activities

strategic plan

organizational health

mission

business plan

Sustainability

Chapter 8: Sustainability

8.1 Overview

The term "sustainability" may be defined as "the ability to maintain a certain level of activity over time." From the PEPFAR perspective, sustainability means maintaining the HIV/AIDS services needed to prevent additional infections, support children who have been affected by the epidemic, and provide care and treatment services to those living with HIV/AIDS for as long as necessary, whether or not PEPFAR continues to fund the program.

Skip Ahead
- Six Tips for Sustainable Programming
- Phases of Planning
- Strategic Planning
- Online Resources

One of PEPFAR's goals is the "transition from an emergency response to promotion of sustainable country programs." In the broader context this means "Supporting partner governments in growing capacity to lead, manage and ultimately finance their health systems with indigenous resources." For NGOs, this translates into building indigenous knowledge bases so programs can continue with fewer external inputs. It means making capacity-building investments now, so that programs can be maintained in the future. It means making sure your program operates in as efficient manner as possible.

From the perspective of an organization implementing PEPFAR programs, sustainability has a programmatic and an organizational development meaning. On the programmatic side, sustainability means maintaining the ability to deliver quality programs that are cost effective and that reach populations most in need.

In terms of organizational development, sustainability means:

- putting in place financial, management, M&E, administrative, and other systems so that the organization can continue to provide quality services, apply for and absorb funds, and remain viable;
- contributing to health and development efforts of both governments and communities through awards and partnerships;
- developing/maintaining a knowledgeable professional staff that you can leverage for future projects;
- growing organizational capacity to continue to be innovative and effective; and
- maintaining and growing your network of partnerships with international and indigenous NGOs and community- and faith-based organizations (CBOs and FBOs).

In addition, with PEPFAR's increased focus on country ownership and government leadership, NGOs need to ensure that they are strong collaborative partners with appropriate government entities. This means:

- ensuring that activities are responsive to the government's needs and strategy and are promoting country ownership;
- coordinating types of activities and geographic location, with government at national and local levels as appropriate;
- ensuring communication with government through attending meetings, sharing reports and successes, etc.; and
- supporting government offices to develop their capacities to manage the components of their HIV/AIDS responses.

This chapter will address important processes and tools that you can use to support the development of sustainable organizations. When developing your own plan, it is important to consider the different aspects of sustainability and country ownership.

Objectives

- Learn how to build your own organization through effective planning and capacity building.
- Gain an appreciation of the value of maintaining your network of relationships with donors, partners, individuals, and private businesses.
- Understand the importance of demonstrating impact on the lives of the beneficiaries you serve.

8.2 Getting Started

Think "Sustainability" Every Day

Sustainability touches almost every decision your organization makes, from the programs you design and the partnerships you build, to your decisions about hiring and allocating resources. Sustainability is about the future of services for existing beneficiaries and the future of your organization. This means:

- empowering volunteers and community groups to take a substantive role in designing and implementing your programs;
- encouraging staff to find solutions that not only cost less to establish, but are also less expensive to maintain;
- building true partnerships with local NGOs, CBOs, and FBOs and focusing on increasing their capacity;
- seeking opportunities to expand your staff's knowledge and experience, and sharing that experience throughout the organization;
- building new relationships with donors, other organizations, and the private sector;
- learning how to demonstrate the effectiveness of your approach so that donors, businesses, other organizations, and individuals will want to continue to support your efforts; and
- paying attention to and enhancing your organization's systems so that it can function effectively, manage funds, provide services, and adapt to future needs.

8.2.1 Six Tips for Sustainable Programming

1. Listen to beneficiaries and community leaders. (Know your environment.)

Nothing is more difficult to sustain than a program that does not have local buy-in. If beneficiaries do not see the program's impact, and local leaders do not understand the value of a program to the community, it will be extremely difficult to maintain, regardless of funding. The best way to get buy-in is to listen to the needs and concerns of beneficiaries and local leaders. By giving them a substantive role in designing and implementing your program, you build in low-cost, effective sustainability from the beginning.

