



Sustaining Momentum for Effective Change: *Lessons Learned From Office on Women's Health Programs*

Forum Summary Report

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I. Overview and Forum Objectives

Federally funded health and human services initiatives represent a substantial investment of scarce resources. However, initiatives that are unsustainable beyond the period of initial funding significantly limit the country's return on this investment and its ability to improve health outcomes.^{1,2} While the long-term viability of initiatives has been widely recognized as integral to their effectiveness over time, there has been a lack of research defining sustainability and guidance for organizations on how to achieve it.³ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office on Women's Health (OWH) is examining the issue of sustainability through an assessment of the sustainability of its previously funded Multidisciplinary Health Models for Women (MHMW) initiative (see Appendix A). To further explore this important issue, OWH convened a forum titled "Sustaining Momentum for Effective Change: Lessons Learned from the Office on Women's Health Programs" on December 16, 2009, in Bethesda, MD. The agenda, participant list, and a summary report on the participant's evaluation of the meeting are included in the appendices to this report.

The forum brought together a diverse group of 101 Federal staff, sustainability experts, and OWH partners from several current and formerly funded OWH initiatives, including:

- Multidisciplinary Health Models for Women (MHMW);
- Advancing System Improvements to Support Targets for Healthy People 2010 (ASIST2010);
- Women and HIV/AIDS; and
- Violence Against Women.

Participating OWH Grant Programs

MHMW: This effort, funded from 1996 to 2007, comprised five programs operating within 48 sites charged with integrating a comprehensive care multidisciplinary model consisting of five core components: clinical care, research, public education and outreach, training, and leadership development.

ASIST2010: This 3-year cooperative agreement program uses a gender focused public health systems approach to improve performance on two or more Healthy People 2010 (HP 2010) objectives in key focus areas. The goals are to:

- Provide additional support to existing public health systems to enable a gender focus to HP 2010 objectives;
- Improve surveillance and information systems to track grantee-level progress on HP 2010 objectives; and

- Develop and implement a plan to sustain the program after OWH funding ends.

Women and HIV/AIDS: This program focuses on a variety of issues and populations, including HIV/AIDS-related services for survivors of domestic violence; HIV/AIDS prevention for women in underserved regions, such as rural areas and Territories; and HIV/AIDS prevention and support for special populations, such as young women attending minority-serving institutions and formerly and currently incarcerated women.

Violence Against Women: This program funds a range of activities related to violence against women, such as campus violence prevention programs, HIV/AIDS support for survivors of domestic violence, special projects and pilot initiatives, and regional programs led by the Regional Women's Health Offices.

The forum had five objectives:

1. Participants come to a clearer understanding of how to define sustainability, the various ways the term is used, how to decide what should be sustained, and what research and experience suggest are promising practices in promoting sustainability.
2. Participants share ideas and develop recommendations for sustaining program components and momentum for changing systems of care.
3. Participants from all sectors (e.g., Federal, community, university, foundations) leave the forum with clear ideas about what they can do to promote sustainability and begin the development of a working definition of sustainability that is applicable across organizations and programs.
4. The presentations and interactions among participants produce information that can be used to improve Federal guidance and support around the issue of sustainability.
5. The Forum serves to maintain and strengthen networks of leaders in women's health.

II. Opening Remarks

Presenter: Anna Kindermann, Public Health Advisor, OWH

Anna Kindermann opened the forum by providing a brief overview of how OWH's interest in better understanding the sustainability process emerged. She explained that for years OWH emphasized the importance of sustaining programs to grantees and contractors, but did not provide a clear definition of sustainability or how to achieve it. In 2008, OWH launched a project using the MHMW effort as a case study. The project was charged with answering the following questions:

- What was the status of the MHMW programs when they ended in 2007, and what is their status now?
- What aspects of the programs have been sustained?
- What have been the major challenges and successes grantees have experienced in trying to sustain their programs?

