Literature Review

Developing a Conceptual Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Community Coalitions Post-Federal Funding

NORC at the University of Chicago

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary **1**

A. Introduction 1
B. Summary of Major Findings 1
C. Conclusions and Implications 4

Chapter One: Introduction **5**

A. Overview 5
B. Purpose and Research Questions 5
C. Background on CAP/HCAP 6
D. Methodology 6
E. Structure of the Report 7

Chapter Two: An Overview of Community Coalitions **8**

A. Functions of Community Coalitions 8
B. Theories of Community Coalitions 9
C. Characteristics of Community Coalitions 13

Chapter Three: Assessing the Impacts of Community Coalitions **17**

A. Challenges of and Approaches for Assessing the Impacts of Community Coalitions 17
B. Impacts of Community Coalition Interventions at the Individual, Systems, and Policy Levels 19

Chapter Four: Sustainability of Community Coalitions **21**

A. Defining Sustainability 21
B. Conceptual Models of Program Sustainability in Community Coalitions and Partnerships 23
C. The Role of Evaluation in Supporting Sustainability in Community Coalitions 29
D. Predictors of Sustainability in Community Coalitions 31
E. Barriers to Sustainability in Community Coalitions 34

Chapter Five: A Conceptual Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Community Coalitions Once Initial Federal Funding has Expired **36**

A. Defining Sustainability in Community Coalitions 36
B. A Conceptual Framework of the Sustainability of Community Coalitions 43
C. Measures for Assessing the Sustainability of the HCAP Community Coalitions 48

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications **50**

A. A Model for Conceptualizing Sustainability 50
B. Pragmatic Implications for Community Coalitions, Evaluators, and Funders 50
C. Policy Implications 52
D. Areas for Future Research 52

Table of Exhibits

Exhibit 1.1: Literature Review Methodology 7

Exhibit 2.1: Community Coalition Action Theory Model 10

Exhibit 2.2: Dimensions of Community Empowerment Model 11

Exhibit 2.3: Framework for Collaborative Empowerment 12

Exhibit 4.1: Selected Operational Definitions of Sustainability in Health Programs 22

Exhibit 4.2: Sustainability Conceptual Model in Community Health Partnerships 24

Exhibit 4.3: Sustainability Framework 26

Exhibit 4.4: Model of Community-Based Program Sustainability 26

Exhibit 4.5: Model for Evaluating the Sustainability of Community Health Initiatives .. 27

Exhibit 4.6: A Framework for Conceptualizing Program Sustainability 28

Exhibit 4.7: Operationalizing Sustainability as an Outcome 30

Exhibit 5.1: Sustainability of the Community Coalition 37

Exhibit 5.2: Sustainability of the Community Coalition's Activities 42

Exhibit 5.3: A Conceptual Framework for the Assessment of Community Coalition Sustainability 46

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Executive Summary

A. Introduction

The federal government has increasingly used community coalitions as a programmatic approach to address emerging community health issues. Community coalitions are composed of diverse organizations that form an alliance in order to pursue a common goal. The activities of community coalitions include advocacy, outreach, education, prevention, service delivery, capacity building, empowerment, community action, and systems change. The presumption is that successful community coalitions will be able to identify new resources to continue their activities and to sustain their impact in the community over time. Given the large investment in community coalitions, researchers are beginning to systematically explore the factors that affect the sustainability of community coalitions once their initial funding ends.

The purpose of this literature review is to summarize and synthesize the existing literature in order to identify how researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have defined and measured sustainability for community coalitions. This report is part of a larger study that is funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As a component of the ASPE study, this literature review explores the constructs of community coalitions, their impacts, and sustainability.

This literature review also includes a conceptual framework that can be used to assess the sustainability of community coalitions. The conceptual framework will guide the ASPE study, which uses the experiences of the community coalitions funded by the Community Access Program (CAP)/Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP) to explore sustainability once initial federal funding has ended.

B. Summary of Major Findings

An Overview of Community Coalitions

The literature highlights three functions of community coalitions that make them unique from other types of community organizations and entities. First, community coalitions create collaborative capacity among diverse organizations, including health care providers, community groups, grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, universities, and government agencies. Second, community coalitions help their communities to develop the capacity to build social capital that can be applied to other health and social issues. Third, community coalitions are catalysts or agents of change at the local level, advocating for stronger policies, influencing individual health or behavior, and delivering services, among other activities. The functions of community coalitions are also the building blocks of two important theories of community coalitions, the Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT) and Empowerment Theory.

The CCAT and Empowerment Theory provide useful frameworks for understanding community coalitions and the factors that affect their ability to successfully perform their core functions. The theories highlight the outcomes of coalitions, ranging from community capacity to health and social outcomes. They also demonstrate that coalitions must react to the needs of the community and adapt their collaborative activities according to new community conditions. An assessment

of the theories of community coalitions and a review of the body of literature on community coalitions and partnerships yielded six characteristics that can affect coalition functioning and effectiveness. These characteristics include: leadership, membership, structure, operations and processes, strategic vision, and contextual factors. These characteristics can affect the development of community coalitions and their ability to achieve their goals and create change.

Assessing the Impacts of Community Coalitions

There is a limited body of literature examining the impacts of community coalitions on health outcomes. Among published research, studies have failed to systematically assess the effectiveness of using community coalitions as a means to improve health. Among individual studies that did assess effectiveness, the results were mixed. Some coalitions were able to demonstrate significant, positive effects on health outcomes, while others were unable to demonstrate any effects on health outcomes. Exploring the impacts of community coalitions generally, and in the health arena specifically, is complicated by the multifactorial nature of the work coalitions undertake (e.g., attempting to address HIV related services, homelessness, and access to primary care simultaneously through different activities), as well as the tendency of coalitions to continually revise activities to respond to community feedback. Traditional program evaluation methods are often ill-suited to capture the dynamic nature of community coalitions.

The lack of well-established evaluation methodologies that address the unique characteristics of coalitions has led some researchers to focus on process evaluation, though policymakers and funders continue to seek direct evidence of community coalitions' positive impacts on health. There are however, several conceptual models for evaluating community coalitions, based on both traditional and participatory evaluation methods, which offer potential for improving systematic evaluation of community coalitions.

Sustainability of Community Coalitions

The concept of sustainability is germane to research on both community-based programs and community coalitions. However, a consensus definition of sustainability has not emerged in either body of research. The primary divergence among definitions in both bodies of literature relates to the unit of analysis—what is being sustained. Some definitions focus on sustaining the program or coalition, while others focus on sustaining the activities and impacts of the program or coalition.

Researchers have developed conceptual models and frameworks to define sustainability in the context of community coalitions. Six conceptual models and frameworks have shaped the literature on the sustainability of community coalitions, offering unique ways to measure the sustainability of the coalitions and their benefits to the communities they serve. Collectively, the models demonstrate the importance of measuring both the sustainability of the coalition and the coalition’s activities separately. The models also highlight different coalition-specific and contextual factors that affect sustainability. Many of the same factors that contribute to the effectiveness and functionality of community coalitions also facilitate their outcomes, impacts, and sustainability.

Several important predictors of sustainability in community coalitions are leadership, membership diversity, history of collaboration, structure, resource diversity, sustainability plans,

and community buy-in. Barriers to sustainability include governance challenges, structural issues, a lack of funding for core operations, turf battles, leader and member turnover, and shifting priorities.

A Conceptual Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Community Coalitions Once Initial Federal Funding Has Expired

Based on the findings from the literature, a conceptual framework of sustainability in community coalitions was developed to guide the ASPE assessment of sustainability using the experiences of the community coalitions funded by CAP/HCAP. Given the two perspectives in the literature emphasizing the sustainability of the coalition or the sustainability of its activities and impacts, the conceptual model defines a sustained community coalition as an alliance of three or more organizations that is addressing one or more of the original goals of the coalition. The original goals of the community coalitions are those that were being addressed when the coalition was initially federally funded. In order to address their original goals, coalitions may conduct a variety of activities that change over time. Through this conceptual framework, it will be possible to assess the sustainability of the coalition itself independently from the sustainability of the coalition's activities.

Of the coalitions that have been sustained, some are fully sustained while others are partially sustained. Some coalitions may have been expanded. Post initial federal funding, some community coalitions will not be sustained—either because they have dissolved due to a lack of resources, conflicts, or other reasons; actively disbanded because they have achieved their original goal(s); and/or they were no longer needed in the community. The conceptual model incorporates these tenets into a framework for assessing sustainability.

In the framework, there are a number of enabling characteristics that affect whether a coalition will be sustained over time: effective leadership, diversity of membership, structure, vision-focus balance, resource stability and diversity, and evaluation. These characteristics were selected because they were identified in the literature as facilitators of coalition effectiveness and/or sustainability. The enabling characteristics impact the extent to which the coalition continues to address its original goals, which range from delivering programs or services to conducting systems change and policy advocacy activities, among others.

In addition to enabling characteristics, the framework also includes the coalition's sustainability actions. Given that the coalition's initial funding has ended, it may engage in a number of actions in order to sustain itself—from creating a sustainability plan to identifying homes for programs and services. The intermediate outcomes in this model are the sustainability of the coalition, the sustainability of the coalition's activities, and in some cases, the expansion of the coalition.

The coalition may have long-term outcomes regardless whether the coalition itself has been sustained. The impacts are the cumulative effects of these outcomes in the community. For the purposes of this assessment, there are impacts at the individual level (i.e., changes in health or behavior), systems level (i.e., changes in infrastructure or capacity in the community), or policy level (i.e., changes in local, state, and federal policies). Contextual factors such as the political environment can also affect the sustainability of the community coalition and its ability to create these outcomes.

C. Conclusions and Implications

While there is no standard approach for defining and conceptualizing sustainability, the range of definitions and conceptual models reveal that the emphasis can either be placed on the continuation of the community coalition or on the coalition's activities and impacts. Findings from this literature review demonstrate that funders of community coalitions and those who lead them must determine if the ultimate goal is to maintain a formal alliance of organizations that increases the community's capacity to address problems, or, to develop and institutionalize programs and activities within the existing system. This literature review adapted components of existing conceptual frameworks to develop a conceptual model that provides a framework for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions in terms of their structure and their intended impacts. The conceptual model will be used to explore and document the extent to which the CAP/HCAP community coalitions have been able to sustain themselves and continue to impact their communities after their federal CAP/HCAP funding ended.

The conceptual model developed in this literature review has a number of useful elements for community coalitions, evaluators, and funders. It will be useful to community coalitions that are interested in planning for sustainability. Coalitions may adapt and repurpose the model to reflect their program goals and activities, as well as their vision for sustainability. Evaluators may use the model to test hypotheses about the effects of coalition characteristics and capacities on intermediate and long-term outcomes (e.g., coalitions with a diverse membership are more likely to achieve health and social outcomes than other coalitions). The conceptual model also provides a method for evaluators to assess why some community coalitions have not been sustained over time. Finally, the conceptual model can help funders of community coalitions and programs think about the efficient use of their resources in achieving their objectives, and about how they measure success (e.g., the sustainability of the coalition, or its activities and impacts).

The literature review and conceptual model have broader implications for policy. Policymakers may use the findings from this study to develop standards for sustainability planning across programs and projects, to set realistic and measureable expectations of sustainability post-funding, and to consider whether there is a role for the federal government in sustaining community coalitions.

Additional research on community coalitions is necessary to identify best practices in funding that would encourage sustainability. Research should also explore the combinations of coalition factors across models to better understand the characteristics, capacities, and conditions that foster community coalition sustainability.

Chapter One: Introduction

A. Overview

Community coalitions have increasingly been used as a vehicle to foster improvements in community health. A coalition is traditionally defined as "a group of individuals representing diverse organizations, factions or constituencies who agree to work together to achieve a common goal" (Feighery & Rogers, 1990). Community coalitions differ from other types of coalitions in that they include professional and grassroots members that are committed to working together to influence long-term health and welfare practices in their community (Butterfoss, 2007). Additionally, given their ability to leverage existing resources in the community and convene diverse organizations, community coalitions connote a type of collaboration that is considered to be sustainable over time (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1993).

Funders of community coalitions include governmental and non-governmental entities. The federal government often provides short-term initial funding to community coalitions to work toward important health goals that cannot be achieved by a single community organization. Foundations also frequently fund community coalitions and other collaborative partnerships to address key social issues. The presumption is that successful community coalitions will be able to identify new resources to continue their activities and to sustain their impacts in the community over time. Understanding the extent to which coalitions can be sustained post-funding will be important as the federal government continues to invest in innovative community-based strategies to improve the health outcomes of Americans.

B. Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this literature review is to summarize and synthesize the existing literature on this topic in order to identify how researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have defined and measured sustainability for community coalitions. This report is part of a larger study that is funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As a component of the ASPE study, this literature review explores the constructs of community coalitions, their impacts, and sustainability, focusing on the intersection of literature on sustainability and community coalitions. Key research questions addressed in the literature review include:

- What are the current theories, research, and best practices of community coalitions identified in the literature?
- What are the impacts of community coalitions identified in the literature?
- How is sustainability defined, measured, and evaluated in the literature?

In addition, this literature review will serve as the foundation for developing a framework that may be used to assess the sustainability of community coalitions in the future. The conceptual framework will guide the ASPE study, which uses the experiences of the community coalitions funded by the Community Access Program (CAP)/Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP) to explore sustainability.

C. Background on CAP/HCAP

One of the largest federal investments to strengthen local health care safety nets through community coalitions was the Community Access Program (CAP) and its successor, the Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP). From 2000 through 2005, HCAP provided grants to local communities to strengthen the health care safety net that serves the uninsured and underinsured. Congressional funding for CAP began with a $25 million appropriation in the fiscal year (FY) 2000 budget that was used to make grants to 23 coalitions of community organizations and safety net providers. Additional funding provided to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for the program included approximately $500 million from FY 2001 through FY 2005. In total, HRSA awarded 260 grants in 45 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Funding for the program was ended in FY 2006.

One of the ways in which CAP/HCAP distinguished itself from other federal safety net programs was by requiring collaboration. Namely, grants were given to consortia of local providers, rather than individual institutions. The program sought to overcome the fragmented nature of safety net care by bringing together the major players of a community and providing funds to address problems that could not be adequately addressed by individual providers or organizations. The CAP/HCAP-funded coalitions focused on activities such as service integration, expansion of the delivery system, cultural competency, provider education, community and patient education, disease detection and prevention, service integration, and new coverage plans for the uninsured, among others.

Understanding the sustainability of community coalitions is particularly important today given new federal investments in clinical and community-based strategies through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. For example, $373 million of ARRA money will fund community consortia to address the leading causes of preventable death and disability under the Communities Putting Prevention to Work initiative. A more complete understanding of the factors that impede and facilitate coalition sustainability will assist successful coalitions to continue this important work after their initial federal funding ends.

D. Methodology

An extensive review of the literature in the fields of public health and social sciences (particularly sociology, community psychology, and political science) was conducted in order to identify peer-reviewed articles, reports, and white papers. Boolean search techniques were utilized to conduct these searches—maximizing the number of pertinent articles and minimizing extraneous material. References from relevant papers were used to identify additional sources. Exhibit 1.1 briefly summarizes the literature search strategy.

Exhibit 1.1: Literature Review Methodology

	Sociology/Community Psychology/Political Science	Public Health
Search Engines	Academic ASAP, JSTOR, PsychINFO, SSRN/ERPN, Google Scholar	PubMed, JSTOR, Google Scholar
Keywords	Community coalition, collaborative, consortium, community partnerships, sustainability, maintenance, institutionalization, measurement, impact, assessment, evaluation, outcomes, capacity, model, theory, framework, best practice	

E. Structure of the Report

The remainder of this literature review is organized into six chapters. Chapter Two, ***An Overview of Community Coalitions***, reviews the functions and key theories of community coalitions, and also identifies characteristics that facilitate coalition functioning and effectiveness. Chapter Three, ***Assessing the Impacts of Community Coalitions,*** discusses methodological challenges in evaluating the impacts of community coalitions and highlights some examples of coalitions that have demonstrated impacts. Chapter Four, ***Sustainability of Community Coalitions*** includes operational definitions of sustainability of community coalitions, models, predictors, barriers, and the role of evaluation in promoting sustainability. Chapter Five, ***A Conceptual Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Community Coalitions Once Initial Federal Funding has Expired***, provides a conceptual framework for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions. Finally, Chapter Six, ***Conclusions and Implications***, summarizes major conclusions and discusses the pragmatic and policy implications of the findings.