2. Develop organizational partnerships at the local level.

An effective approach to building the capacity of indigenous partners is to have counterparts sit side-by-side every day, transferring skills and knowledge and developing solutions together.

3. Ensure involvement with government.

As host-country governments are ultimately responsible for ensuring the long-term sustainability of HIV/AIDS programs in their countries, it is essential that your programs are in line with government priorities at the national and local levels and are coordinated with appropriate government bodies in the specific technical and geographical areas in which you are working. This is more than just informing your government counterparts; it means sharing information on project implementation and participating in meetings.

4. Factor long-term costs into your procurement decisions.

The cost of procuring equipment and software is more than just the price tag. There are long-term maintenance costs, costs to train future staff, and costs for parts or upgrades. Consider these long-term costs in your procurement process, so you will not be stuck with something that is too expensive to maintain when your current award ends.

5. Understand the true value of your human capital

Staff are your organization's most important asset. Why? Because, they not only possess the skills, knowledge, and ability to implement your program, but they also embody your NGO's institutional memory—the collective set of facts, concepts, experiences, and know-how that keeps your organization running. When a high-performing employee leaves, your organization loses expertise as well as productivity. Replacing staff incurs other costs as well—recruiting, interviewing, hiring, training, and, not the least of them, the time it takes for the new hire to become fully productive.

Finding and retaining good staff and nurturing institutional memory are keys to the long-term health and success of your organization. Therefore, it is a good idea to include methods and means for maintaining your human capital in all of your planning.

6. Capture and share the knowledge

Wisely invest in building the knowledge and skills of your staff and partners. By establishing a strong learning and sharing program within your organization, and between you and your partners, you ultimately create a more sustainable organization.

8.3 Planning for Long-Term Organizational Health

Sustaining your organization is different from sustaining your activities. Often, sustaining activities occurs when they are transitioned to local entities (local CSOs, government institutions, etc.) while your organization continues to support other existing activities/programs or moves on to new activities/programs. The following sections will focus on organizational sustainability.

Whether your organization is a newly founded, grassroots initiative with three staff members or an established NGO with an office full of experienced workers, planning for the future is essential. While you may be certain of current funding streams and awards, these tend to have a short-term time horizon, after which things start to get a little less clear. Even if you have a good idea about what might happen in the future, such as potential awards and partnership opportunities, there is always the possibility that things will change—funding opportunities may or may not be there, staff may move on, or the needs of the communities you serve may shift. Organizational planning attempts to prepare your organization for the future by creating a bridge that links your current awards to your long-term vision.

8.3.1 Phases of Organizational Planning

An organization generally considers three phases (see Figure 49) when designing a plan for its future: the short-term horizon, the intermediate horizon and the long-term horizon. Planning can occur either from the short-term project to the longer-term program and organization, or it can occur from having a strategic overarching plan and then developing business and workplans based on that strategic plan. This section will guide you from a workplan to a business plan to a strategic plan.

Short-Term Horizon

The short-term horizon is defined by program descriptions, agreements, staffing arrangements, and workplans currently in place—all variables that may change over time. This phase will last at least through the end of your current award. If you have other funding streams and programs, your short-term horizon may extend further into the future, depending on how long the funds you have secured are available to your organization.

Stage one of planning for the short-term horizon developing your workplan, which describes your project goals and objectives. It articulates where you want to be and how you are going to get there, down to weekly or even daily tasks. With a clear timeline, it drives the project forward by giving staff specific directions on what needs to be done to achieve the intended outcomes. The workplan has a life span of one year and is reviewed and rewritten annually.

Intermediate Horizon

Your intermediate horizon begins where your short-term horizon starts to taper off. As funding for specific programs ends, variables such as funding, staff, and programs will become increasingly unpredictable. For example, you may not be able to identify future funding sources precisely, but you will have some ideas. During this phase, you should be building on your past and current workplans to develop a business plan for the next two to three years. The business plan will reflect the activities that you believe should be part of your organization's portfolio beyond the life of the existing projects and how you will attempt to undertake them. It also outlines the internal resources available to you and the approaches needed to secure additional resources.