The project is using a mixed-method research design that builds upon findings from a previous literature review and collects data from MHMW program sites through four strategies: (1) an abstraction of data from grant and contract documents, (2) a Web-based survey, (3) key-informant telephone interviews, and (4) site visits.

The current forum will provide an opportunity to delve deeper into different perspectives on what sustainability is, personal experiences from grantees and contractors that have struggled to maintain their programs, and recommendations on how Federal agencies and other funders can best promote sustainability. OWH will use the information collected at the forum and other information from the ongoing assessment to convene a consensus conference with representatives from other HHS offices and agencies to develop a common definition of sustainability in the context of public health and a set of common guidelines to help foster sustainability and lasting positive changes to health systems.

Presenter: Frances Ashe-Goins, Acting Director, OWH

In Frances Ashe-Goins's welcoming remarks, she noted the diversity of attendees, including researchers from academia and leaders from community-based organizations, and their common stake in efforts to understand and promote sustainability. She noted that the current forum was designed to encourage attendees to think about making existing resources last and finding additional ones. She encouraged attendees to network with one another and to tap into one another's knowledge and experience.

III. Plenary Sessions

Session 1:

Opportunities for Creating Positive, Sustainable Change With Federal Support

Presenter: Lee Wilson, Director, Division of Public Health Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

Lee Wilson stated that although HHS sustainability requirements are an excellent idea, they are not yet fully formed. An important goal is to gather input from grantees regarding the types of programs and services that are and are not sustainable, as well as which ones should be federally funded on a continuous basis rather than for just 2 or 3 years. It is important to recognize that health and human services programs address ongoing needs that are not going to go away, especially in difficult times. These kinds of programs run counter to the economy: Demand is highest when resources are most limited, making sustainability a challenge. Mr. Wilson described some potential funding opportunities that are or may become available. These include:

- Health reform. Health reform is going to cover a lot more people and provide services to people who have not had eligibility before. They will be able to get services that providers will be able to bill for. There will be a real focus on being able to bill, so this may be a disadvantage for certain services such as prevention. Grantees at the community level or with discretionary grants will have to find ways to bill for services provided.
- Demonstration programs. There are a large number of demonstration programs that he encourages grantees to look into. Dr. Atul Gawande, a former HHS employee, wrote an article in the December 14th *New Yorker* on how testing and demonstration projects have brought about real change in our society. He is hopeful that such demonstration projects will produce real change for health care in our country.
- Comparative effectiveness research dollars (CER). ASPE received over a billion dollars as part of the stimulus package, \$400 million of which came to the Office of the Secretary and \$700-800 million to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The results from these comparative effectiveness research studies are to be released to providers and the public. These are new and real funds, but the vast majority will go into looking at clinical types of care. There will be huge opportunities to apply for funding and demonstrate effectiveness.
 - One problem is that grantees receiving these CER dollars are barred from making cost comparisons. Mr. Wilson is not sure how to compare effectiveness without looking at cost, but is hopeful that this requirement will be relaxed in the future.
 - The CER money will be realized in a series of grants coming out of the department as the first billion needs to be spent by the end of this fiscal year. NIH is on a major hiring spree to be able to support CER. Wilson recommended that forum participants pursue grant funding and look at outcomes from CER research as it will be the standard for determining what will be funded in the future.

Mr. Wilson presented five suggestions for grantees to consider when thinking about sustainability:

- **Have a signature program or activity.** Grantees should “do what they do best” and avoid diluting programs to meet too many needs.
- **Have a clear mandate and demonstrate it.** Know what the needs are in the community and in the target population and have clear, proven models for addressing those needs.

- **Write grant applications well.** Clearly articulate needs, strategies, and evidence for why this program will make a difference. Take a hard look at what is and is not changeable. Identify those programs and needs that will not go away and make the case for funding to congressional and legislative representatives. Make the point at the national level that the program will not be able to function with only local, State, and private funds.
- **Be ready to “sell yourself” and build the program’s reputation.** Explore every opportunity for funding and what the program may influence. Reach beyond the program’s target.
- **Diversify funding. Always have a proposal “in your pocket.”** Always be ready to explain why the program should get the money. Take a hard look at what the program is able to do and what improvements it is making.