Chapter Two: An Overview of Community Coalitions

Community coalitions bring together community groups, grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, universities, government agencies, and other organizations. The activities of community coalitions are as diverse as their memberships, including advocacy, outreach, education, assistance, prevention, service delivery, capacity building, empowerment, community action, and systems change.

Chapter Two discusses the core functions of community coalitions and explains why coalitions are different from other organizations and entities. This chapter also explores two prominent theories of community coalitions that describe the different factors that can affect coalition formation and functionality. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of several coalition characteristics that were identified in the theories of community coalitions and the literature, and with a discussion of why each of these characteristics can impact coalition effectiveness.

A. Functions of Community Coalitions

The literature highlights three functions of community coalitions that make them unique from other types of community organizations and entities. These functions contribute to their effectiveness in addressing their goals and creating improvements in their communities.

Create collaborative capacity. Community coalitions create collaborative capacity among coalition members, within member relationships, and through the organizational structure and programs of the coalition (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001). By convening different organizations, community coalitions mobilize community resources to address a common goal (Butterfoss et al., 1993). Unlike other types of community entities, community coalitions are purposefully structured to foster collaboration (Butterfoss, 2007).

Build community capacity. Community coalitions help their communities develop the capacity to build social capital that can be applied to other health and social issues (Fawcett et al., 1995). Coalitions are able to build capacity because they facilitate interaction across numerous sectors of a community, which mobilizes human resources and better positions the community to respond to social needs (Fawcett et al., 1995).

Foster change at the local level. Unlike other coalitions, community coalitions are catalysts or agents of change at the local level (Fawcett et al., 1995). Compared to large-scale and state coalitions, which are positioned to impact higher-level policies, community coalitions are more focused on the implementation of services at the local level (Butterfoss, 2007). Thus, community coalitions are in the position to bring about social change and improve the health of communities (Wolff, 2001). Community coalitions are adept at creating change because they often represent the diversity of the community and include both professional and grassroots organizations (Butterfoss, 2007). Additionally, research has shown that strong multi-organizational working relationships increase opportunities for integrated service delivery and stronger local systems (Vicary, Doebler, Bridger, Gurgevich, & Deike, 1996). They foster changes through a variety of activities, including creating new programs or services, developing new or more coordinated systems or infrastructure, advocating for stronger policies, influencing individual health or behavior, and disseminating products or materials, among others.

Community coalitions' ability to create collaborative capacity, build community capacity, and foster change at the local level distinguishes them from other organizations and entities. These functions are also the building blocks of two important theories of community coalitions, which are discussed next.

B. Theories of Community Coalitions

Theory-based approaches attempt to identify the conditions needed for community coalitions to create sustainable community change. They also help to explain why some coalitions are successful in addressing their goals and others are not. In addition, theory-based approaches are integral to the evaluation and improvement of community coalitions.

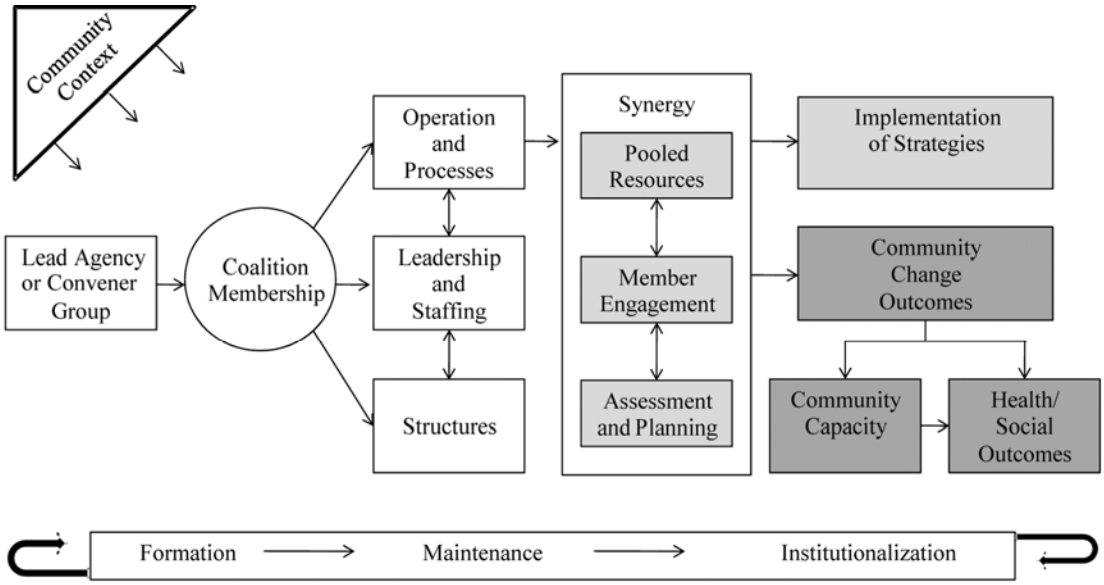
Two prominent theories of community coalitions are the Community Coalition Action Theory and Empowerment Theory. These theory-based frameworks illustrate the different stages of community coalition formation and the dimensions and factors that can facilitate and impede a community coalition's ability to address its goals.

The Community Coalition Action Theory. The predominate theory of community coalitions is the Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT) (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). The CCAT highlights several important factors that affect a community coalition's ability to conduct its core functions of creating collaborative capacity, building community capacity, and fostering change at the local level. The CCAT is viewed as an important framework for building and evaluating coalitions.

The CCAT builds on a number of existing models and frameworks including the Community Organization and Development Model (Braithwaite, Murphy, Lythcott, and Blumenthal, 1989); the Framework for Partnerships for Community Development (Habana-Hafner, Reed, & Associates, 1989); the Framework of Organization Viability (Katz & Kahn, 1978); the Community Coalition Model (Butterfoss et al., 1993); the Health Promotion and Community Development Model (Francisco, Paine, & Fawcett, 1993); the Typology of Community Organization and Community Building (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2005); and the Model of Community Health Governance (Lasker & Weiss, 2003). Together these frameworks have informed the CCAT's presentation of the stages of development and implementation, core components of effective coalitions, and the interaction of context and outcomes that impact a coalition's formation and success.

The CCAT models the progression of community coalitions from formation to institutionalization and includes a feedback mechanism that loops back to earlier steps in response to new issues and changes in community context (Exhibit 2.1). The theory takes into account the numerous factors which impact community coalitions, such as the community's social and political climate, history, and values.

Exhibit 2.1: Community Coalition Action Theory Model



Source: Recreated from Butterfoss, 2007

The CCAT begins in the Formation stage, where the **lead agency** or convener group builds a collaboration to respond to a particular community need or mandate. The lead agency identifies and recruits the coalition **membership**, and leaders are selected to develop the coalition's operations and processes and structures. **Operations and processes** are the coalition's mechanisms for communication among staff and members, decision-making, and conflict management. **Structures** are the formal rules and procedures that facilitate the coalition's activities. These components make **synergy** within the coalition more likely.

With members and systems in place, the coalition then goes through the Maintenance stage, which involves the pooling of resources to maintain its activities, the engagement of members, and effective planning strategies. Finally, community coalitions move into the Institutionalization stage, in which successful coalition **strategies**, such as community policies, practices, and other activities can facilitate **community change outcomes**. Community change outcomes can increase **community capacity** (i.e., the community's ability to respond to its own needs) and create **health and social outcomes** (e.g., reductions in mortality, progress towards social goals). The community coalition may institutionalize its activities within the community to build community capacity. Throughout this process, coalitions may return to earlier stages as a means of responding to changes in the coalition or community. The **community context** can affect the coalition at any stage.

The CCAT introduces several important coalition characteristics (e.g., leadership, membership, structure) that affect a community coalition's ability to foster changes in the community. The theory highlights the idea that a coalition's strategies can create community capacity outcomes as well as health and social outcomes.

Empowerment Theory. Empowerment Theory explores the process of gaining influence over the conditions that matter to people who share communities, experiences, and concerns (Fawcett et al., 1995). By definition, Empowerment Theory is central to the core functions of community coalitions: creating collaborative capacity, building community capacity, and fostering change at the local level. Empowerment Theory suggests that community coalitions empower their member organizations to collaborate effectively and their communities to build the social capital necessary to address emerging issues. Additionally, this theory focuses on the different factors that facilitate or impede a community collaborative's capacity to bring about community change.

Interest in empowerment as a research concept has evolved gradually since the 1970s and is now a mainstream multidisciplinary concept. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) highlighted two synthesized definitions of empowerment:

1. An intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources.
2. A process by which people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community, and a critical understanding of their environment.

Building off of the empowerment concept, Fawcett et al. (1995) developed a model of community empowerment and a framework for the process of empowerment in collaborative partnerships. This model and framework provide an understanding of Empowerment Theory in relation to community coalitions. The Community Empowerment Model consists of three dimensions: **person or group**, **environmental**, and **empowerment capacity and outcomes** (Exhibit 2.2). The factors in each dimension can interact in various ways to foster or hinder a partnership or coalition's capacity to impact the community and create change.

Exhibit 2.2: Dimensions of Community Empowerment Model

Dimension	Factors
Person or Group	• Experience and competence of individual leaders • Group's knowledge of community, initiative, problem • Group's structure and capacity to develop a strategic plan and plan for goals
Environmental	• Social and/or environmental resistance and conflict • Support and financial resources • Cultural values, policies, laws
Empowerment Capacity and Outcome	• Ability to influence programs, policies, and outcomes related to the mission

Source: Adapted from Fawcett et al., 1995.

Person or group factors. The competence of the collaborative's leadership can play an important role in the functioning of the collaborative partnership. The partnership's knowledge

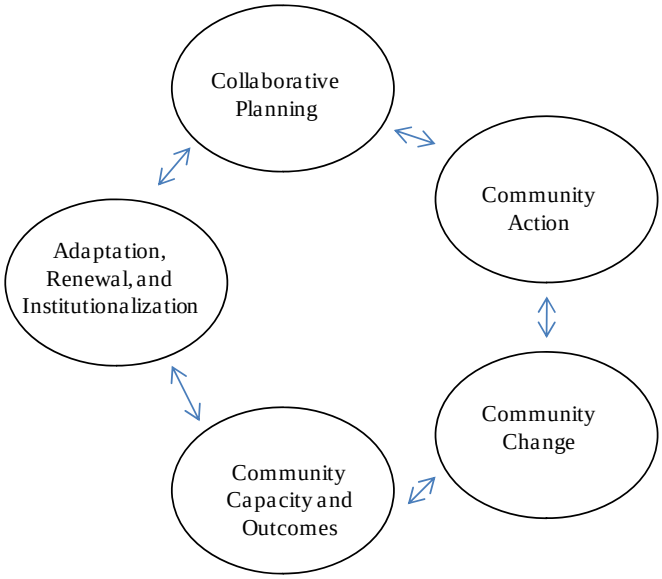
and recognition of the community and its challenges, or its structure and capacity, may also impede or facilitate empowerment capacity.

Environmental factors. The environment can affect a community collaborative's capacity to create changes. For example, if there is a high degree of conflict in the environment due to social issues or cultural values, it may be difficult to create change. The extent to which the collaborative has support and financial resources, and the types of policies or laws in place will also facilitate or impede capacity.

Empowerment capacity and outcome. These factors relate to the ability of the community collaborative to influence community conditions at a point in time. This capacity may change as other factors in the community change.

Fawcett et al. (1995) also developed the Framework for Collaborative Empowerment in Exhibit 2.3 to illustrate the process of community empowerment. The five interrelated elements of community empowerment are: collaborative planning; community action; community change; community capacity and outcomes; and adaptation, renewal, and institutionalization.

Exhibit 2.3: Framework for Collaborative Empowerment



Source: Fawcett et al., 1995.

Collaborative planning involves bringing together organizations from diverse backgrounds to collaboratively plan for changes in the community. **Community action** is the action taken by the leadership and membership of the collaborative to create changes that are in line with key goals. **Community change** is the result of community action and may include new policies or practices at the community level. **Community capacity and outcomes** are the ultimate goals of the collaborative, with the community having the ability to pursue its own goals in the future. **Adaptation, renewal, and institutionalization** are the efforts that the collaborative makes to address new issues in light of new conditions. This framework is particularly relevant to community coalitions because it shows that adaptation is a part of community empowerment.

The coalition's goals and activities are responsive to the needs of the community. Therefore, if the community's needs change, the coalition's planning and action must also change to address the new environment.

Empowerment theory and the CCAT provide useful frameworks for understanding community coalitions and the factors that affect their ability to successfully perform their core functions. These theories indicate that coalitions are able to create change in communities by building community capacity and improving health and social outcomes. They also suggest that coalitions must react to the needs of the community and adapt their collaborative activities according to new community conditions. A number of important coalition characteristics emerged from these two theories. These characteristics and their impact on coalition effectiveness are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

C. Characteristics of Community Coalitions

An assessment of the CCAT and Empowerment Theory and an examination of the literature exploring community coalitions yielded six characteristics that can affect coalition functioning and effectiveness. These characteristics include: leadership, membership, structure, operations and processes, strategic vision, and contextual factors. A discussion of these characteristics is presented below.

Leadership

The CCAT, Empowerment Theory, and other studies have identified effective leadership as a facilitator of coalition action and sustainability (Butterfoss, Goodman, Wandersman, Valois, & Chinman, 1996a; Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1996b; Goodman et al., 1998). Leadership can consist of one or both of the following: the member organizations of a coalition, and the individual leaders within a coalition (Bailey & McNally Koney, 1995). Research suggests that the convening or "lead" agency must have organizational capacity, commitment, and vision, among other characteristics to build an effective coalition (Butterfoss, 2007). In addition, leadership from individual staff members in the member organizations is also critical. Coalitions and partnerships with action-oriented leadership (Bazzoli et al., 2003; Hasnain-Wynia, 2003) and competent, committed leaders are most effective (Conrad et al., 2003). Hasnain-Wynia et al. (2003) found that partnerships with effective or ethical leadership were more likely to be perceived by their memberships as effective in achieving their goals. Wagenaar and Wolfson (1993) found that coalition leaders from diverse cultural groups, especially those that reflect the community, are more successful in obtaining community buy-in for coalition activities.

Membership

Coalition membership includes a variety of organizations in the community that provide time or other resources to the coalition. Butterfoss (2007) noted that coalitions with a diverse membership of community gatekeepers, and professional and other grassroots organizations are most successful. A diverse membership brings a variety of perspectives from different sectors, backgrounds, and constituencies. Hays, Hays, Deville and Mulhall (2000) found that representation of a large number of community sectors was associated with achieving coalition outcomes. Diverse membership may create challenges for the coalition in the short-run (e.g.,

difficulty in obtaining consensus, divergent perspectives), but facilitates the achievement of community improvements in the long run (Easterling, 2003).

Other factors that are associated with coalition effectiveness are the number of partners in the membership and the amount of time that member organizations can contribute to the coalition's activities. There is an inverse relationship between the number of partners and the successful completion of activities: the more partners in the membership, the fewer activities successfully completed by the coalition (Hasnain-Wynia et al., 2003). Additionally, coalitions with a dedicated staff (those who are wholly committed to working on the activities of the coalition) demonstrate more results than coalitions that without their own staff (Wolff, 2001b).

The expertise of the membership can also affect the success of the coalition. Coalitions benefit from having staff members with experience in community planning and organization, as they understand what is required to engage the community and conduct activities that meet the community's needs (Butterfoss, 2007; Wolff, 2001b).

Finally, the commitment of the membership to the coalition and its activities facilitates coalition effectiveness (Butterfoss, 2007). Research shows member satisfaction is associated with coalition effectiveness, as satisfied members are more invested in the coalition and its activities (Kumpher, Turner, Hopkins, & Librett, 1993).