Long-Term Horizon

Beyond your intermediate horizon lies your long-term horizon, the driving force for charting your future course. This planning phase involves looking at your organization's vision and mission, defining what you want to achieve ultimately, and developing an approach to realizing it. This is where your strategic plan comes in. This normally is only undertaken once every five years since it provides a thorough review of all aspects of your organization, including a reexamination of your vision, mission, and values. For many NGOs, planning for the future is difficult, because the lack of long-term funding often means they are working with unknown variables. In fact, part of the purpose of a strategic plan is to try to quantify some of these unknown variables. The strategic plan can be developed as the first planning document if you wish to develop your vision, and then subsequently work out what activities you will undertake to achieve your vision.

Figure 49—Strategic Planning Phases
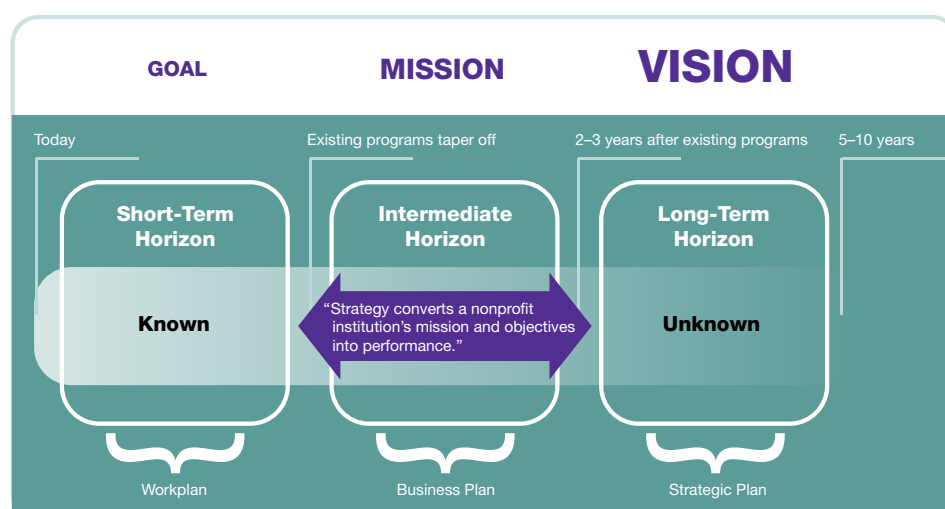
8.3.2 Workplans, Business Plans, and Strategic Plans

A workplan has very clear inputs (how much funding you have received and the start and end dates for your award) and relates to a project; a business and strategic plan often has numerous unknown variables and is based on your organization. In fact, part of the purpose of a strategic plan is to try to quantify some of these unknown variables. For example, you may not be sure what funding you will have after a current award ends, so you create a resource development plan to try to address those gaps.

Workplans are often described down to weekly or even daily tasks. A workplan drives the project forward by giving staff specific directions on what needs to be done to achieve the intended outcomes.

A strategic plan is defined by a long-time horizon. This is simply because sometimes the information is not available to make specific plans. For example, you do not know exactly when new Requests for Proposals (RFPs) might be issued over the next year, so you cannot schedule staff to address them right now. However, you can assign staff to monitor funding announcements and have a strategy for which staff might be pulled in temporarily from other projects to contribute to an RFP response.

8.3.2.1 *Business Plan*

A business plan should be a work in progress and should be updated regularly. Even successful, growing businesses should maintain a current business plan. Your plan needs to look at:

- what you do well;
- what your market niche is;
- who your target audience is; and
- what competition you have to provide quality services to fulfill your objective.

