Healthy Communities

(http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/pdf/sustainability_guide.pdf)

The Sustainability Planning Guide helps coalitions, public health professionals, and other community stakeholders develop, implement, and evaluate successful sustainability plans.

The Legacy Wheel

(<http://www.promoteprevent.org/content/leaving-legacy-six-strategies-sustainability>)

The Legacy Wheel offers a broader view of sustainability using various strategies to maintain the program elements that are responsible for its positive outcomes, whether or not you receive additional funding.

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Suicide Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.sprc.org>