Structure

Structural characteristics refer to the administrative rules in place that facilitate the management of the community coalition. The CCAT illustrates that coalitions with structures are more likely to achieve collaborative synergy in the coalition. Researchers have also identified the importance of coalition structures in predicting coalition progress. Butterfoss (2007) notes that the development of structure, rules, and responsibilities early in a coalition's development enables community coalitions to operate effectively. Butterfoss (2007) indicates that structures can take the form of written policies and laws (e.g., memoranda of understanding, bylaws, and policy and procedure manuals). Bryson (1988) adds that coalitions benefit from developing clear mission statements.

Another important structure is a steering committee or executive board that provides guidance and governance to coalition activities (Butterfoss, 2007). The steering committee or executive board, comprised of representatives of the member organizations, convenes regularly to assess the goals and activities of the coalition. Such structures facilitate collaboration, as they help members to more fully understand the purpose of the coalition and their individual roles and responsibilities.

Operations and Processes

In addition to structures such as an active governing body and a well-formed steering committee, the literature suggests the coalition's operations and processes as facilitators of coalition effectiveness. The coalition institutes operations and processes for communication, decision making, and conflict resolution that enable it to function. Communication has been identified as one of the most important characteristics for the success of any organization, including community coalitions (Beckham & King, 2005; Butterfoss, 2007). For a coalition to operate effectively, messages must be accurately communicated within and outside of the coalition. Regular communication among coalition members fosters cooperation that can help the coalition meet its goals. Decision-making processes are also important to coalition functioning because

they are related to member satisfaction and involvement in the coalition. Coalitions may choose to appoint a single decision maker, a group of decision makers, use majority rule, or require consensus.

Conflict resolution processes are also important to coalition functioning, as they foster strong partnerships among members (Butterfoss, 2007). Bazzoli et al. (2003) found that partnerships that avoided conflict were more successful, completing a higher proportion of their action steps. Research suggests that coalition effectiveness correlates negatively with staff turnover and weakness in community organization skills (Kegler, Steckler, McLeroy, & Malek, 1998), and with historical and cultural conflicts (el Ansari & Phillips, 2001). Conflict may result from "turf" issues (Meek, 1992), and leadership problems and internal disagreements (Butterfoss, 2007) that affect the direction of the coalition. Additionally, coalition members may view one another as competitors, which can impact member satisfaction and coalition functioning. In a study of organizations participating in a children's health coalition, Valente, Coronges, Stevens, and Cousineau (2008) found that perceptions of other organizations as competitors was associated with perceptions that the coalition functioned poorly and that there were obstacles to achieving the coalition's goals.

Strategic Vision

Each coalition has a number of goals that are in line with its general mission—from allocating resources and providing services to suggesting new policies. The coalition's strategic vision is the overarching reference for the coalition's goals and activities (Easterling, 2003). Strategic vision helps coalition members to understand the future direction of the coalition, and to recognize the benefits of their participation (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). A vision statement might describe the impact that members want the coalition to have over a certain period of time (Butterfoss, 2007). A clear vision helps the coalition to raise awareness of its activities within the community, identify partners and resources, and reduce conflict within its membership.

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors, such as the economic climate or shifting population demographics, may also affect the formation and effectiveness of community coalitions. Contextual factors are external conditions that either exist or are lacking in the environment, and thus can enhance or inhibit the coalition's activities. Both the CCAT and Empowerment Theory highlight the impact of contextual factors, suggesting their importance in predicting coalition effectiveness. Specifically, Butterfoss, Lachance, and Orians (2006) found that contextual factors such as politics, the history of collaboration among member organizations in the coalition, geography, and community readiness can impact coalition formation. Population demographics, the cultural climate in the community, overall community attitude toward a particular issue, and precipitating events in the community are other contextual factors that may impact coalition effectiveness (Butterfoss, 2007).

As illustrated in the CCAT, Empowerment Theory, and the literature, elements such as leadership and staffing, structures and collaboration, among others, can affect the development of community coalitions and their ability to achieve their goals and create change. The ways in which these characteristics come together to shape community coalitions can impact their effectiveness. This chapter reviewed the functions of coalitions, as well as two predominant theories of community coalitions and their characteristics. Chapter Three provides an assessment

of the current issues in the literature surrounding the evaluation of community coalitions' influences on health outcomes.

Chapter Three: Assessing the Impacts of Community Coalitions

Over the last decade, community coalitions have emerged as a popular vehicle for addressing community health issues (Butterfoss, 2007). Significant professional interest and resources have been invested in assessing best practices for the development and implementation of community coalitions. However, much less is known about the outcomes and impacts of community coalitions on the communities they serve. Few systematic studies have been conducted to examine trends in community coalition outcomes and impacts (Berkowitz, 2001; Cramer, Mueller, & Harrop, 2003; Payne, 1999). Yet, the ability of community coalitions to evaluate their activities and impacts is an important factor for coalition sustainability.

This chapter synthesizes the literature on evaluating the outcomes and impacts of community coalitions. It begins with an overview of the literature that discusses the challenges associated with assessment of the impacts of community coalitions, and includes approaches that have the potential to guide a more systematic and standardized evaluation process for community coalitions. The final section provides case studies of several community coalition evaluations chosen to demonstrate how community coalitions can impact communities.

A. Challenges of and Approaches for Assessing the Impacts of Community Coalitions

When several organizations and resources come together in the form of a community coalition, the assumption in the literature and among practitioners is that the pooling of intellectual and material resources will result in improved program effectiveness with the sum total of the coalition's results being greater than the results for organizations working independently. A search of the literature reveals several community coalition studies which failed to find evidence of this effect for health outcomes (Community Intervention Trial for Smoking Cessation, 1995; Feinberg, Bontempo, & Greenberg, 2008; Hallfors, Cho, Hyunsan, Livert, & Kadushin, 2002), while other studies, as listed in Berkowitz and Wolff (2000), demonstrated significant improvements in health outcomes.

One reason for the inconsistent evidence on the ability of community coalitions to affect change and influence health outcomes is methodological. According to the literature, the traditional set of methodological tools is not well equipped to handle the realities of the complex world in which community coalitions operate (Berkowitz, 2001). For example, community coalitions often operate multiple interventions and program activities aimed at multiple levels and populations in multiple venues (Koepsell et al., 1992). This structure poses several challenges for traditional health outcomes evaluation designs such as an undefined universe for sampling, contamination of control groups, and the inability to identify and control key variables (Berkowitz, 2001).

In response to the challenges associated with demonstrating the impacts of community coalitions through evaluation, researchers are beginning to develop evaluation models of community coalitions that capture both their impacts at the individual level (e.g., health outcomes) and at the community level (e.g., capacity and environment) (Backer, 2003; Taylor-Powell, Rossing & Geran, 1998). Three evaluation models that are frequently used to capture the impacts of coalitions are the Targeting Outcomes of Programs (TOP) model, the Community Toolbox Evaluation model, and the theory of Empowerment Evaluation.

The TOP model is a framework for identifying and assessing outcomes by integrating program development, process evaluation, and impact evaluation elements (Bennett & Rockwell, 1995). Within the model, there are seven levels of evidence that can be used to assess whether the coalition is making an impact, from measuring resources to measuring social, economic, and environmental impacts. The evaluation model helps the evaluator track the coalition's individual, community, and systems-level health outcomes, as well as its long-term impacts.

The Community Toolbox Evaluation model is another evaluation model that provides a logical framework for assessing change throughout the stages of the coalition process, from assessing the success of problem identification to disseminating best practices identified throughout the evaluation (Fawcett et al., 2001). Given the dynamic nature of coalition activities, this model moves beyond the notion of evaluating a unidirectional causal relationship to evaluating a series of impacts.

Finally, an alternative approach to assessing the impacts of coalitions is the theory of Empowerment Evaluation (American Diabetes Association, 2009; Cramer, Mueller, & Harrop, 2003; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005). Empowerment Evaluation theory is a frequently employed and thoroughly studied approach that intends to increase the probability of attaining program success through two key components. The first component is to provide stakeholders with the tools and resources they need to assess planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their activities. The second component is to include evaluation as an integrated part of the planning and management of program activities. Empowerment Evaluation theory can also be used alongside traditional, external evaluation methods (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).

Although the theoretical foundations of each model differ (including both traditional and participatory evaluation approaches), a shared goal of all three models is to provide a tool that is specific enough to measure and assess a particular coalition, yet general enough to allow for valid comparisons between coalitions. Even using these models, however, it is difficult to demonstrate that a community coalition has had direct and positive impacts over time.

Researchers have argued that the primary impacts of community coalitions may stem from their ability to alter their environment and/or increase their community's capacity to continually identify and address health problems (Cheadle, Wagner, Koepsell, Kristal, & Patrick, 1992; Kegler, Twiss, & Look, 2000; Mittelmark, Hunt, Health, & Schmid, 1993). Therefore, evaluators have tried to demonstrate the ability of community coalitions to increase a community's capacity and social capital, which is then leveraged to attain a positive impact over time (Hawe, King, Noort, Jordens, & Lloyd, 2000; Laverack & Wallerstein, 2001; Stephens & Studdiford, 2008). These outcomes can then be linked to the existing science showing a connection between the physical and social environment and long-term health outcomes. However, policymakers and funders are often left unconvinced by this solution, seeking instead direct evidence of health outcomes to justify a continued reliance on the community coalition as a mechanism for improving health.

B. Impacts of Community Coalition Interventions at the Individual, Systems, and Policy Levels

As a result of the inability of researchers to systematically evaluate the impacts of community coalitions to date, the literature does not provide a full accounting of the issues, populations, or intervention methods addressed by community coalitions. However, broad searches for community coalition activities in public health reveal a range of issues being addressed (from safe streets initiatives to access for the uninsured and underinsured to diabetes management), using a range of intervention methods designed to affect change at multiple levels (e.g., individual, systems, and policy). This section discusses the impact of coalitions in three areas: individual impacts, systems impacts, and policy impacts—to convey the range of outcomes that community coalitions can demonstrate given appropriate evaluation designs and resources.

Individual Impacts

Individual impacts are changes in health or behavior at the person level. One example of a coalition program that was able to demonstrate individual-level impacts is the Appalachian Cancer Coalition. The Community Coalition Action Theory was used to evaluate 1,369 initiatives conducted by 11 different community coalitions with a focus on cancer prevention. The evaluation provided assessments for organization change/capacity outcomes, process outcomes, and long-term impacts. Intervention methods included outreach, education, and screening. An example of an individual-level outcome associated with the coalition activities is increased screening rates (Kluhsman, Bencivenga, Ward, Lehman, & Lengerich, 2006).

Another study that demonstrated individual-level impacts was the California Healthy Cities Project. More than 70 coalitions participated in the project, with the aim of raising health as a priority in decision-making processes for local government. Selected interventions and outcomes, representing processes and impacts at various levels, included: 1) reduced youth tobacco use through counter-messaging pro-tobacco influences, 2) increased average GPA for teens in an intergenerational tutoring program from below 2.0 to above 2.5, 3) decreased violent crime arrests by 47 percent during the reporting period following forums to promote public safety awareness by local merchants and citizens, 4) established policies to allow interim use of public and private land for community gardens and recreation, 5) developed a "Quality of Life Index" to monitor livability indicators and guide policy development and resource allocation, and 6) incorporated a health element into the General Plan of a city (California Healthy Cities and Communities Program, 2008; Kegler, Twiss, & Look, 2000).

Systems Impacts

Systems impacts are changes in infrastructure or capacity in the community. Evaluations of the HCAP program have identified numerous systems impacts directly attributable to the participating community coalitions (National Opinion Research Center [NORC], 2007; West, de Libero, & Shelton, 2005). While some consortia failed to achieve all of their original goals, the information is largely positive overall. Grantees used the flexibility of the HCAP program to develop over 75 different types of program activities. The national evaluation of HCAP found substantial evidence that coalitions were able to improve the efficiency of service delivery in their communities (NORC, 2007). The following list of systems impacts abstracted from the

national evaluation of HCAP demonstrates the diversity of issues and approaches that community coalitions utilize to generate results for systems-level health improvements:

- Several grantees employed case management systems and were able to secure provider support of the system by documenting cost savings.
- Seventy-five percent of grantees successfully implemented a system for patient tracking and for managing use of services.
- Across all grantees reporting, primary care and specialty referral systems supported referrals for over 483,000 and 438,000 patients, respectively.
- Grantees reported assigning over 560,000 individuals to medical homes over the course of their projects and assigning over 1.2 million individuals to primary care providers.
- Enrolling the uninsured in health insurance plans also improved the financial stability of safety net providers, offering them an additional source of funding for care they might have otherwise provided for no reimbursement.

Policy Impacts

Community coalitions have also achieved **policy impacts** at the local, state and federal levels. One example of a community coalition that was pursuing county policy changes was the Los Angeles County Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Policy Coalition. This coalition was formed to change the county's policies surrounding alcohol and tobacco billboards and storefront advertising. Specifically, the goal of the coalition was to pass an ordinance at the city level and establish a multi-sector movement to protect youth from the dangers of alcohol and tobacco use. The 60-member coalition mobilized to persuade the Los Angeles City Council to pass an ordinance restricting alcohol and tobacco advertising in 1998 (Butterfoss, 2007), demonstrating that community coalitions have also been successful in creating broader policy changes.

This chapter summarized the current issues in the literature surrounding the evaluation of community coalitions' influences on health outcomes and community capacity, provided evaluation frameworks with the potential to be widely applied to overcome evaluation challenges, and supplied an illustrative selection of community coalition impacts. Evaluations of community coalitions must be linked to a solid logic model or theory in order to assess coalitions' impacts at multiple levels within the community and their sustainability. Chapter Four provides an in-depth examination of community coalition sustainability and the role that evaluation plays in fostering sustainability.

Chapter Four: Sustainability of Community Coalitions

The federal government and foundations are increasingly investing in community coalition-driven programs to create capacities within and across organizations, convene different community segments, conduct innovative activities, and extend health benefits to underserved populations. Given this investment, funders often expect that community coalitions and their activities will be sustained post-funding.

Research to date illustrates a lack of consensus about what it means for a community coalition and its activities to be "sustained." Some researchers indicate that sustainability refers to the maintenance of the community coalition itself, while others define sustainability in terms of the continuation of the coalition's activities in the community. Additionally, researchers have applied different frameworks to conceptualize the sustainability of community coalitions.

Chapter Four provides a synthesis of the literature on sustainability in the context of community coalitions. The seminal literature on the sustainability of community-based programs is also highlighted because such programs are often driven by coalitions. This chapter begins with an overview of the definitions of sustainability in health programs and community coalitions, followed by a discussion of several conceptual models, the role of evaluation in sustaining coalitions, key sustainability measures, and the predictors of and barriers to sustainability in community coalitions. Key findings from Chapter Four are used in Chapter Five to develop a conceptual framework for measuring the sustainability of community coalitions post initial federal funding.

A. Defining Sustainability

The concept of **sustainability** is germane to research on both community-based programs and community coalitions. However, a consensus definition of sustainability has not emerged in either body of research (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; Altarum Institute, 2009). The primary divergence among definitions in the literature relates to the unit of analysis—what is being sustained. As the literature discussed in this section reveals, some definitions focus on sustaining the program or coalition, while others focus on sustaining the activities and impacts of the program or coalition. Exhibit 4.1 provides an overview of selected definitions of sustainability in the community-based health programs and community coalition literatures. Each definition is categorized as having a primary emphasis on either the continuation of the program or coalition itself, or, the continuation of the program or coalition's activities and effects.

The definitions included in Exhibit 4.1 illustrate several key points. First, many definitions of sustainability focus on specific aspects of program and coalition operations. For example, Mancini and Marek's (2004) definition emphasizes the capacity of the program to continuously respond to community issues, and highlights flexibility and adaptability as important characteristics of the program. Edwards et al. (2007) and Rog et al. (2004) note that sustainability is related to the coalition's capacity to secure stable funding and resources. Rog et al. also highlights other factors that are important to a coalition's sustainability, noting that a coalition must be operational, cohesive, and growing. Therefore, a coalition's structures (i.e., processes, regulations, and laws) and collaborative capacities will impact its sustainability.