Although NGOs working in the HIV field are different from commercial enterprises, many parameters are similar and need to be included in your business plan for you to remain competitive. One of the major challenges you may face is convincing your donors to believe in you. You need to show them that you can reach your beneficiaries and that you will make a difference over the long term, so they should continue to support you.

8.4 Developing an Effective Business Plan

To develop a successful business plan, you need to ascertain how you can be most successful. This section outlines six major aspects that you should look at to develop the most effective business plan. This guides your work moving forward and provides a marketing tool for donors to show you know your environment, your organizational capacity, and how you plan to market yourself.

1. Undertake an Environmental Scan

To start your environmental scan, answer the following questions:

- What is the situation in your operational location, and what is the context of the epidemic in your location?
- What is the demographic situation in your location and in your target population?
- What services are currently available?
- What gaps in service delivery do you hope to address?
- What other stakeholders are operating in your technical or geographical field?

Analyze Stakeholders

A critical stage of your business plan is reviewing the stakeholders with whom your organization interacts. These stakeholders can be partners, competitors, donors, or beneficiaries, and each can have a significant impact on the operation of your program. Donors provide funding for your programs; partners can extend the reach of your program and carry out activities that are outside your expertise; competitors vie for the same resources; and beneficiaries are at the heart of whether your program is a success.

You can complete an analysis of your organization's stakeholders in several different ways. One method is to map each stakeholder to classify it by its potential for threat and cooperation. Whatever the approach, stakeholder analysis can help your organization develop strategies to get the most effective support possible and reduce any obstacles to implementing your

program effectively. Can you consider the stakeholders identified through the stakeholder analysis as potential partners, competitors, or potential donors who could contribute to the success of your intervention? (Remember, donors do not only provide money. Consider donors who provide in-kind contributions, including community volunteers.)

Consider Gender
An integral part of development work, particularly related to HIV, is how men and women are each affected. USAID's approach to gender analysis is built around two key questions:

1. How will the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household (for example, roles in decisionmaking and different access to and control over resources and services) affect the work to be undertaken?

2. How will the anticipated results of the work affect women and men differently?

As part of the environmental scan, it is essential to analyze the impact of interventions on men and women. Components of a gender analysis include:

- analysis of sex-disaggregated data and information;
- assessment of roles and responsibilities/division of labor;
- consideration of access to and control over resources;
- examination of decisionmaking patterns; and
- examination of the data using a gender perspective (i.e., in the context of women and men's gender roles and relationships).

Answering these questions provides gender-disaggregated data. However, you need to not only provide analysis, but also a gender perspective, which results in a gender analysis as per the United Nations Development Program, synthesized below:

(1) Sex-Disaggregated Data + (2) Analysis + (3) A Gender Perspective = Gender Analysis

In general, all gender analysis approaches should examine the representation of men and women in a particular sector (e.g., education, health, or economic growth); how resources are distributed; and what historical and contemporary social context can explain why gender differences exist. It may also be useful to examine the historical and contemporary social context relevant to the specific sector to understand gender differences. (For more details, see Annex VI.)

2. Look at Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

To conduct a SWOT analysis, you will use all of the data and findings from your OCA, TOCA, work, and communication plans to pinpoint key themes.

The first step is to specify an objective of the organization and ask each person on the team to identify internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and challenges or threats). Give each person three cards to write three strengths, one on each card. Collect and cluster the cards to identify the main themes the team has identified. Repeat the exercise for internal weaknesses, external opportunities, and external challenges or threats, and then develop a matrix (see Figure 50).

Within each section of the SWOT, include factors that you believe will make your business a success:

- **Strengths Section**—Examples could include a superior ability to satisfy your customers' needs, highly efficient methods of delivering your service, outstanding personnel, or a key location.

- **Weaknesses Section**—Include factors that will make it hard to achieve your growth objectives, such as a lack of skilled human resources, which, with correction, you can convert into strengths.

- **Opportunities Section**—Include external factors that can assist your program, such as the government's decision to increase access to health services in your project area.

