



The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Guide to Using the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool

Sustaining the achievements of the Forum sites is a high priority for the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. To that end, and in partnership with site leaders, federal leadership developed a sustainability framework and this accompanying self-assessment tool. The sustainability framework outlines eight capacities necessary for sites to successfully implement and sustain their youth violence prevention efforts. This tool will help you reflect on those capacities and determine your priorities for moving forward. It will also help federal leadership and other funding partners provide technical assistance to you that will be of greatest value to your community.

How to Use This Tool

This self-assessment tool is designed to collect a variety of perspectives on your site's capacity to succeed in and sustain its youth violence prevention work. An "About the Self-Assessment Tool" letter is included in this guide. It can be shared with those who will be implementing this tool so they have a better understanding of the tool and their role in this process.

After input is collected, you will need to reach consensus on the self-assessment ratings and on your site's top sustainability priorities and technical assistance needs. A summary self-assessment should be included in your next Forum plan, and the decisions reached should be reflected in the goals and activities within your plan.

There are a variety of ways your site can use this tool to collect input and reach consensus. It is important that you design a thoughtful process that fits your community.

The following section, "Recommendations on the Self-Assessment Process," can help you decide how to proceed.

This tool is meant to provide an assessment snapshot that helps you to set priorities for the short and long terms. As you know, collective impact efforts are often developmental and always dynamic. One year, your plan is strong and your partnership is solid. The next year, you may have a turnover in city leadership and a critical staff member may leave a partner organization. Assessing and building capacity is not something you do once and then move on in your work. Sustainability capacities will not remain static. They will need to be revisited on a regular basis and when your political or economic circumstances change.

Lastly, it is important to remember that, to make progress, you do not need to do everything well. Rather, this self-assessment should help you clarify and focus your sustainability efforts by building a collective understanding among your site leaders about your strengths, your challenges, and your capacity-building priorities.

Recommendations on the Self-Assessment Process



Because every Forum site is different, there is not one process that will work for everyone. You will need to gather a sustainability self-assessment team and develop a decision-making process that fits your local governance structure, your culture, and your site's stage of development.

Self-Assessment Team

The first step is to determine who will make up your self-assessment team. Everyone on the team will complete the tool and come together to reach consensus on ratings and priorities for moving forward, so it is important that your site leaders are part of the team. When we refer to site leaders, we are talking about those people who make decisions and act on behalf of the local Forum effort. Each site may define its site leaders slightly differently, and that is fine. However, before using this tool, it is important to identify your site leaders.

The next decision is to determine whether your self-assessment team will include additional stakeholders, beyond your existing site leaders. It is critical that diverse perspectives are collected as part of the process. Capacities are often perceived differently from different vantage points. A few questions to consider as you decide whom else to include on the team are

- Is your existing site leadership representative of your community?
- Do young people have a decision-making role within your site leadership?
- Are resident groups represented in your site leadership?

If you answered “no” to any of these, you will want to consider expanding your self-assessment team to include these other stakeholder groups' perspectives. You could also consider whether an existing advisory committee, self-evaluation team, or other standing committee already brings the right people together and could serve as the self-assessment team. And while your team should be representative and include diverse perspectives, keep in mind that it is difficult to reach consensus with large groups (i.e., more than 20 people). A team of around 10 persons is recommended. Once the team is determined, you will need to reach out to potential members by phone or email and invite them to participate. The “About the Forum's Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool” can be helpful in your communications.

Self-Assessment Decision-Making Process

Once the team is formed, you will need to determine how they will complete the assessment tool and how consensus will be built. There are two basic options, and many variations on each.

Option 1. Send the self-assessment tool to team members to be completed on their own. This can be done with an Excel document or by Survey Monkey. Give your team a timeline for completing the assessment, and be sure to explain why their input is important. Set up a time—in person if possible or by conference call—to discuss the self-assessment. Ask them to complete and return the self-assessment in time, so the team's responses can be summarized before you meet. We suggest allowing a minimum of 2 hours for the discussion. This allows time to cover all the areas and come to consensus on the ratings and priorities. If you are using this tool with a group larger than 10, you may need to allow additional time for discussion.



Option 2. Schedule an in-person meeting with the team. Review the self-assessment tool, its purpose, and why their input is important. Provide time for questions. Then ask people to complete the tool individually, followed by small-group or large-group facilitated discussion to reach consensus on ratings and priorities for moving forward. Again, the larger the group the more time you will need. You may also consider bringing in an outside facilitator so everyone can participate equally in the conversation.

There are many factors to consider as you determine which decision-making process, or variation on these, is best suited for your site. For example, a longstanding site with a cohesive leadership team may prefer a streamlined process similar to Option 1. However, a newer site where relationships and trust are still being built may be better suited to Option 2, which allows more time for questions, group discussion, and to hear other people's thoughts and perspectives.

Thank you for all your work in preventing youth violence and promoting positive youth opportunities!

About the Forum's Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool*

As a Forum site, we need to develop a range of capacities to achieve our long-term goals. To grow and sustain our youth violence prevention effort, we have to make choices on where to prioritize our time and efforts. This self-assessment tool will assist us in examining what capacity building should be prioritized in our work moving forward. It can also help us identify our strengths, areas needing new strategies or renewed emphasis, and our site's technical assistance needs.

What We Learn From the Self-Assessment Will Inform Our Forum Planning Process and Determine Our Top Capacity-Building Priorities Over the Next 3 years

This tool is organized around **eight critical capacities** that are necessary for advancing and sustaining a Forum site. We need the capacity to

1. Develop and articulate a **shared vision of success** and the scale and scope of that vision.
2. **Clearly define the desired results**, and measure the impact of our efforts.
3. **Authentically engage youth** in all aspects of our effort.
4. Create a **leadership and governance** structure to support our multidisciplinary partnership.
5. Consistently and effectively **engage community stakeholders** in our collaboration.
6. Effectively **manage the operations** of our diverse community collaboration to achieve shared goals.
7. **Secure and leverage a broad range of financial resources** to support the capacities and functions we need to achieve and sustain our vision.
8. **Nimble adapt to and strategically influence** the changing context in which we operate.

Keep in mind that few communities have time to address all of these items in detail. We should not assume that, to succeed, we must have all of these capacities to the highest level. Rather, we

*For use in communications with your self-assessment team.



need to be making sufficient progress in the critical areas and building capacity over time. We will need to make our own best judgment about where, when, and at what scale to focus our attention to build capacity.

Each capacity includes specific elements for you to consider and rate. At the end of the assessment, there is a space for you to identify key strengths and challenges, and make recommendations for top shorter-term (12 months) and longer-term (2 to 3 years) priorities for expanding and deepening our efforts. After each of us completes this tool individually, we will come together to reach consensus on our ratings and rank our priorities moving forward.

Above all, please remember that this is a tool to help us move our work forward—this is not a scorecard!