Exhibit 4.1: Selected Operational Definitions of Sustainability in Health Programs

	Definition of Sustainability in the Community-Based Health Programs Literature	Definitions of Sustainability in the Community Coalitions Literature
Focus on Continuing the Program or Coalition	• A multidisciplinary concept of the continuation process (Shediac-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998, p. 92). • The continuation of programs. (Pluye, Potvin, Denis, & Pelletier, 2004, p. 121) • The capacity of programs to continuously respond to community issues. (Mancini & Marek, 2004, p. 339)	• Sustainability is defined broadly, including, but not limited to, funding and resources. The definition also involves the extent to which a collaborative continues to be operational, cohesive, and growing. (Rog et al., 2004, p. 250) • Sustainability refers to the coalition's capacity to support and maintain its activities over time. (Butterfoss, 2007, p. 279) • Sustainability is the capacity to collaborate, to make developmental progress in realizing partnership objectives, and to secure a stable financial base. (Edwards et al., 2007, p. 38)
Focus on Continuing the Activities and Effects of the Program or Coalition	• For health promotion, sustainability may refer to intervention effects or the means by which these are produced—the programmes and agencies that implement interventions. The aim of health promotion is to produce intervention effects that may be sustained over time. (Swerissen & Crisp, 2004, p. 123) • Sustainability of social service projects is whether projects can survive the loss of original foundation funding and continue to provide the social services they have developed. (Stevens & Peikes, 2006, p. 153)	• The maintenance of the capacity of a community to deliver program activities after the initial program created a community coalition. (Scheirer, 2005)* • Sustainability is built on the value that collaborative capacity adds to the community and community health and on the collaborative process through which this value is created. (Alexander et al., 2003, p. 134S)

* Excluding the Scheirer (2005) definition, all others provided in this table are direct quotations.

Second, the definitions in Exhibit 4.1 suggest that sustainability is a process that occurs over time. For example, Swerissen and Crisp's (2004) definition focuses on the continuation of the program's benefits in the community. Stevens and Peikes (2006) define sustainability as the survival of the social service program and its ability to continue to provide social services. Butterfoss (2007) focuses on the capacity of a coalition to support its activities over time.

Third, these definitions point to the fact that sustainability is not an all or nothing phenomenon. For example, Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998), who pioneered efforts to define and conceptualize sustainability in community-based programs, define sustainability as a multidisciplinary concept of the continuation process that can take on many different forms. Their research concludes that sustainability is a matter of degrees. Sustainability may mean that a program is continued under a different structure, or that parts of the program are transferred to the community. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each definition illustrates that each program or coalition must determine its own goals for what should be sustained over the long-term (Alexander et al., 2003; Butterfoss, 2007).

Based on the current definition, future efforts at defining the concept of sustainability for programs and coalitions should ensure a balance between the continuation of the program or coalition and the continuation of its activities and benefits. Furthermore, definitions should accommodate degrees of sustainability and an understanding that sustainability is a process that occurs over time.

B. Conceptual Models of Program Sustainability in Community Coalitions and Partnerships

Plans for sustainability are different, depending on the goals and objectives of each community coalition. As such, the conceptual models of sustainability in community coalitions offer different approaches. The following section describes six conceptual models and frameworks that have shaped the literature on the sustainability of community coalitions:

1. Model for Sustainability in Community Health Partnerships (Alexander et al., 2003)
2. Partnerships for Quality Sustainability Framework (Edwards et al., 2007)
3. Model of Community-Based Program Sustainability (Mancini & Marek, 2004)
4. Conceptual Model for Evaluating Sustainability of Community Health Initiatives (Beery et al., 2005)
5. Framework for Conceptualizing Program Sustainability (Shediac-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998)
6. Framework of Collaborative Sustainability (Rog et al., 2004)

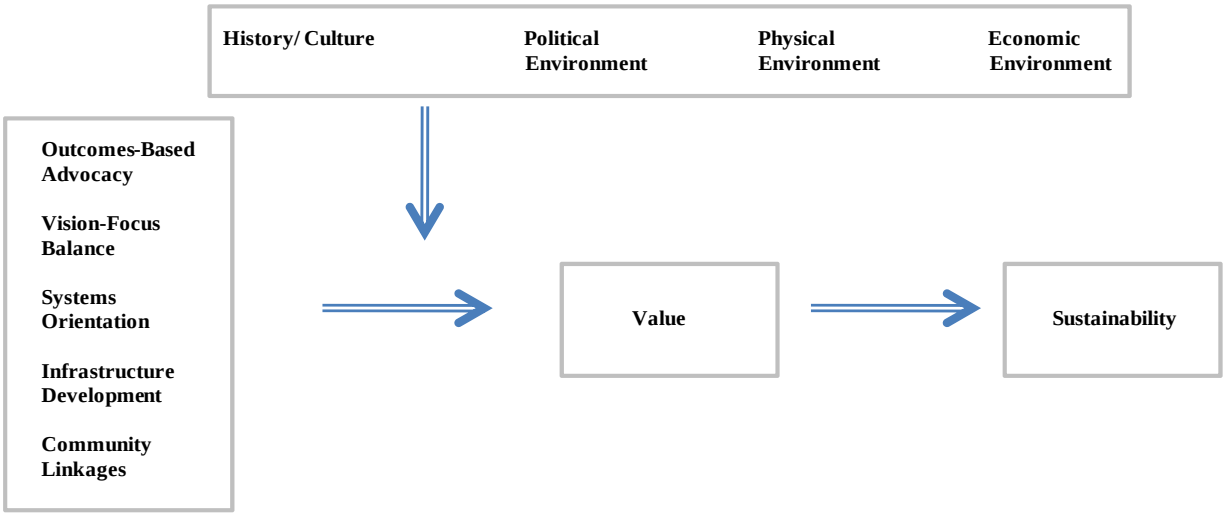
These models were selected for two key reasons. First, they were identified in the literature as salient frameworks for conceptualizing sustainability in programs, community coalitions, and community health initiatives. Second, each model or framework provides a unique approach to conceptualizing sustainability. For example, the Model for Sustainability in Community Health Partnerships (Alexander et al., 2003) identifies sustainability-enhancing factors that can be used to evaluate the strength of partnerships. The Partnerships for Quality Sustainability Framework (Edwards et al., 2007) maps sustainability goals to sustainability elements. The Model for Community-Based Program Sustainability (Mancini & Marek, 2004) illustrates how different elements of a community-based program can contribute to middle-range program results and sustainability. The Conceptual Model for Evaluating Sustainability of Community Health Initiatives (Beery et al., 2005) shows that there are three elements of a community health initiative that can be sustained: the partnership, the partnership's activities, and other capacity-building activities. The Framework for Conceptualizing Program Sustainability (Shediac-

Rizkallah & Bone, 1998) is one of the earliest efforts to conceptualize program sustainability and identifies different factors that influence sustainability. Finally, the Framework of Collaborative Sustainability (Rog et al., 2004) relates coalition factors that contribute to different stages of sustainability. These models illustrate the key factors that can contribute to sustainability of community coalitions, and are explained in greater detail in the remainder of the section.

Model for Sustainability in Community Health Partnerships

In a qualitative study of four partnerships from the Community Care Network (CCN) Demonstration Program,[1] Alexander et al. (2003) developed a conceptual model of sustainability in community health partnerships and identified potential determinants of sustainability. Exhibit 4.2 presents the sustainability conceptual model. The model assumes that sustainability is built on the value that collaborative capacity adds to the community. The higher the value of the collaborative efforts, the more likely the collaborative efforts will be sustained. The key emphasis of the model is that there are factors associated with value creation and sustainability. These five sustainability-enhancing factors are outcomes-based advocacy, vision-focus balance, systems orientation, infrastructure development, and community linkages.

Exhibit 4.2: Sustainability Conceptual Model in Community Health Partnerships



Reprinted from Alexander et al. (2003).

Outcomes-based advocacy refers to the partnership's ability to communicate achievements of the partnership to internal and external stakeholders. The vision-focus balance refers to the ability of the coalition to agree on the long-term vision of the coalition, and its commitment to pursue actions that will move the coalition toward its vision. Systems orientation means that the partnership and its leadership can address complex community health issues using a coordinated multi-sector effort in the community. Infrastructure development refers to the ability of the partnership to develop internal systems to foster participation. Community linkages refer to the

[1] The Community Care Network Demonstration Program is composed of public-private partnerships of providers, human services agencies, and other organizations that are addressing access to care for disadvantaged residents.

partnership's ability to develop working relationships with institutions and individuals, and incorporate direct community input. These five factors are the emphasis of the Alexander et al. model because they are hypothesized precursors of sustainability.

The model is useful because it takes into account four different contextual factors that affect the partnership: historical/cultural, political, physical, and economic. The sustainability of the partnership is affected by the prior experiences of collaboration in the community (historical/cultural environment), the extent to which governments are involved in policy planning and to which they embrace the community health issue being addressed (political environment), the geographic or other factors that affect the partnership (physical environment), and the economic situation in the community (economic environment).

Partnerships for Quality Sustainability Framework

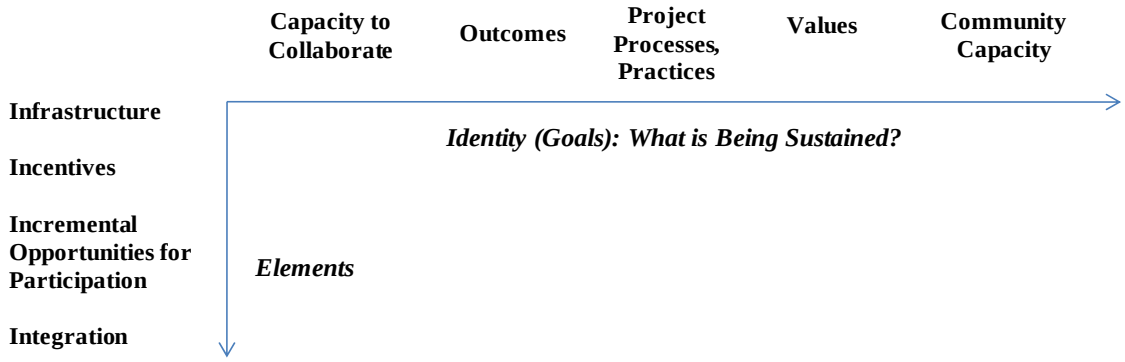
Edwards et al. (2007) assessed the sustainability of the Partnerships for Quality (PFQ) projects funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The PQF program funded partnerships of health care professionals and other organizations to facilitate the translation of research into practice, especially in the areas of patient safety and quality improvement (Evaluation of AHRQ's Partnerships for Quality Program, 2006). Edwards et al. convened a work group to review the literature and develop a conceptual framework of sustainability that drew from Rogers' framework (as cited in Edwards et al., 2007) that includes four elements of sustainability.

The four elements of sustainability are infrastructure, incentives, incremental opportunities for participation, and integration. Infrastructure refers to the resources necessary to bring about and sustain improvements. Incentives can be used to maintain partnerships and key outcomes or practices. Incremental opportunities are activities that facilitate participation from key partners and enable them to experience a sense of ownership. Finally, integration involves aligning the goals of the partnership with the strategic goals of the organization using rewards and measures.

Five goals for sustainability were selected by the work group for the PFQ framework: a partnership's capacity to collaborate, outcomes, project processes and practices, values, and community capacity. The goals are the attributes of the partnership and the partnership's activities that are being sustained.

The two-dimensional framework, shown in Exhibit 4.3, is composed of the elements of sustainability and the goals of the program (i.e., what is being sustained?). While this model is highly specific to partnerships pursuing patient safety and quality improvement objectives, it is useful because it shows that there are a number of attributes that can be sustained—the partnership's ability to collaborate, outcomes, practices, values, and community capacity efforts. Additionally, this model also shows that sustainability is affected by four key elements (infrastructure, incentives, incremental opportunities for participation, and integration).

Exhibit 4.3: Sustainability Framework

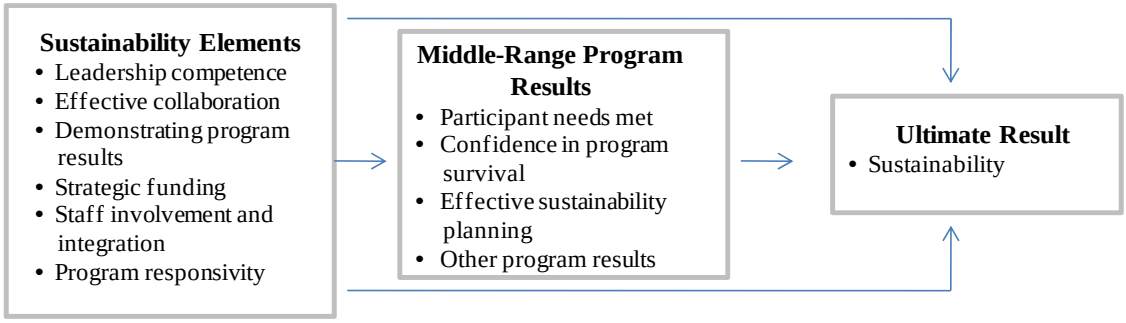


Reprinted from Edwards et al. (2007).

Model of Community-Based Program Sustainability

Mancini and Marek (2004) explored whether community-based programs were sustaining their benefits to families and communities. Exhibit 4.4 shows Mancini and Marek's (2004) model of community-based program sustainability.

Exhibit 4.4: Model of Community-Based Program Sustainability



Reprinted from Mancini and Marek (2004).

The unique aspect of Mancini and Marek's model is the relationship between the sustainability elements (e.g., leadership competence, effective collaboration, demonstrating program results, strategic funding, staff involvement and integration, and program responsivity), middle-range program results (e.g., continuing to focus on goals, planning for sustainability), and the ultimate result of program sustainability.

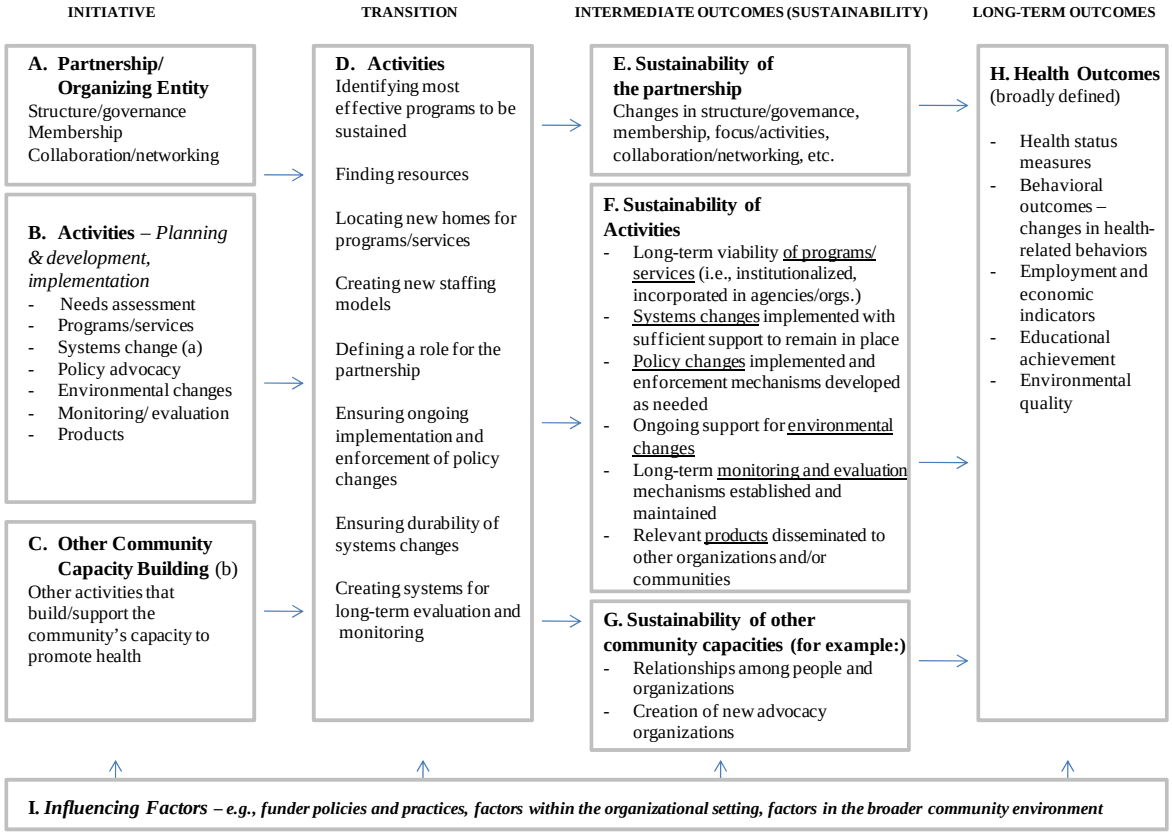
The emphasis of this model is that a variety of sustainability elements can contribute to middle-range program results that are ultimately connected to program sustainability. The achievement of middle-range program results increases the chance that the program will be sustained.