- **Threats Section**—Include external factors over which you have no control and that can adversely affect your program, such as security issues that make it hard for you to complete your assignment or changes in government legislation that affect your services and compel you to adjust your program to be competitive once again.

In writing up your SWOT analysis, highlight how you plan to consolidate the strengths, address the weaknesses so they are not constraints on your organization, and ensure that the opportunities and threats do not adversely affect your ability to perform the tasks you have outlined in your plan.

Figure 50—Example of the Types of Information to Include in a SWOT Analysis Matrix

Strengths

Sample strengths criteria
- Capacity?
- Competitive advantages?
- USPs (unique selling points)?
- Resources, assets, people?
- Experience, knowledge, data?
- Reach, awareness?
- Innovative strategies?
- Location and geography?
- Price, value, quality?
- Accreditations, qualifications, certifications?
- Cultural, attitudinal, behavioral?
- Management, succession?
- Philosophy and values?

Weaknesses

Sample weaknesses criteria
- Gaps in capacity?
- Lack of competitive strength?
- Reputation, presence, reach?
- Financials?
- Known vulnerabilities?
- Time frames, deadlines, pressures?
- Cash flow, cash drain?
- Continuity, supply chain robustness?
- Effects on core activities, distraction?
- Reliability of data, plan predictability?
- Morale, commitment, leadership?
- Processes, systems, etc?
- Management, succession?

Opportunities

Sample opportunities criteria
- Sector developments?
- Competitors' vulnerabilities?
- Development or sector trends?
- Technology development and innovation?
- Global influences?
- New sectors, vertical, horizontal?
- New USPs?
- Tactics: e.g., innovation, major contracts/awards?
- Business and program development?
- Information and research?
- Partnerships, agencies, distribution?

Threats

Sample threats criteria
- Political issues?
- Legislative issues?
- Environment/climate change?
- Competitors?
- Sector demands?
- New technologies, services, ideas?
- Vital contracts and partners?
- Sustaining internal capacity?
- Insurmountable weaknesses?
- Loss of key staff?
- Sustainable financial resources?
- Economy—U.S., global?

3. Review Your Organization & Management Structure

To review your current organizational and management structures, you should look at:

- Your NGO's organizational chart with a narrative description showing clear lines of authority

- A description of the ownership of your NGO and any links that you have to parent organizations or to other partnerships that directly influence how your organization is managed

- Profiles of your management team:
    - who does what in the organization, and who is responsible for which part of the portfolio;
    - the background of your senior managers, and why they are part of your management team; and
    - what unique education, skills, and work experience will add value to your organization to allow you to address identified needs

- The qualifications of your Board of Directors—their names, positions, background and historical and future contributions to your organizations success. Board members can provide the skills and connections you do not have. Where finances are the principle constraint to growth, many organizations have Board members with the fundraising capacity to bring in resources to support and expand the organization

- The legal status of your organization. Donors do not wish to find out you are not registered in a country or you have historical tax liabilities that may adversely affect your ability to provide the services

4. Develop a Marketing Plan

There is no single way to approach a marketing strategy. Your strategy should be part of an ongoing self-evaluation process and unique to your organization. Your growth strategy might include an internal strategy, such as how to increase your human resources; a horizontal strategy (increasing geographic spread into new areas); or a vertical strategy where you would continue to operate in the same geographic areas but provide a wider range of different services to your target populations.

An integral part of your marketing plan is a communication strategy. This outlines how you are going to reach your customers. Examples of the parameters you need to consider appear in figure 51.