The final portion of this session featured questions from the audience. Following are highlights from this discussion.

What about grantees that are not providing clinical services but are providing public health/prevention services?

- There will be a series of demonstration programs looking at issues related to wellness and health professional shortages. These programs will be exploring how to structure the healthcare safety net in such a way as to respond to regional and national primary care provider shortages, especially in rural areas. There will be a number of approaches around the medical home model that demonstrate a continuum of care across a wide variety of interventions related to chronic disease management and health.
- There may be initiatives related to tobacco, obesity, and hepatitis coming out in the near future. These will be the “signature initiatives of the Secretary.”
 - The tobacco initiative will be based on the “moving towards a smoke-free America” program from 2006 or 2007. It will feature broad-based prevention, education, regulation, and treatment strategies.
 - Healthy Weight will be Michelle Obama’s signature initiative.
 - The hepatitis program is just beginning right now; the Institute of Medicine will be releasing a report and an accompanying initiative in January.
- There will also be two cross-departmental initiatives: one has to do with the economic downturn and is called a place-based initiative. This initiative will take communities that are particularly hurting and coordinate labor, homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse services. The idea is to join services to address community needs as a whole. Finally, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education will be launching the Healthy Schools Initiative pilots with an idea towards moving interventions into schools. This is a healthy weight initiative based on the idea of “healthy choice vs. default choice.”
- Finally, there is a grant announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for 50 communities to do prevention work.

Mr. Wilson closed by recommending that grantees look at the text of the healthcare bills and at the websites such as the Alliance for Health and the Kaiser Foundation for summaries of various pieces of legislation.

Session 2: What Do We Know About Supporting Sustainability?

Moderator: Christopher Botsko; Deputy Director of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation; Community Health Systems; Altarum Institute

Panelists: Stacie Geller; Professor; University of Illinois, Chicago

Justina Trott; Director of Policy, Research, and Education; Women's Health Services; Santa Fe, NM

Quinn Gentry; Behavioral Scientist and Program Evaluator; Messages of Empowerment Productions, LLC; Atlanta, GA

Susan Hailman; Director of Knowledge Transfer and Technical Assistance; Campaign Consultation, Inc.

Amy Brown, Senior Policy Associate, Altarum Institute

Is There an Agreed-Upon Definition of Sustainability?

Amy Brown opened the panel session with brief highlights from Altarum Institute's sustainability literature review, conducted as part of OWH's assessment project. She explained that one of the major findings from the review was that there is no single agreed-upon definition of sustainability. However, the most simplistic definition is that sustainability is the continuation of a program or initiative beyond the period of initial funding. While this definition may be sufficient for a small, well-defined program such as a new mobile medical unit program, it becomes problematic for complex initiatives such as MHMW.

In order to define sustainability for complex initiatives, Ms. Brown said that it is important to first identify what is most important to maintain. Ideally, organizations will want to continue operating at much the same level as they were at the beginning and as a recognizable, branded initiative. Research and conversations with grantees have uncovered that it is often too difficult to keep an initiative going at the same level. However, what may be more important and more feasible to maintain is the systems change aspects of these initiatives. For example, during pilot interviews for the assessment, one of the grantees told the project team that the core model provided a new way of thinking about women's health and health care in general. The grant has changed the way the grantee does business and has helped it to better organize staff resources and provide more effective services for all their patients. Another grantee said that it formed several new multidisciplinary committees which for the first time allowed a high level of collaboration across departments. The grantee has been able to maintain these committees in large part because staff appreciated the opportunity to collaborate.

These examples capture another key finding from the literature, that sustainability is not a simple dichotomy of sustained or not sustained. Rather, there are usually varying degrees of sustainability in which some aspects of an initiative will be maintained but not others.