Additionally, the sustainability elements may also be independently related to program sustainability.

Conceptual Model for Evaluating the Sustainability of Community Health Initiatives

Beery et al. (2005) developed a conceptual framework that examines sustainability in a community health initiative led by a community partnership. This model, shown in Exhibit 4.5, conveys the transition from project initiation to intermediate and long-term outcomes, using a logic model framework. The model begins with activities (e.g., planning, assessment, evaluation) that contribute to the community's overall capacity (boxes A, B, and C). In the transition column, a number of activities are then carried out by community health initiatives in order to sustain the initiative (box D). Such activities range from finding resources to creating systems for long-term evaluation and monitoring. The **intermediate outcomes** of the sustainability effort are those elements that could be sustained, including the partnership itself, the activities, and the community capacities. Finally, the **long-term outcomes** are the health outcomes.

Exhibit 4.5: Model for Evaluating the Sustainability of Community Health Initiatives



(a) For example, integrated services, data sharing or integrated data systems, results-based budgeting.
(b) For example, health literacy, resident leadership training, organizational development.

Reprinted from Beery et al. (2005).

This model illustrates the various ways in which sustainability can occur within an initiative. The partnership (box E) and/or the major activities of the partnership (boxes F and G) can be

sustained. Sustaining the partnership and/ or its activities results in the continuation of health outcomes.

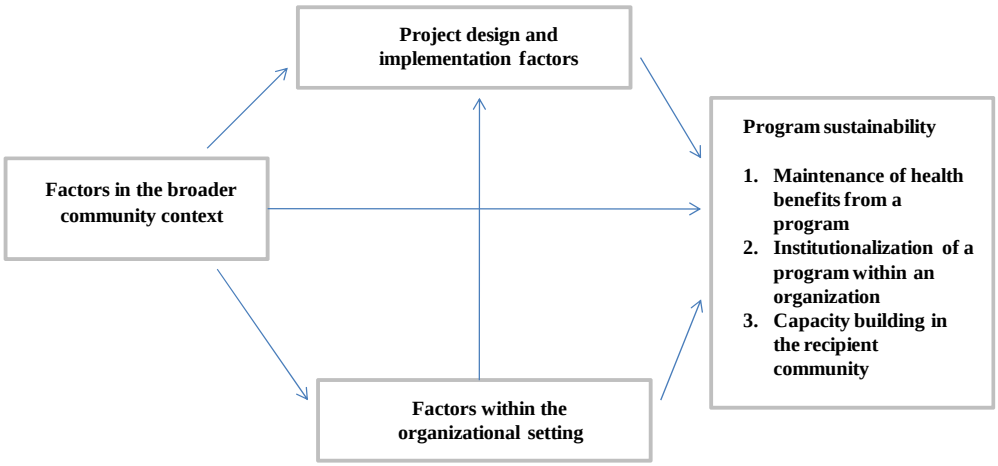
Framework for Conceptualizing Program Sustainability

Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) designed a framework for conceptualizing sustainability in community-based programs. The framework, displayed in Exhibit 4.6, is one of the earliest frameworks to systematically relate different factors to program sustainability. They identified three groups of factors that influence sustainability: 1) project design and implementation factors, 2) factors within the organizational setting, and 3) factors in the broader community environment. Project design and implementation factors are related to the resources available to the program (e.g., staff time, financial resources). Factors within the organizational setting are those that are related to organizational and managerial structures and processes (e.g., program location, program leadership, and institutional strength). Factors within the community context are the political, economic, and social issues that influence the program's sustainability.

The design and implementation of the project and its sustainability are affected by the organizational and managerial structures in place as well as the community context. The community context affects the project design and implementation, the internal organizational and managerial structures and processes, and the sustainability of the program.

For each of these factors, the researchers develop questions that can be used to guide the sustainability planning process.

Exhibit 4.6: A Framework for Conceptualizing Program Sustainability



Reprinted from Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone (1998).

Framework of Collaborative Sustainability

Rog et al. (2004) conducted a cross-site evaluation of 12 violence prevention collaboratives to identify predictors of sustainability. The researchers identified variables relevant to collaborative sustainability: impetus for establishing the collaborative, membership characteristics (composition, number of sectors involved, and extent of resident involvement), the structure of the collaborative, and the focus and operation of the collaborative. Categories for the values of the variables were constructed (e.g., high/medium/low diversity of funding). Then, the

researchers conducted a case-oriented analysis, comparing and contrasting the variables across the collaboratives. Each collaborative was also categorized into one of five stages of sustainability:

1. Expansion (expanding into additional locations, institutionalizing activities)
2. Likely expansion (securing new leadership, considering expansion)
3. Strategic assessment (taking stock of the current situation, developing strategic plan)
4. Rebuilding (in the process or rebuilding after a crisis)
5. No longer in operation

The researchers mapped a number of findings from each collaborative against each collaborative's stage of development to identify relevant patterns of sustainability. This framework indicates that coalitions move through different stages of development over time, and that a variety of factors can affect their development.

The six models presented in this section provide useful ways to conceptualize sustainability in community coalitions. First, they demonstrate the importance of measuring both the sustainability of the coalition and the coalition's activities separately. The sustainability of the coalition's activities in the community does not necessitate the sustainability of the coalition. Second, several of the models have highlighted that there are different contextual factors that affect sustainability. Third, the models also identified a number of common coalition-specific factors that can be found within community coalitions. While many different factors were identified, the models have six types of factors in common suggesting their level of significance:

1. Leadership competency
2. Effective collaboration
3. Attention to the long-term direction of the partnership / planning
4. Demonstration of results / communication of value-added
5. Strategic funding
6. Community buy-in and participation

The next section discusses how some of these factors have been converted into formal measures and used in assessments of sustainability in community coalitions.

C. The Role of Evaluation in Supporting Sustainability in Community Coalitions

Evaluations of community coalitions can be used to provide accountability to the community, demonstrate the importance of the coalition to the funder, improve the coalition's activities, identify the coalition's challenges, raise community awareness, and inform policy decisions (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004). Evaluation also plays an important role in supporting the sustainability of community coalitions (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004). Weiss, Coffman, and Bohan-Baker (2002) developed a paper about the role of evaluation in initiative sustainability based on the Harvard Family Research Project's experience conducting foundation initiatives.

The researchers suggest four ways to operationalize initiative sustainability in order to track its progress over time (Exhibit 4.7). Although the sustainability of community coalitions is not the explicit focus, the model provides the types of data that evaluators might look for when assessing sustainability.

Exhibit 4.7: Operationalizing Sustainability as an Outcome

Sustainability Focus	Evaluation Focus
1) ***Organizations and/or Projects*** – securing additional funding for grantees or projects begun or supported under the initiative	• Presence of grantee effort to obtain additional funding • Grantee success in obtaining additional funding • Presence of grantee revenue-generating strategies to support initiative-related work • Presence of multiple factors to support initiative-related work
2) ***Ideas*** – maintaining the initiative's core principles, values, beliefs, and commitment	• Core ideas operationalized in grantee policies, structures • Initiative principles applied to other grantee projects • Commitment to continuing work started or supported under the initiative (e.g., generation of new ideas, migration of initiative ideas, new research projects, etc.)
3) ***Relationships*** – maintaining connections among people and institutions	• Collaboration involving higher-order ways of working together (e.g., joint projects or products) • Collaboration present over time (not just a one-shot effort) • Collaboration that is not initiative-driven
4) ***Outcomes*** – maintaining initiative results	• Codification of outcomes (e.g., in policy, procedures, legislation) • Support/demand (public, policymakers, etc.) for outcomes • Continued involvement/commitment of people over time

Source: Weiss, Coffman, Bohan-Baker, 2002.

Measures and Indices Used to Measure Sustainability in Community Coalitions

Measures are necessary to assess sustainability and to monitor the progress toward sustainability (Shediac-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998). One of the challenges of measuring sustainability is that the analysis or assessment captures each community coalition at a point in time—and cannot take into account the changes that are occurring within each coalition over time, or that may occur in the future (Rog et al., 2004). Despite these difficulties, a variety of measures and indices have been used to measure and evaluate sustainability in community coalitions. These measures and indices should not be confused with the conceptual models of sustainability presented earlier. Rather, these are tools that can be used to evaluate the impacts of specific coalition characteristics on sustainability. They include the following:

Program Sustainability Index. Mancini and Marek (2004) developed a 53-item Program Sustainability Index (PSI) that was used in a study of sustainability in community-based programs. The PSI includes 53 items reflecting seven sustainability elements: leadership competence, effective collaboration, understanding the community, demonstrating program results, strategic funding, staff involvement and integration, and program responsivity.

Framework to Track Collaboration and its Development. Weiss, Coffman, and Bohan-Baker (2002) tracked collaboration and its development over the course of a five-year evaluation of the

Kellogg Foundation's Devolution Initiative. The Devolution Initiative funded research, policy, and advocacy organizations as well as scholars and community organizers to work together to create an information base about the impact of welfare reform and health care devolution, and to disseminate that information to policymakers. Based on semiannual interviews with grantees and review of questionnaires, the researchers evaluated the type of collaborations occurring. Specifically, grantee collaboration (i.e., the collaboration occurring within each funded collaborative) was measured according to four levels: collaboration, coordination, contribution, and communication occurring amongst the grantees.

The "collaboration" level was considered the most extensive form of collaboration, whereby entities within each grantee collaborative were working together to prepare reports and conduct joint meetings. A step down from collaboration was the "coordination" level, whereby grantees were coordinating data collection and messages. A step down from coordination was the "contribution" level, whereby grantee entities were providing input on each other's reports and responding to information requests. The lowest level of collaboration was "communication," whereby entities were simply on a mailing list, communicating informally.

Measures of Adherence to Program Framework. Feinberg et al. (2008) examined the predictors of sustainability among 110 prevention coalitions that participated in Communities That Care (CTC) between 1998 and 2008. CTC is a program of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration that strives to reduce adolescent problem behaviors. The researchers categorized each CTC coalition as active or defunct after the seed funding was withdrawn. On an annual basis, several measures were used to determine whether the CTC sites were continuing to adhere to the CTC program framework. Measures included: "continuing to conceptualize the need for prevention programming in relation to local risk-factor profiles, promoting evidence-based programs, maintaining a community collaborative approach (versus program implementation by a single agency), and maintaining contact with the state technical assistance framework" (p. 498). These measures were highly specific to the program's framework.

Coalition Board Functioning Index. Feinberg et al. (2008) also created a board functioning index. This index was formulated based on the mean of four factors: 1) board work (measured by board directedness, board efficiency, leadership style, and leadership competence), 2) organizational resources (turnover of board membership, recruitment of new members, and barriers), 3) staff-board communication, and 4) board relations (board cohesion and conflict). Elements of this index can also be used to assess collaboration among coalition members.

Evaluations provide feedback and build the capacity of the coalition to measure its progress, readjust, and adapt to the changing needs of the community. Evaluation can also help to identify the factors that facilitate or mitigate sustainability in different types of community coalitions. The next section explores some of the key predictors of sustainability in the extant literature on community coalitions.

D. Predictors of Sustainability in Community Coalitions

Chapter Two presented the research on characteristics that facilitate effective development and operations for community coalitions. For the same reasons, many of those factors also contribute to the sustainability of community coalitions, their capacities, and benefits over time. The

literature revealed the following characteristics as important predictors of sustainability in community coalitions: leadership, membership diversity, history of collaboration, structure, resource diversity, sustainability plans, and community buy-in. This section discusses why each of these characteristics is related to sustainability in community coalitions.

Leadership

Focused and effective leadership facilitates sustainability in community coalitions (Goodman et al., 1998; Leviton, Herrera, Pepper, Fishman, & Racine, 2006; Mancini & Marek, 2004). The Alexander et al. (2006) study of community coalitions found that coalitions with a high potential for sustainability invested significant resources in ensuring that the coalition had effective leadership and staffing. The study also found that continuity of leadership over time helps to facilitate sustainability. Butterfoss (2007) also indicates that sustainability is facilitated by core leadership with a strong commitment to the coalition.

Membership Diversity

Researchers have noted that community coalitions that engage members of the community in the coalition—including policymakers, business professionals, residents, consumers, and beneficiaries—are more likely to continue to grow over time (Feinberg et al., 2008; Wolff, 2001). Involving a variety of community sectors can enhance the sustainability of the collaborative (Rog et al., 2004).

History of Collaboration

Coalitions that have a history of working together are more likely to survive post-funding than coalitions that come together for the purpose of obtaining a grant. Leviton et al. (2006) surveyed 787 Faith in Action[2] community coalitions and found that programs that were serving clients prior to receiving the grant were significantly more likely to survive (91 percent) than programs that did not exist prior to the grant (84 percent) ($p<0.05$). Rog et al. (2004) also found that violence prevention coalitions that had a history of collaboration prior to the grant appeared to be more likely to continue post-grant. Forming a collaborative prior to the funding opportunity was viewed as a proxy for commitment in this study.

Structure

Clear operational guidelines, and program management policies and procedures have been identified as key predictors of sustainability in community coalitions (Butterfoss, 2007; Feinberg et al., 2008; Leviton et al., 2006; Lodl & Stevens, 2002). In the Feinberg et al. (2008) study of Communities That Care coalitions, the researchers found that board functioning, as reported by board members and technical assistance providers, was positively associated with the survival of the coalition. Additionally, board functioning was positively associated with the number of funding sources and the amount of the coalition's funding post-grant.

[2] Faith in Action is a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that funded interfaith coalitions of religious, health, social service, and civic organizations to help meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Research also suggests that the composition of a collaborative's steering committee or board is associated with sustainability. The Rog et al. (2004) study of violence prevention community coalitions found that the one variable that distinguished the three collaboratives that were expanding from others that were not was the composition of their steering committee. The most successful collaborative had a board with a professional-grassroots mix in the structure. This finding is also supported by the national HCAP evaluation (NORC, 2007), whereby HCAP consortia reported that building a membership with broad-based grassroots participation was important for the sustainability of the coalition's activities. The Leviton et al. (2006) study identified quantitative links between sustainability and capacity in 787 Faith in Action community coalitions, concluding that survival of the organizations was associated with characteristics such as an active governing body.

Resource Diversity

Funding diversity is a key predictor of sustainability in community coalitions (Butterfoss, 2007), and in organizations more generally (Leviton et al., 2006; Rog et al., 2004). Programs are more likely to survive when they have political, financial, and institutional resources (Feinberg et al., 2008). Resources include money, people, goods, and services. Funds can be obtained from membership dues, the lead agency, community donations, financial partners, and in-kind contributions, grants, and contracts (Butterfoss, 2007). Diverse funding reduces the imbalance in power that occurs when a single funder is controlling the coalition's budget. With multiple funding sources, the coalition can ensure that it is fulfilling its own goals, as well as funders' requirements.