Figure 51—Components of an External Communication Strategy*

	Strategic Communications Practices	Quality Criteria/Standards
Strategy	a. Identify the vision	The communications vision is aligned with, but distinct from, the organization's overall mission.
	b. Choose goals and outcomes	Goals and outcomes are well defined, measurable, and help guide a defined plan of action.
	c. Select target audiences	Audiences are specific (not the general public) and include key decisionmakers or individuals with influence on the issue.
	d. Develop messages	Messages are specific, clear, persuasive, reflect audience values, and include a solution or course of action.
	e. Identify credible messengers	Target audience see messengers as credible, and you can recruit them and make them available to the cause.
	f. Choose communications mechanisms/outlets	Outlets (e.g., in the air [media] and on the ground) are chosen for their access and availability to target audiences.
	g. Scan the context and competition	Risks and contextual variables that can affect communications success are identified and factored into planning when possible.
Implementation	h. Develop effective materials	Materials are developed in attractive, accessible, and varied formats for maximum exposure and visibility.
	i. Build valuable partnerships	Linkages exist with internal and external stakeholders who can help align with and carry the message.
	j. Train messengers	Internal and external messengers are trained in key messages and deliver them consistently.
	k. Conduct steady outreach	Outreach and dissemination to audiences through multiple outlets is regular and sustained.
	l. Monitor and evaluate	Activities and outcomes are monitored and evaluated regularly for purposes of accountability and continuous improvement.
Support and Integration	m. Support communications at the leadership level	Management understands and supports communications as an integral part of organizational viability and success.
	n. Earmark sufficient resources	Fundraising regularly includes dedicated resources for communications practice.
	o. Integrate communications throughout the organization	Communications is seen as an integral part of every organizational project or strategy.
	p. Involve staff at all levels	Communications is not seen as an isolated function; most if not all staff members have some knowledge of and/or participation in communications efforts.

* Adapted from *Strategic Communications Audits.* Prepared for the Communications Consortium Media Center, Julia Coffman, October 2004.

5. Indicate the Services You Provide

Consider the following questions when examining the services you provide:

- Who is your target audience for your services for this objective? In a PMTCT project, this would be women of childbearing age who are also likely to be HIV positive and who need services to try and prevent HIV transmission to their children.

- What is the geographic spread of your operations? (How many communities districts and provinces do you work in?)

- How do your activities fit within the priorities of the host government and the community in which you currently serve?

- How will you address other needs of the community? (For more information on indicating the services you provide, visit http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/writeabusinessplan/serv_bp_servprod.html.)

6. Review Your Funding Streams and Capacity

In this aspect of your business plan, it is important to think about your current budget and what budget amount your organization could manage in the next three to five years. You should back up this projection with historical financial data, such as balance sheets and cash flow statements for each year you have been in business. This shows your capacity to grow and run a larger or smaller size organization.

Also consider your core staff (the number that is essential to run your organization), and what additional staff would be required to address different models of growth (how you will secure and retain these staff).

After examining these six aspects of your organization and developing the body of your business plan, finish with an executive summary and distribute it carefully. Given that there is proprietary information within the document, you should control the distribution of any copies by keeping a record of who receives one.

8.5 Developing a Strategic Plan
A Never-Ending Plan

A workplan has clear start and end dates. As your organization completes tasks, it checks them off and archives them. A strategic plan, however, is never complete. It is always working to bridge the gap between your current projects and the future. Even as you bridge one gap, the next one appears on the horizon. The good news is, you do not need a whole new plan. Rather, you can build on your business plan and adjust your next set of goals.

In this way, your strategic plan provides your overarching framework and acts as the hub to which all other plans in your organization are linked, including individual workplans, your capacity-building plan (refer to your OCA and TOCA—see Chapter 4) and your marketing and communication plan (see Chapter 3), all of which should be working together to ensure that you are able to meet future objectives and demonstrate your impact to new and existing donors, partners, and beneficiary communities.

Your strategic plan allows you to see the big picture of future resource availability and ensures that your marketing and capacity-building plans are properly aligned with and support your overall organizational objectives.

8.5.1 Taking on a Strategic Planning Initiative

There are various methods for conducting organizational planning, but at its simplest, it is a participatory process that examines your vision statement, mission statement, values, strategic objectives, and goals. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, they are not identical. They represent a framework to define and communicate the purpose of your organization, starting from the highest, long-term level (vision), down to the very specific, short-term level (activities). Essentially, you are answering these basic questions:

- What do we hope to achieve (vision)?
- What is our purpose (mission)?
- What do we believe (values)?
- What will we do to get there (goals)?
- Where are we now?
- Where are we going (objectives)?
- How will we get there (activities)?
- How will we know whether we have arrived?