Ms. Brown indicated that the literature presents sustainability as a multidimensional concept characterized by at least four major elements:

- **Adherence to the original program principles and objectives.** Even if the same level of programming and service delivery is not maintained, it may still be possible to maintain the commitment to a new way of approaching health care.
- **Integration within the structure of the host organization.** A key determinant of the longevity of an initiative is how much internal support it has from the host institution. An effective way of securing this support is by convincing the institution to adopt aspects of the initiative to improve the overall system of care.

- **Building community capacity.** Equally important to having support from the host organization is having the support of the surrounding community. This can include maintaining a community advisory board, training residents to be community health workers to help implement the initiative, or building community partnerships. These efforts can help foster a sense of community ownership of the initiative and help identify champions who will advocate for the initiative and help bring in resources.
- **Maintenance of benefits.** This is generally the most visible and tangible aspect of sustainability and requires some continued level of programming and services to benefit clients, staff, and students. This element usually requires the greatest amount of direct resources.

Ms. Brown concluded by stating that the literature also emphasizes that sustainability is not an isolated event that occurs after 4 or 5 years of grant funding. Instead, it is an integral part of an initiative's lifecycle. Planning for sustainability should begin with the preparation of the initial funding application and continue throughout program planning and implementation to allow sufficient time to build trust and strong partnerships, and to create a high profile for the initiative.

What Needs To Be Done To Achieve Sustainability?

The moderator asked panelists to reflect on their own experiences in thinking about how to conceptualize and promote sustainability. Stacie Geller agreed that it is important to have a broad definition of sustainability, but she felt that a missing component was access to sources of long-term funding. Her experience with the MHWM initiative has shown that the longer the funding was provided, the greater the success in sustainability. Justina Trott added that sustainability is about a program "gaining traction and taking hold" in a community. For her program, full sustainability would mean that her organization had met its key goal of meeting the health needs of women and eliminating the need for services.

Quinn Gentry explained that her views of sustainability have been shaped by her career as a brand manager and reflected on how certain product brands are able to stay around for hundreds of years. She suggested that organizations think about branding when they think about sustainability and shared several tips for achieving sustainability:

- Ask stakeholders in the community what they find to be valuable about the initiative. Focus on developing and promoting this favorable aspect.
- Hire competent frontline staff members who can provide a critical first impression of the organization.
- Maintain fiscal accountability and be able to track for stakeholders how all expenditures have been used.

The final portion of the session featured questions from the audience. Following are highlights from this discussion.

How can we talk about sustainability as a journey?

- The key to sustainability is adaptability and a willingness to change over time. You must adapt a program to fit the changing needs of new and diverse stakeholders.
- Clear, concise language about what you do is critical to being able to chart the journey toward sustainability. Starting out with a solid message about your goals will help indicate where you are going on this journey.

How do we maintain support from our organization's administration in the face of continued budget cuts due to the economy?

- It is important to identify what is unique about what you are doing. This is the selling point of your initiative, which needs to be advertised. For example, in Chicago, there are a lot of academic research centers, but the center at the University of Chicago is the only National Center of Excellence in the city, which makes it unique.
- Emphasize that your program is not just delivering a set of services but is making a much broader impact by implementing a new model of care that works at the system level to improve women's health.

How do you take credit for making systems changes?

- Learn from the success that the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) have had in applying a new collaborative model to radically transforming the research process. The major goal of CTSA is to develop teams of investigators from various fields who can take scientific discoveries in the laboratory and turn them into treatments and strategies for patients in clinical settings. Researchers involved in CTSA have been able to claim a role in implementing and promoting this new model and demonstrating that its success is rooted in a different way of thinking about how to translate research into practice.

Additional Recommendations

- Collect quantitative and qualitative data to more effectively tell your story and explain what makes what you do special.
- Incorporate nontraditional partners, particularly ones outside the health realm.
- Engage partners who can make major contributions and have them play a role in achieving sustainability.