Two studies in particular demonstrate that resource diversity contributes to sustainability in community coalitions. Leviton et al. (2006) found that the size of the budget (at least $25,000 per year) and funding diversity (resources from at least three different community organizations) was associated with program survival. In another study, Rog et al. (2004) found that the community coalitions with diverse funding portfolios were expanding into new areas or becoming institutionalized in the community. Rog et al. found that funding should be flexible enough to support the core activities of the collaborative—rather than earmarked for specific programmatic activities that are carried out by the collaborative (e.g., service delivery).

Sustainability Plans

Moving sustainability from a goal to a reality requires creating goals and objectives, developing and implementing sustainability strategies, and continuously evaluating those strategies (Shediac-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998). Developing a comprehensive sustainability plan at the outset is critical to a coalition's success (Friedman & Wicklund, 2006). Program results, strategic funding, and staff involvement and integration are also related to planning early for sustainability (Mancini & Marek, 2004).

Community Buy-In

Butterfoss (2007) notes that coalitions that are widely respected in their communities are more likely to continue. With community buy-in, the collaborative opens itself up to a number of new resources and funding opportunities. Additionally, community buy-in helps the collaborative to

better position itself to achieve goals in the future (Rog et al., 2004). Lodl and Stevens (2001) highlights the importance of community buy-in to coalition sustainability. They found that inactive coalitions reported a lack of community interest in coalition activities.

E. Barriers to Sustainability in Community Coalitions

Community coalitions face a number of barriers that impede their sustainability. Key challenges related to coalition structure, governance, and funding are briefly discussed in this section.

Structure of Coalitions

Several of the key barriers to sustainability that are discussed in the literature are inherent to the structure of community coalitions. Namely, coalitions are composed of different types of organizations that come together voluntarily to achieve a goal. Alexander et al. (2003) noted that partnerships that comprise community coalitions are loosely bound, and there are few barriers to exiting the coalition—making sustainability more difficult. Leviton et al. (2006) also found that it is difficult to achieve sustainability given the loose coalition of organizations, the low level of funding, and the voluntary nature of the program. Second, coalitions are comprised of a number of different groups with divergent structures and work cultures—and thus, it is difficult to build and maintain a working partnership. In an analysis of the dynamics of four partnerships and their potential for sustainability, Alexander et al. (2003) found that member organizations struggled to balance their time and commitment between the coalition and their home organization, which affected the long-term sustainability of the coalition.

Governance Challenges

In community coalitions, governance is the activity of decision-making. Community coalitions often form steering committees or boards to make strategic decisions about coalition operations. Governance challenges occur when the responsibilities of the steering committee are not clearly defined, or when the steering committee overrides the rights of individual members (Butterfoss, 2007). Community coalitions that experience persistent governance challenges have difficulty sustaining themselves over time. The Rog et al. (2004) study of the community coalitions through the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention found that all of the coalitions that were no longer in operation had experienced governance challenges. Specifically, these coalitions struggled with role clarity between the responsibilities of coalition staff versus their steering committee. Findings from the national HCAP evaluation also illustrate the need for establishing memorandums of understanding that clarify the roles and responsibilities of all entities involved in the collaborative (NORC, 2007).

Lack of Funding for Core Coalition Operations

Community coalitions may not be sustainable if the only resources available to them are program or project dollars that are earmarked for service delivery or specific program activities. Cutler (2002) notes that the sustainability challenge for community-based initiatives is identifying resources that can be used to convene members, hire staff, build collaborative capacity, and plan for the future. It is often difficult for coalitions to find public and private funders that are willing to support core operations—especially if funders want to demonstrate causality between their investments and specific positive outcomes in the community. Coalitions may be successful in

securing funding or resources for operations through highly invested anchor institutions (universities, academic medical centers, etc.), as such institutions play an important role in building successful communities (Webber & Karlström, 2009).

Other Challenges

There are other challenges to sustainability that are inherent to community coalitions. According to Feinberg et al. (2008), such challenges include turf battles, leader and member turnover, and shifting coalition priorities.

Chapter Four summarized the current issues in the literature surrounding the sustainability of community coalitions. This chapter included a discussion of different definitions of sustainability in the context of programs and community coalitions and an overview of conceptual models and frameworks that have shaped the sustainability literature. A discussion of sustainability measures and the role of evaluation, as well as an overview of the predictors of and barriers to sustainability was also included. Chapter Five uses the information collected through the literature review to provide a conceptual framework for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions once initial federal funding has ended.

Chapter Five: A Conceptual Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Community Coalitions Once Initial Federal Funding has Expired

The previous chapters have explored the literature on the construct and functions of community coalitions, the impacts and outcomes of their activities, and their sustainability. The literature has demonstrated that—because community coalitions are diverse, with varied characteristics, goals, and outcomes—it is difficult to determine whether, how, and what should be sustained (e.g., the coalition's membership, goals, activities, etc.). Researchers have constructed definitions of sustainability, and applied conceptual frameworks that highlight different components. Building on the information presented in the previous chapters, Chapter Five presents a conceptual framework for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions once initial federal funding has expired. This chapter will provide the following:

1. A definition of sustainability in community coalitions
2. A conceptual framework that can be used to assess sustainability in community coalitions
3. Key measures that can be used to assess the sustainability of community coalitions

A. Defining Sustainability in Community Coalitions

Given the complexity of the literature on the sustainability of community coalitions, this section defines what it means to be a sustainable community coalition. As depicted in previous chapters, community coalitions have different memberships, patterns of formation, functions, goals, activities, and organizational structures. As such, it is important to clearly define what is meant by the term "community coalition."

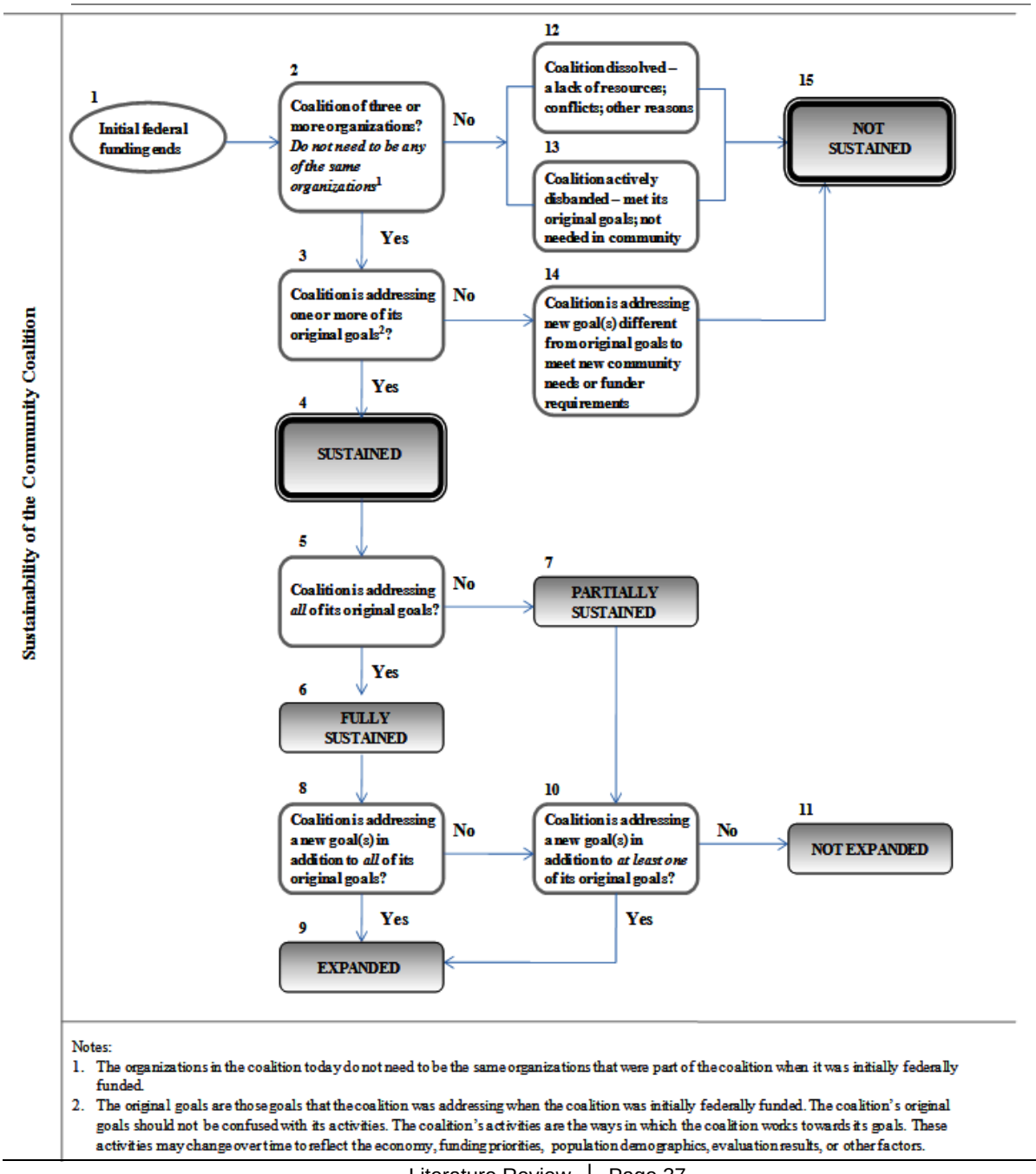
A commonly used definition of community coalitions developed by Feighery and Rogers (as cited in Butterfoss, 2007, p. 31) defines a community coalition as "a group of individuals representing diverse organizations, factions, or constituencies within the community who agree to work together to achieve a common goal." To add specificity to the conceptual framework, the Feighery and Rogers definition is expanded to define the number of organizations. Thus a community coalition is defined as an alliance of three or more organizations who agree to come together to achieve a common goal. Adding the requirement of at least three organizations to the definition excludes direct partnerships between two entities from qualifying as a coalition, while ensuring the inclusion of coalitions of all sizes. This definition serves two purposes. First, by building on the well-accepted Feighery and Rogers definition, findings about the sustainability of community coalitions generated with this definition can be compared to other findings in the literature. Second, this definition is broad and will therefore be inclusive of community coalitions even if their form or function changed over time.

Next, it is necessary to define what is meant by the sustainability of a community coalition. Post initial federal funding, some community coalitions continue to function exactly as they did previously—with the same membership, goals, activities, managerial structures, intensity of collaboration, community buy-in, and vision. Others are sustained with a different composition of members, although the coalition is still continuing to address its original goals. Some community coalitions have the same composition of members, but have scaled back their work by addressing only one (rather than all) of their original goals. Other community coalitions continue to evolve since they were initially federally funded, addressing their original goals and

expanding to work toward new goals. Some coalitions adopt entirely new goals as a result of a shift in the economic or political environment or in response to a change in the community's needs. In addition, some coalitions dissolve because of internal problems, or actively disband because they have found new homes for their activities within the community (e.g., institutionalization of the benefits within the community) or because they have achieved their original goals. A definition of sustainability in the context of community coalitions must recognize these different scenarios.

In order to provide a foundation for the definition of a sustained community coalition, Exhibit 5.1 displays a sustainability decision tree.

Exhibit 5.1: Sustainability of the Community Coalition



Notes:

1. The organizations in the coalition today do not need to be the same organizations that were part of the coalition when it was initially federally funded.
2. The original goals are those goals that the coalition was addressing when the coalition was initially federally funded. The coalition's original goals should not be confused with its activities. The coalition's activities are the ways in which the coalition works towards its goals. These activities may change over time to reflect the economy, funding priorities, population demographics, evaluation results, or other factors.

At the most basic level, once the initial federal funding ends, the coalition is either sustained or not sustained. The sustainability of a community coalition is a function of two conditions that must be met post initial federal funding:

1. The first condition of sustainability is that the coalition is **composed of an alliance of three or more organizations**.

2. The second condition of sustainability is that the alliance of three or more organizations is working together to address one or more of its **original goals** (i.e., those goals that the coalition was working toward when the coalition was initially federally funded).

For the purposes of this conceptual framework, there is an important distinction between the community coalition's "goals" and its "activities." For example, the original goals of the HCAP community coalitions were connected to the vision of the coalition. These were commonly to increase insurance coverage and access to services for the uninsured and underserved, better coordinate and integrate services in the community, improve the quality of health care for the uninsured and underserved, and reduce the cost of care for the uninsured and underserved. The **activities** are the ways in which each coalition works toward its goals. Activities are unique to each coalition and may be refined over time to reflect the economy, funding priorities, population demographics, evaluation results, or other factors.

Thus, a **sustained community coalition** is an alliance of three or more organizations that are addressing one or more of the original goals of the coalition. It is important to note that this model assumes that there will be membership turnover in the community coalition. Thus, the alliance of three or more organizations does not need to be the same one that was part of the community coalition when it was initially federally funded. In other words, the coalition is considered "sustained" as long as it is composed of an alliance of three or more organizations that are working to achieve one or more of the original goals of the initially federally funded community coalition.

Furthermore, of the sustained community coalitions (i.e., those that have satisfied both conditions), some may be **fully sustained**, meaning that the coalition is addressing all of its original goals, while others may be **partially sustained**. A coalition is considered partially sustained if it satisfies both conditions of sustainability but is not addressing all of its original goals. For example, suppose a community coalition was originally working toward two goals: improving coordination among providers in the community, and reducing the cost of insurance for the underserved. After the coalition's initial federal funding expired, it focused its efforts exclusively on addressing the latter goal to reduce the cost of insurance. Since the coalition is no longer addressing all of the original goals, this coalition would be considered **partially sustained**.

Similarly, some community coalitions may be continuing to work toward all of their original goals while also addressing a new goal. For example, a community coalition is addressing its original goal of improving access to services for the uninsured. Post initial federal funding, this community coalition continues to work toward this original goal but is also addressing a new goal: improving collaboration among social services organizations in the community. This community coalition would be considered **expanded**.

Community coalitions may also be **partially sustained and expanded**. These coalitions are partially sustained because they are addressing at least one of their original goals. However, they have also expanded because they have taken on at least one new goal. For example, suppose a community coalition had two original goals: reducing non-emergent emergency department (ED) usage in the community and expanding access to health insurance. In the meantime, another organization in the community received a large grant to address non-emergent ED use in the area's primary hospital. As a result, the coalition decided to "drop" its original goal to reduce non-emergency ED use since the other organization had assumed leadership of this issue. Simultaneously, there was an increasing need for health education in the community. The coalition replaced one of its original goals with the new goal of promoting health education. Now, the coalition pursues health education and continues to expand access to health insurance. This coalition would be considered partially sustained and expanded. The new goal may or may not be synergistic to the original goals of the coalition. Rather, the new goal is reflective of the evolving needs of the community. Partially sustained and expanded coalitions have an important adaptive capacity, given that they have responded to community conditions over time.

Post initial federal funding, some community coalitions will not be sustained. The coalitions that do not have an alliance of three or more organizations, may have either **dissolved** because of a lack of resources, conflicts, or other reasons, or **actively disbanded** because they have achieved their original goal(s), and/or were no longer needed in the community. Additionally, in some cases, the coalition may have an alliance of three or more organizations that is no longer addressing at least one of the coalition's original goals. This coalition is **addressing a new goal**, perhaps as a result of a shift in the economic or political environment or in response to a change in the community's needs. Additionally, a coalition may address a new goal to meet the requirements of a new funder. Regardless of whether the coalition dissolved, actively disbanded, or is addressing a new goal to meet the needs of the community, the coalition is considered **not sustained**. Thus, even coalitions that have an active membership and/or were successful in institutionalizing the activities in the community may not necessarily be considered sustained.

Coalitions that are "sustained" in Exhibit 5.1 are composed of an alliance of three or more organizations that are working toward one or more of the coalition's original goals. However, these coalitions are not necessarily pursuing their **original activities**, i.e., the same activities that they did when they were initially federally funded. Activities are the ways in which each coalition addresses its goals, and may include programs or services, systems, policies, health behavior interventions, dissemination of products, and community capacity building. Therefore, upon determining whether the coalition itself has been sustained, it is necessary to explore whether the coalition has been able to sustain all, some, or none of its original activities. Given that coalitions evolve over time, it is possible that activities will also change to reflect the needs of the community or the requirements of a funder.