Vision

An organization's vision is often an inspiring statement of what the organization is striving to achieve. NGOs often focus on the problem they hope to solve by painting a picture of a vision they have for the future after the problem has been solved or mitigated.

Example: "XYZ NGO envisions our community free of poverty and hunger, where everyone has access to basic education, health care, and economic opportunities."

Mission Statement

Your mission statement tends to summarize the actions your organization is going to take to make the vision a reality.

Example: "Our mission is to fight poverty and hunger in our community by building education, health care, and economic development programs that meet the needs of the community."

Values

An organization's values are its deeply held beliefs that shape the organization's actions. Your organization may have several core values.

Examples: "Our organization believes in providing equal opportunities for everyone in the community, regardless of gender, religious beliefs, or ethnicity."

"Our organization believes that all children have the right to basic education."

"Our organization believes that our priorities must be driven by and in harmony with the desires of the community."

Strategic Goals

Strategic goals are the key approaches an organization will use to accomplish its mission and drive toward its vision. While your vision, mission, and values may never change, your strategic goals will likely evolve every three to five years.

Example: "To accomplish our mission, our organization will:

- Remove the barriers to education and expand educational opportunities for all,
- Improve access to health care services, and
- Expand economic opportunities through training and providing microloans to entrepreneurs."

Objectives

Finally, your organization should determine how to accomplish its strategic goals by developing objectives that are specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and time-based (SMART.):

- **Specific**—Is there a description of a precise or specific behavior/outcome that is linked to a rate, number, percentage, or frequency?
- **Measurable**—Is there a reliable way to measure progress toward achieving the objective?
- **Achievable**—Are we attempting too much? With a reasonable amount of effort, can we do what we set out to do?
- **Realistic**—Do we have the resources—staff, money, materials, etc.—to have a real impact?
- **Time-Based**—Is there a clearly stated or defined finish and/or a start date?

Sample SMART objectives:

- By November 30, 2010, conduct a 10-session behavior-change program reaching at least [X number of] girls ages [Y to Z] who are at risk for HIV.
- By the end of the calendar year, reduce the average time [specific type of] patients wait to see a nurse from [X] minutes to [Y] minutes.
- By August 2010, develop an at-a-glance fact sheet and meet with 3 local employers (workforce fewer than 15 individuals) to discuss the benefits of offering HIV/AIDS awareness sessions to employees.

Not Very SMART objectives:

- Eliminate HIV in Smithville Province within a year.

  - Not achievable
- Reduce the amount of unprotected sex by June 2011.

  - Not specific or measurable
- Change attitudes about condom use.

  - Not specific, measurable, or time-bound
- Increase HIV knowledge by participating in local arts festival.

  - Not specific, measurable, achievable, time-bound, or realistic

You have examined many of these aspects as you developed your organization. You need to review them from time to time to determine whether they are still appropriate. For your business or strategic plan to work, it must be able to help you answer questions about your organization's future, such as:

- What do we want to do in the future (types of activities, geographic location, beneficiaries, etc.)?
- How will we fund our work?
- How will we maintain services to meet existing community needs?
- How can we expand to address other needs in the community?

How Does This Help My Program?

Developing a business and strategic plan can help an organization manage the many uncertainties it faces while fulfilling its mission. It can provide clear points of reference to help inform decisions about how to shape programs and assign human and financial resources in response to changes in its operating environment. Furthermore, if an organization is seeking funding from donors, having a business plan and a strategic plan in place will help it stand out as an organization that has a comprehensive grasp of all aspects of its work, including programs and services, management and operations, finances and fundraising, and governance.