IV. Breakout Groups

Following the conclusion of individual presentations, Christopher Botsko from Altarum Institute announced that the rest of the forum would consist of three breakout groups and report-outs. The breakout group organization and topics were:

- **Sustainability experiences.** Participants were assigned to groups made up of different programs and initiatives. They were asked to share their experiences with sustainability, including examples of their successes as well as aspects that did not work well.
- **Lessons from sustainability experiences.** Attendees were grouped together with those from similar programs and organizations to discuss ways to decide what should be sustained, ways to support sustainability, and challenges specific to sustaining efforts focused on women's health.
- **Recommendations for sustainability.** Participants returned to mixed groups to discuss how Federal agencies and other funders should define sustainability, as well as the type of support that grantees and contractors need to become sustainable.

It is important to note that the purpose of the discussion groups was to provide a forum where all participants could present what they saw as the key issues in understanding and promoting sustainability. The fact that issues are listed here does not mean that the groups as a whole agreed on proposed solutions.

Sustainability Experiences

What are examples of efforts that have been sustained?

- One grantee has focused on greater education of clients, providers, and community organizations so that it can encourage greater awareness of and screening for hypertension. These audiences are also encouraged to educate others on hypertension, a practice change that will be sustained into the future.
- Another grantee provided substantial training and technical assistance to partner staff on geriatric chronic disease management so that they could integrate these practices into their own operations.
- A director of a Community Center of Excellence reported that she has used the multidisciplinary aspect of the core MHMW model to help find additional resources. Her program formed a multidisciplinary committee comprised of staff across different departments. The committee was able to tap into the departmental budgets to help pay for travel and speaker costs, which has continued because of high participation and interest in the group.
- An academic institution was able to institutionalize its focus on leadership development by establishing a new Office of Faculty Development. This office has been able to use internal resources to work across different departments and develop new tools, such as enhanced search committees and training on gender bias in hiring decisions, to bring women into leadership positions.

What are examples of efforts that have been challenging to sustain?

- One grantee shared an experience in which she had difficulty sustaining an effort to screen HIV-positive patients for domestic violence. Because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the largest national funder of HIV-related care, does not currently mandate such screening, local leaders and funders have not felt compelled to support efforts to enhance domestic violence screening in HIV services.

- Another academically based program has faced increasing pressure from the dean, who wants the program to emphasize research over the other components of the core model. To focus more time and effort on pursuing greater research funds, such as through the National Institutes of Health, they have had to scale back on the program and have had less success with other components.

What helps achieve sustainability?

Set Yourself Up for Success:

- Establish goals that are realistic and achievable.
- Develop a plan for evaluation and use the results to improve the implementation process.

Demonstrate Value and Effectiveness:

- Prove the value of the work you are doing and what makes it unique.
- Present both stories and statistics that demonstrate the achievement of outcomes.
- Demonstrate the value of programs to build buy-in from internal leadership.
- Use the Federal designation to your advantage. It is a sign of prestige that can signify the importance of programs.

Know When To Claim Credit and When Not To Claim Credit:

- Sometimes it is beneficial to claim credit for implementing strategies because it may lead to greater support from stakeholders.
- Other times, claiming credit may make you too visible, and you can become a target for budget cuts.
- Give credit to partners which may help strengthen relationships.

Adaptability:

- Be open to adapting the approach to meet changing community needs.
- If an approach is too cumbersome or not working well, tweaking it may make it more sustainable.
- Modifying who is responsible for an aspect of implementation may help lead to sustainability by encouraging partners to take control and use their resources to keep the program going or even to expand it.
- Be open to making tradeoffs. You may need to drop some activities to free up resources for other activities.

Find Additional Resources:

- Take advantage of diverse funding streams beyond Federal sources, including various state-level grants and contracts and private foundation funding.
- Ask partners to help pay for or provide training that will increase staff competence and help the staff plan and implement the program effectively.
- Explore which services are billable, and focus efforts on increasing those as a way to generate revenue.
- Building a strong network of volunteers offers an important source of free support that can continue into the future if well maintained.