Exhibit 5.2 demonstrates that all, some, or none of the original activities of the coalition may have been sustained, regardless of whether the coalition itself has been sustained. If **all or some of the original activities are sustained**, they can be sustained by the community coalition and/or a federal, state or local government entity. If the coalition conducted several original activities, some may have been sustained by the coalition while others may have been sustained by government or non-government entities.

There are several reasons that explain why **none of the coalition's original activities are sustained**. First, the coalition may have lost its funding, or alternatively, the funder may have changed its priorities, affecting the original activities. Second, there may have been a change in the target population's demographics that required the coalition to conduct different activities. Third, evaluation results or new evidence-based data may have suggested the need for changes to the coalition's activities.

Below are three hypothetical cases of community coalitions whose activities have been sustained after their initial federal funding has ended. In the first case, all of a sustained community coalition's original activities have been sustained. In the second case, some of a sustained community coalition's original activities have been sustained. In the third case, none of a sustained community coalition's original activities have been sustained.

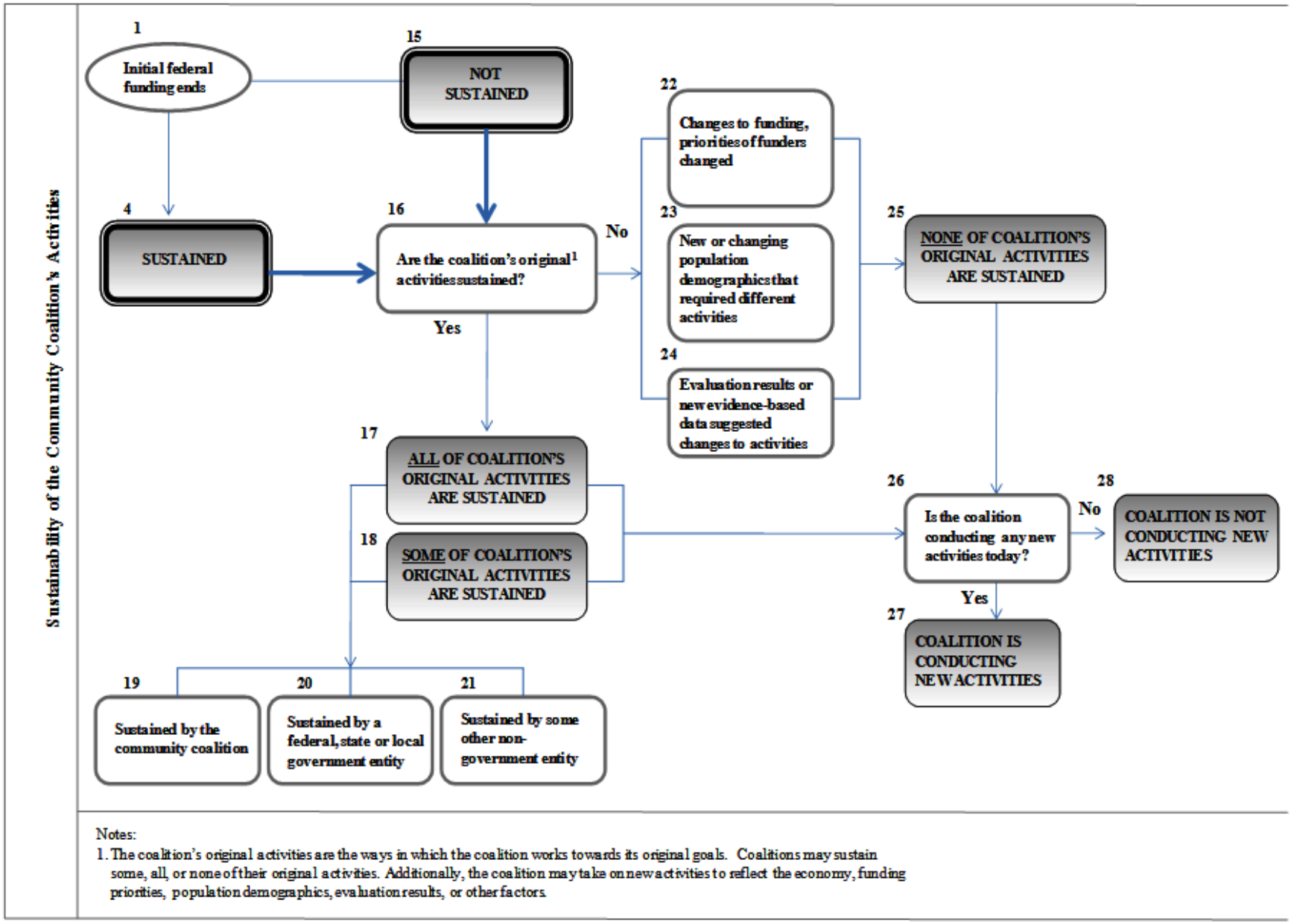
- ***All of a sustained community coalition's original activities are sustained***. For example, suppose an HCAP community coalition's original goal was the improvement of coordination and integration of services. The coalition decided to implement an electronic medical record application at 15 different clinics in its service area. The HCAP funds were used to conduct several activities: to integrate clinic messaging standards, train providers in the county clinics about how to use the EMR, and purchase some of the needed hardware for the rollout. After the initial federal funding ended, the coalition was able to continue all of these activities because it found a suitable benefactor to continue the project. This is an example of a sustained coalition that sustained all of its original activities.
- ***Some of a community coalition's original activities are sustained.*** For example, suppose an HCAP community coalition's original goal was the improvement of access to health care services for the uninsured. The coalition conducted a variety of activities to meet this goal when it was initially federally funded. First, the coalition expanded the network of providers in the community that would serve the uninsured at a reduced cost. Second, the coalition implemented patient navigation services to expand access to rural members of the community. Finally, the coalition disseminated health education materials throughout the community. After initial federal funding expired, the coalition has been sustained because it has an alliance of three or more organizations that continues to meet the original goal of improving access for the uninsured. However, after the initial federal funding ended, the coalition also had to cut several of its original activities because of budgetary constraints, and it now only focuses on expanding the network of providers that serve the uninsured. The local health department has continued the patient navigation services. However, the health education effort was not sustained. This is an example of a sustained coalition that has sustained some of its original activities.
- ***None of a sustained community coalition's original activities are sustained.*** For example, suppose an HCAP community coalition's original goal was to increase access to primary care and prevention services in rural counties. The coalition's original activities were related to health education and community outreach. Post initial federal funding, the coalition was sustained because it received a large grant from a foundation. As part of this grant, the coalition conducted a needs assessment involving focus groups with residents of rural counties. Findings from the focus groups indicated that transportation was the largest barrier to accessing primary care and preventive services in

the coalition's catchment area. In response to this new information, the HCAP coalition discontinued its original activities, and conducted new activities that address transportation needs in rural areas. This is an example of a sustained coalition that has sustained none of its original activities.

In addition to these examples, there may be many other variations (e.g., a partially sustained coalition that has sustained some/all of its activities, an expanded coalition that sustained none of its original activities but conducts several new activities, a coalition that was not sustained even though some or all of its activities live on in the community, etc.).

Regardless of whether the original activities of the coalition have continued, the coalition may take on **new activities** to reflect the economy, funding priorities, population demographics, evaluation results, or other factors.

Exhibit 5.2: Sustainability of the Community Coalition's Activities



Notes:
1. The coalition's original activities are the ways in which the coalition works towards its original goals. Coalitions may sustain some, all, or none of their original activities. Additionally, the coalition may take on new activities to reflect the economy, funding priorities, population demographics, evaluation results, or other factors.

B. A Conceptual Framework of the Sustainability of Community Coalitions

With a working definition of sustainability in the context of community coalitions, it is possible to develop a conceptual framework for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions after their initial federal funding has expired. The framework in Exhibit 5.3 depicts the relationships between sustainability enabling characteristics, actions, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes. The components of the conceptual framework are discussed in detail in the remainder of the section.

1. Enabling Characteristics of the Community Coalitions

The enabling characteristics of the community coalitions are those defining features that affect whether they will be sustained over time. While there are a number of characteristics that may affect sustainability, this conceptual model includes strength of leadership, diversity of membership, structure, vision-focus balance, strategic planning, resource stability and diversity, and evaluation. These characteristics were selected because they were identified in the literature as important facilitators of coalition effectiveness and/or sustainability. Additionally, the framework includes an "other" category in order to represent the array of additional characteristics that may affect sustainability.

i. **Strength of Leadership.** Leadership in the community coalition refers to the lead or convening organization, the member organizations, or the individual leaders from the member organizations. The strength of leadership reflects the leadership's success in the following areas:

- Connection to the community prior to working on the coalition's activities
- Expertise in the health and social issues that the coalition is addressing
- Ability to foster active involvement of other key stakeholders (e.g., board members, leaders of membership organizations, community organizers)
- Ability to negotiate, facilitate groups, network, and foster relationships with community stakeholders
- Ability to communicate a clear mission and vision for the coalition

Research suggests that the strength of leadership within the coalition is an important facilitator of sustainability. The literature demonstrates that successful coalition leaders are able to foster the involvement of coalition members, build relationships between the coalition and other organizations, and develop an important network of constituents that can facilitate the work of the coalition. A charismatic leader or highly motivated project manager may also be critical to moving the coalition through difficult times.

ii. **Diversity of Membership.** Diversity of membership refers to the different types of sectors and organizations represented in the coalition. Sectors include health, public health, substance abuse and mental health, education, social services, and faith organizations, among others. Health organizations may include academic medical centers, oral health providers, pharmacies, and school-based health centers. Public health

organizations may include state public health departments, primary care associations, and area health education centers. Substance abuse and mental health organizations may include providers and programs. Education organizations may include universities and colleges, policy centers, and student organizations. Social services organizations may include child care providers, food aid programs, and juvenile justice programs. Faith organizations may include churches, synagogues, and mosques. Other organizations may include consumer advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and elected officials. Membership diversity can affect whether the community coalition is sustained in the long-term.

iii. **Structure.** Structure refers to the administrative rules in place that facilitate the management of the coalition. Specifically, structure includes the governance of the coalition (e.g., the presence of a lead or convening agency, the presence of a governing body such as a board or committee) as well as the operations and processes that facilitate collaboration (e.g., memoranda of understanding, inter-agency agreements, regular meetings, committees). Structure also refers to the membership's documented policies for decision-making and conflict resolution processes. Given that one of the defining features of community coalitions is collaboration among member organizations, the presence or absence of these structures affects sustainability.

iv. **Vision-Focus Balance.** The vision-focus balance is the extent to which the membership agrees on the long-term goals of the coalition (vision) and is committed to pursuing activities (focus) that will move the coalition toward this vision. The vision-focus balance affects sustainability in the long-term because it reflects the commitment of the membership to achieve the goals of the coalition.

v. **Strategic Planning.** Strategic planning is the continuous assessment of the coalition's goals, activities, priorities, and plans for the future. Research suggests that planning for the future of the coalition is a facilitator of sustainability; therefore, the extent to which the coalition is engaged in strategic planning will be an important factor.

vi. **Resource Stability and Diversity.** Resource stability refers to the extent to which the coalition's funding stream changes from year to year (i.e., increases, decreases, or stays the same). Resource diversity reflects the different types of resources that support a community coalition. Resources can include financial and in-kind contributions (e.g., facilities, equipment and supplies, volunteer time). Community coalitions may receive resources from government agencies, foundations, businesses, academic institutions, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and other organizations such as the United Way. Resource stability and diversity are important facilitators of sustainability because programs that have stable funding streams from a variety of different sources are more likely to survive.

vii. **Evaluation.** Evaluations can be used to demonstrate the importance of the coalition to the community and future funders, improve the coalition's activities, and identify the coalition's challenges. The extent to which coalitions have engaged in evaluation activities (e.g., empowerment evaluation, program monitoring, quantitative and qualitative methods) may affect their sustainability.

viii. **Other.** There are a number of other characteristics that may affect sustainability in community coalitions. For example, coalitions that include organizations with a history of collaboration are more likely to survive post-funding because the organizations often have proven methods for collaboration. Additionally, coalitions that have community buy-in are more likely to continue because community residents are willing to contribute time and resources to supporting the activities.

2. Community Coalition Activities

The community coalition's activities operationalize the original goals of the coalition and may include but are not limited to the following:

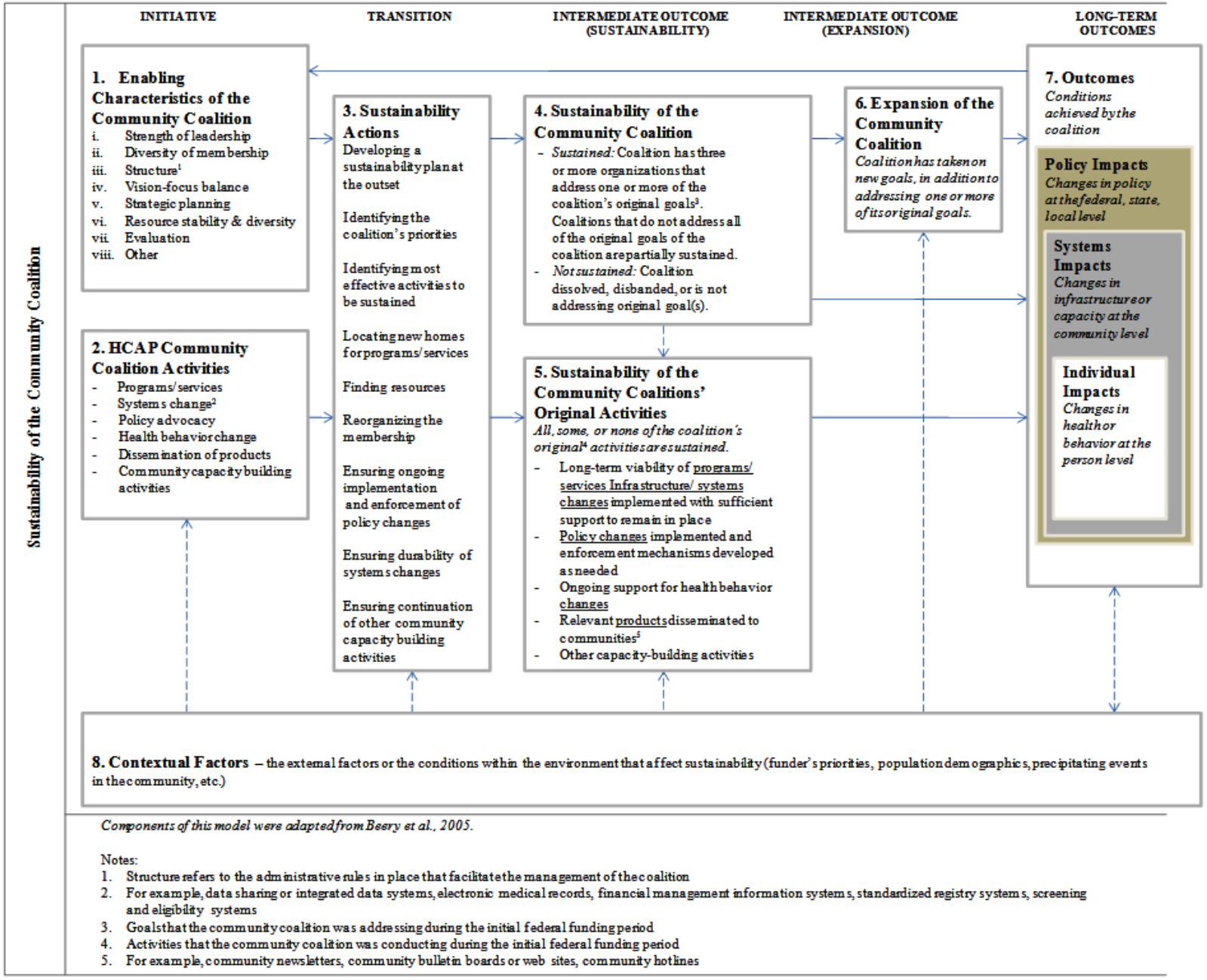
- **Programs/services** (e.g., enrollment assistance in Medicaid/SCHIP, pharmacy assistance, coordination with social services, language/translation services, patient navigation, new health insurance plans, care coordination, new clinics or access points, medical homes, expansion of specialty services)
- **Systems change activities** (e.g., data sharing or integrated data systems, electronic medical records, financial management information systems, standardized registry systems, screening and eligibility systems, disease management system)
- **Policy advocacy** (e.g., collaborations with local or state government)
- **Health behavior change** (e.g., prevention, healthy diet, screenings, health education)
- **Dissemination of products** (e.g., community newsletters, community bulletin boards or web sites, community hotlines)
- **Community capacity building activities** (e.g., providing technical assistance and training to other organizations, establishing networks of organizations, implementing community leader development programs, developing community resource guides)

As noted earlier, these activities may have changed over time, although the coalition's goals remained the same. Activities may be refined over time to reflect the economy, funding priorities, population demographics, evaluation results, or other factors.