As stated earlier, you can update the business plan regularly—every two or three years. It is often managed internally and shared with the Board for approval. A strategic plan involves a broader cross-section of the organization, including the Board, and normally takes several activities over several weeks to reach a conclusion. As already stated, revising the strategic plan is done infrequently with a suggested interval between revisions of five years. Before getting started on a strategic plan, consider the following tips:

- ***Talk with other organizations.***

  Network with organizations to find out how they went about their strategic planning. Ask who helped with their plan, what has worked, and what they would do differently next time.

- ***Read online resources.***

  Online resources alone may not be sufficient to guide your process, but they should give you a good sense of what to expect. You may even find tools you like, and you can search for a consultant with specific experience using those tools.

- ***Assign an internal point person or team.***

  Create a core strategic planning team. As with the OCA, involve a core team that includes representatives from the organization's management, administration, finance, and technical departments and, when possible, Board members.

Although your organization may have someone on staff with the right expertise to guide a team through an in-depth examination of the organization, it is often preferable to have a consultant who has no vested interest in the organization. An outsider can bring an objective, fresh view of your organization and the perspective of what has worked for other organizations facing similar issues. If you do decide to have someone in your organization conduct the strategic planning rather than a consultant, you should ask the following questions: 1) Is that person able to be unbiased in looking at both the strengths

and weaknesses of the organization? 2) Can that person diplomatically and effectively guide the group to consensus? 3) Can that person manage conflict that might arise during an examination of the organization?

If you hire a consultant to guide your strategic planning process, you might want to assign an internal point person or team to work with the consultant and to manage implementation of the strategic plan in moving the organization forward. That way, when the consultant finishes, the strategic plan can be left with the point person or team who understands the plan and what is expected after the planning process ends.

- *Involve your Board.*

  Strategic planning is a process the management team should undertake with the approval of, and oversight from, the Board of directors. In some cases, the Board may want to be directly involved in some or all of the strategic planning activities.

- *Review your mission and vision statements.*

  Every organization has a purpose. For NPI grantees, it is providing services to address the HIV pandemic. Although this purpose is not likely to change, organizations may change their way of thinking and approach to a problem as time goes on and they implement activities. While one does not want to change a strategy continually, organizations should periodically review their mission and vision statements. This is an opportunity to bring staff together and align the mission of the employees with the overall mission of the organization.

- *Be sure your outcomes are clear.*

  Each consultant or facilitator will have his or her own approach. However, be sure the consultant and internal point person(s) clearly understand what the outcomes will be and what their expected contributions are so there will be no confusion later.

8.6 Strategic Planning Online Resources

There are many excellent resources available online to help guide your strategic planning process. You may find those listed in Figure 52 to be helpful.

Figure 52—Sample Online Resources on Strategic Planning

Tools and Resources	Description
Developing Strategic Plans (pdf) http://tinyurl.com/lqqzsb	A Tool for community- and faith-based organizations from the Core Initiative and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2007
Strategic Planning Chapter (pdf) http://tinyurl.com/nr7j6g	From the publication, *Capacity Building for Local NGOs: A Guidance Manual for Good Practice*, published by the Catholic Institute for international Relations, 2005
Strategic Planning (in nonprofit or for-profit organizations) http://tinyurl.com/csrhfo	Adapted from *The Field Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning and Facilitation* by Carter McNamara, Authenticity Consulting, 2008
Strategic Planning in Smaller Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide for the Process http://tinyurl.com/kma7of	This short guide is meant to help Board members and the staff of smaller nonprofit organizations develop strategic plans to strengthen and sustain their organization

8.7 Summary

Sustainability is about making sure your work today has the greatest possible long-term impact. That can mean designing sustainable interventions the community can manage down the road; it can mean planning strategies to put your organization in the best possible situation to secure future funding; and it can mean telling your donors, partners, and beneficiaries how your work has affected the lives of those you have served.

It is not necessary to use all of the methods described here; they are simply available tools and strategies many other organizations have used. But the activities and processes described may be valuable in getting your organization to prioritize sustainability and incorporate it into your everyday work.