3. Sustainability Actions

Sustainability actions are those activities that the coalition undertakes to plan for the future of the coalition and its activities. Sustainability actions may begin during the coalition development phase to ensure as seamless a transition as possible to new funding mechanisms. For example, coalitions attempt to identify and implement certain activities to sustain themselves, such as locating new homes for programs/services; identifying new funding streams from foundations or other organizations; and securing additional resources from their memberships. Coalitions may also choose to restructure their membership or modify processes for collaboration (e.g., meet less often or in a smaller core group). Sustainability actions can include working to identify ways to maintain the impacts of coalition activities—ranging from changes in individual behavior, community-level systems, and policies. A coalition's sustainability actions may not necessarily involve developing a formal sustainability plan, but can include determining key priorities, and identifying the most effective activities to be sustained and strategies for sustaining them.

Exhibit 5.3: A Conceptual Framework for the Assessment of Community Coalition Sustainability



Components of this model were adapted from Beery et al., 2005.

Notes:
1. Structure refers to the administrative rules in place that facilitate the management of the coalition
2. For example, data sharing or integrated data systems, electronic medical records, financial management information systems, standardized registry systems, screening and eligibility systems
3. Goals that the community coalition was addressing during the initial federal funding period
4. Activities that the community coalition was conducting during the initial federal funding period
5. For example, community newsletters, community bulletin boards or web sites, community hotlines

4. Sustainability of the Community Coalition

Based on the success of their sustainability actions, an intermediate outcome is the **sustainability of the community coalition**. The community coalition may or may not have been sustained after initial federal funding ended. The sustainability of the community coalition means that there is an alliance of three or more organizations that is addressing one or more of the original goals of the coalition. The alliance does not need to include the same membership organizations that were part of the coalition when it was initially federally funded. Of the coalitions that have been sustained, some may only be partially sustained. The coalition is partially sustained if it is not addressing all of its original goals. The community coalition is not sustained if the coalition has dissolved (i.e., lack of an alliance of three or more organizations) or disbanded (i.e., alliance of three or more organizations disbanded because the coalition is no longer needed in the community). Additionally, coalitions are "not sustained" if they have an alliance of three or more organizations, but are not addressing the original goals of the coalition.

5. Sustainability of the Community Coalition's Original Activities

The **sustainability of the community coalition's original activities** is another intermediate outcome. The coalition may sustain all, some, or none of the original activities that it conducted when it was initially federally funded. A community coalition does not need to be sustained for its activities to continue in the community.

6. Expansion of the Community Coalition

In addition to coalition sustainability, another intermediate outcome is the **expansion of the community coalition**. In this case, the community coalition is sustained and is addressing new goals, in addition to continuing to address one or more of its original goals. A coalition can also be partially sustained and expanded, meaning that it continues to address at least one of its original goals and has also taken on a new goal.

7. Long-Term Outcomes

Outcomes are the conditions to be achieved by the community coalition. The coalition may have **long-term outcomes** regardless whether the coalition itself has been sustained. The impacts are the cumulative effects of these outcomes at multiple levels in the community. For the purposes of this assessment, there are three types of impacts:

- **Individual impacts** are changes in health or behavior at the person level. Some community coalitions may have focused on changing individual behavior—tobacco use, utilizing screening tests, healthy weight, and disease prevention.
- **Systems impacts** are changes in infrastructure or capacity at the community level. This can include the implementation of new systems (e.g., data sharing or integrated data systems, electronic medical records, financial management information systems, standardized registry systems, screening and eligibility systems), clinics, and other infrastructure that have community-level impacts.
- **Policy impacts** are changes in policy at the local, state, and federal levels.

In Exhibit 5.3, an arrow between Outcomes and Enabling Characteristics of the Community Coalition shows the presence of organizational learning. Coalitions are dynamic by nature, and therefore, their outcomes affect their characteristics.

8. Contextual Factors

Contextual factors are the external factors or conditions that exist within the environment that can enhance or inhibit sustainability. These factors permeate the conceptual model at all levels. They can impact the coalition's enabling characteristics, activities, sustainability actions, sustainability, expansion, and outcomes. Examples of contextual factors are provided below:

- A seminal or precipitating event impacts the responsiveness of the community to the coalition's activities (e.g., community rallies around the coalition's goal to improve access to dental services because a local child died from complications associated with a tooth abscess)
- Policies, laws, and regulations (e.g., reduced Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement rates affect a provider's ability to provide free services to the uninsured as part of the coalition's network)
- The implementation of a new organization in the community (e.g., a sustained coalition expands its goals because it included a new community partner that brings a new perspective)
- The priorities of a funder (e.g., a new funder indicates that resources can only be used for delivering services rather than for core coalition operations)

The contextual factors in the community are also affected by the community coalition's outcomes. For example, if the community coalition creates a local-level policy change, then the political or economic climate of the community may also change.

C. Measures for Assessing the Sustainability of the HCAP Community Coalitions

Building from the sustainability decision trees (Exhibits 5.1 and 5.2 and the detailed conceptual framework (Exhibit 5.3), there are several measures that can be used to assess the sustainability of community coalitions. Four possible measures are described below.

Measure 1: Sustainability of the Community Coalition

A: Sustained *(an alliance of three or more organizations that is addressing one or more of the original goals of the initially federally funded coalition)*

B: Fully sustained *(an alliance of three or more organizations that is addressing all of the original goals of the initially federally funded coalition)*

C: Partially sustained *(an alliance of three or more organizations that is not addressing all of the original goals of the initially federally funded coalition)*

D: Not sustained *(coalition is no longer in operation)*

Measure 2: Expansion of the Community Coalition

A: Expanded *(coalition is addressing one or more of the coalition's original goals, and is also addressing new goals)*

B: Not expanded *(coalition is addressing one or more of the original goals, but is not addressing new goals)*

Measure 3: Partial Sustainability and Expansion of the Community Coalition

A: Partially sustained and expanded coalition *(the coalition is addressing a new goal(s) in addition to at least one of its original goals)*

Measure 4: Sustainability of the Community Coalition's Original Activities

A: All of the coalition's original activities were sustained *(all of the coalition's original activities that were conducted while the coalition was initially federally funded have been sustained)*

B: Some of the coalition's original activities were sustained *(some of the coalition's original activities that were conducted while the coalition was initially federally funded have been sustained)*

C: None of the coalition's original activities were sustained *(none of the coalition's original activities that were conducted while the coalition was initially federally funded have been sustained)*

D: New activities are conducted by the coalition *(the coalition is conducting new activities, regardless of whether the original activities have been sustained)*

Chapter Five provided a definition of sustainability in community coalitions and a conceptual model that can be used to assess the sustainability of community coalitions. At the most basic level, the model shows that a community coalition is either sustained or not sustained post initial federal funding. The coalition may have been sustained to different degrees (e.g., partially sustained, expanded). Additionally, regardless of whether the coalition itself has been sustained, some, all, or none of its activities may continue in the community. Thus, this model explores the sustainability of the coalition independently from the sustainability of its activities. Key components of the conceptual model include the coalition's enabling characteristics, sustainability actions, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes. This chapter also provided four measures that can be used to assess the sustainability of community coalitions. Chapter Six provides a conclusion of the findings from the literature and offers pragmatic and policy implications from the conceptual model.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications

The findings from the literature review and conceptual model have implications for community coalitions, evaluators, and funders. Chapter Six focuses on the conclusions from this review, as well as the pragmatic and policy implications associated with the sustainability of community coalitions once initial federal funding ends.

A. A Model for Conceptualizing Sustainability

While there is no standard approach for defining and conceptualizing sustainability, the range of definitions and conceptual models reveal that the emphasis can either be placed on the continuation of the community coalition or on the coalition's activities and impacts. Each community coalition is formed for different reasons and seeks to accomplish a unique set of goals. Therefore, it is critical to ask the question, what should be sustained?

Findings from this literature review demonstrate that funders of community coalitions and those who lead the coalitions must determine if the ultimate goal is to maintain a formal alliance of organizations that increases the community's capacity to address problems, or, to develop and institutionalize programs and activities within the existing system. If the goal is to formalize relationships among diverse organizations to build capacity within the community, then sustaining the coalition may be of paramount importance. On the other hand, if a community coalition is formed to conduct specific programmatic activities and institutionalize those activities within a member organization or elsewhere, then sustaining the coalition may not be necessary.

While the literature demonstrates that it is appropriate to emphasize different aspects of sustainability in different situations, the lack of a standard definition makes evaluation of community coalitions difficult. As a result, researchers have crafted detailed conceptual models that define sustainability in the context of the coalitions that are being evaluated.

This literature review adapted components of existing conceptual frameworks to develop a conceptual model that provides a framework for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions in terms of their structure and their intended impacts. The conceptual model is a logic model that depicts the potential actions and outcomes of community coalitions post initial federal funding. The model also incorporates the enabling characteristics of coalitions that facilitate sustainability and may lead to long-term outcomes. The conceptual model developed in this review will be used to explore and document the extent to which the CAP/HCAP community coalitions have been able to sustain themselves and continue to impact their communities after their initial federal funding ended. While the conceptual model will be used to guide the current study, it also has implications for community coalitions, evaluators, and funders, in general.

B. Pragmatic Implications for Community Coalitions, Evaluators, and Funders

The conceptual model has a number of pragmatic implications for community coalitions, evaluators, and funders. The conceptual model can be useful to community coalitions that are interested in planning for sustainability. Coalitions may adapt and repurpose the model to reflect their program goals and activities, as well as their vision for sustainability. Additionally,

community coalitions may strategically invest time and resources into developing the characteristics and capacities that facilitate sustainability, including strong leadership, diverse membership, and commitment to the coalition's goals, among others. The model may also be used by community coalitions that are interested in engaging in actions that will facilitate sustainability post initial funding (e.g., institutionalizing program services in the community, identifying new funding sources, developing a sustainability plan).

In addition to community coalitions, the model has implications for researchers and practitioners who evaluate the sustainability of coalitions. First, the model provides a concrete definition of sustainability that can be used in subsequent evaluations of community coalitions. To be considered sustained, coalitions must have an alliance of three or more organizations that are addressing one or more of the original goals of the coalition. Second, the model incorporates different levels of sustainability, enabling evaluators to study coalitions that have been partially sustained or expanded. Third, the model emphasizes the importance of defining appropriate evaluation questions. Is the evaluator interested in the sustainability of the coalition or in the sustainability of its activities and impacts? The conceptual model presented in this literature review can be used to assess the former and the latter. Fourth, the model enables evaluators to test hypotheses about the effects of coalition characteristics and capacities on intermediate and long-term outcomes (e.g., coalitions with a diverse membership are more likely to achieve health and social outcomes than other coalitions).

Finally, the conceptual model provides a method for evaluators to assess why some community coalitions have not been sustained over time. Specifically, evaluators can use the model to distinguish between coalitions that tried, but were unable to sustain themselves due to organizational and funding barriers, and those that have not been sustained because they have fulfilled their mission, moved on to other pressing priorities, or were no longer needed in the community. This is a particularly important implication because some community coalitions have succeeded in their communities, even though they have not been sustained.

The conceptual model also has implications for funders of community coalitions. The federal government and foundations continue to invest in community coalitions to improve outcomes at the local level. When providing initial program funding for community coalitions or programs, funders must consider whether they expect them to continue post-grant. The conceptual model can help project officers think about the efficient use of their resources in achieving program objectives. Is success defined in terms of the sustainability of the coalition or its activities and impacts? Funders that are focused on the sustainability of the community coalition may choose to fund coalitions that have a solid plan for securing future resources for operational costs (e.g., meetings). In contrast, funders that are interested in the sustainability of the coalition's activities and impacts may want to fund coalitions that have plans for institutionalizing their activities in other organizations at the end of the project.

Finally, the conceptual model may also help funders to provide specific requirements for sustainability in requests for proposals, highlighting sustainability as an important concern. Furthermore, the conceptual model can be used by funders to provide direction to coalitions, and possibly to offer technical assistance when needed.

C. Policy Implications

The literature review and conceptual model has broader implications for policy. Policymakers may use the findings from this study to develop standards for sustainability planning across programs and projects. Currently, some programs require grantees to develop a sustainability plan that describes their sustainability strategies prior to being funded. However, other programs do not require grantees to document their sustainability strategies. Policymakers at the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies may be interested in developing standardized sustainability planning tools to track the sustainability actions of grantees and to monitor the progress of the programs. The conceptual model can be used to develop the criteria for these tools.

Policymakers can also use the conceptual model to set realistic and measurable expectations of sustainability post-funding. Given the internal dynamics of coalitions, the changing economic landscape, and other contextual factors, achieving sustainability can be a great challenge. In the conceptual model, sustained coalitions must maintain an alliance of three or more organizations and a commitment to addressing the original goals for which they were federally funded. Many coalitions will not be able to satisfy both of these conditions. The model helps policymakers understand that there are a variety of factors that affect sustainability, and that even coalitions that have not been sustained may have made valuable contributions to their communities.

Finally, many federal programs assume that community coalitions and their activities should be sustained after the grant period in the absence of federal funding. However, policymakers should consider whether there is a role for the federal government in sustaining community coalitions. In a down economy, federal funding may enable coalitions to sustain themselves until it is possible to secure new funds. Policymakers may wish to allocate continuation funds to community coalitions that have the highest potential for long-term survival or those that are creating the greatest impact in their communities. The conceptual model can be used to identify community coalitions with the greatest potential for success.

D. Areas for Future Research

Researchers question whether community coalitions should be continued in the long-term and whether long-term sustainability is the appropriate goal of any grant-funded program. The literature review and conceptual model have emphasized that the continuation of any community coalition or program should depend on its intended goals. Little research has addressed the more subjective question of whether community coalitions should be sustained.

Additional research is necessary to explore whether community coalitions should exist in perpetuity. There is debate in the philanthropic literature about whether foundations are more effective when they operate with a limited life span and have to spend down their resources at a predetermined point in time. Limited life span foundations have been said to set clearer objectives and focus on discrete outcomes, have a greater sense of urgency, and have the ability to mobilize more talent because they require a limited time commitment. Thus, operating under this arrangement may be more effective than existing in perpetuity. The same issue can apply to community coalitions and programs. Additional research should explore the concept of limited life span community coalitions, and whether operating under this arrangement influences their outcomes.

The literature review and conceptual model also raise broader research questions that should be investigated in future sustainability studies. First, is there a best practice for funding community coalitions to encourage sustainability? Some funders provide decreasing annual resources (e.g., 100 percent year one, 50 percent year two, 10 percent years three to five). Others institute requirements for programs to find matching funds at the onset. Further research will be necessary to understand how different funding arrangements impact the sustainability of community coalitions.

Second, the different definitions in the literature concur that sustainability is a process that occurs over time. However, research has not suggested an appropriate length of time to fund a coalition or program. Funding a community coalition for four years versus two years may yield different results, and have implications for sustainability. In the same vein, researchers should also explore whether there is an acceptable timeframe for assessing the sustainability of community coalitions (i.e., how soon after the initial funding is withdrawn, and how long should this assessment continue?).

Finally, no single conceptual model can possibly incorporate every coalition factor or characteristic that may affect sustainability. Thus, research should begin comparing the combinations of factors across models to better understand the characteristics, capacities, and conditions that foster community coalition sustainability.

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