Marketing and Communication:

- Marketing can be an effective tool for bringing in additional funding.
- Be strategic about communication, through strategies including:
 - Get on funders' agendas and bring a community partner there to share the story of the initiative and create greater awareness of its strengths.
 - Invite certain elected officials to become program champions to help advocate on its behalf.
 - Think about how you talk about the program and promote it. Focus on what you are doing to bring about real change.
 - Have a succinct message that provides a good overview of the initiative and why it is important and effective.

Build Strong, Meaningful Partnerships:

- Maintain existing partnerships and approach a wide range of potentially new partners, especially the nontraditional ones.
- Utilize a community-informed design (or redesign) strategy that involves participatory planning with partners.

Lessons From Sustainability Experiences

When do you start planning for sustainability?

- Planning should start as early as possible, ideally before or during the grant or contract application proposal process.
- Identify early on what it is that you are trying to sustain, and use this information to guide planning.
- Develop short-term, immediate, and long-term goals for sustainability.
- Build sustainability into all aspects of the program design.
- Involve partners and the community from the beginning.

How do you decide what should be sustained?

Ask Key Questions:

- What components best fit the host organization's overall vision and approach?
- What aspects of the approach are most effective?
- How well does the component meet community needs?
- How feasible is it to continue the various components?
- Will the component continue to have a sufficient level of support, such as staffing and funding?
- What components will be the most attractive to funders?
- What components of the program are effective yet require only limited resources or effort to continue?

Additional Considerations:

- Some activities have a finite timeline and therefore may not be ideal targets for sustainability. For example, a short-term research study has a set end date, and once that has been reached, the study should end. However, other activities, such as community education and outreach, are ongoing and should be targeted for continuation.
- As the major recipients of the benefits of programs, community members should have a say in which aspects to maintain. In particular, they can help identify which aspects are the most effective and well received, which can in turn become targets for sustainability.
- Only those components of programs that have documented evidence of success should be sustained.

How do you maintain or create partnerships that support sustainability?

Be Savvy in Approaching Partners:

- Use appropriate forms of communication. It may be necessary to have face-to-face contact with new partners with whom you are unfamiliar. However, as trust is built, it may be more efficient to meet remotely, such as via telephone.
- Provide a menu of requests for assistance that will appeal to a range of potential partners and supports. Some requests may be too demanding or aggressive for some, so there should be some smaller roles available that these partners can play. One participant shared two different types of partnerships that his program has developed:
 - Implementation partners. These organizations have a high level of participation in the operation and oversight of the program.
 - Referral partners. These organizations just refer potential clients to the program. They often have fewer resources and a less developed infrastructure and cannot play as big a role as required of implementation partners.
- Communication with partners should occur on a regular basis and frequently enough to be engaging.
- It is not sufficient just to have buy-in from the directors of partner organizations. Staff at all levels should understand the value of the partnership.
- Offer recognition or some sort of rewards to demonstrate appreciation to partners and encourage an even greater level of participation.
- Try to make partnerships a fun experience.

Develop Respectful, Authentic Relationships:

- Partners should feel that they are valued contributors and that they have a say in sustainability decisions.
- Ask partners about their needs and figure out together how the program can help meet them.
- Pay attention and reach out to partners at all times, not just when you need something.
- Always follow through on your commitments to partners. This will show them that they can rely on you.

Approach Nontraditional Partners:

- One participant shared that her organization formed a partnership with the local public library system to operate a new collection of electronic kiosks that deliver consumer health information produced by her clinic.

What are the specific challenges to sustaining efforts that recognize the importance of gender issues in health as opposed to those that do not?

It Is Often Difficult To Generate Support for Women's Health Efforts:

- Some funders and policymakers may be resistant to singling out one portion of the population (i.e., women) and would rather support broader efforts targeted at the entire population.
- Women often do not consider their own health needs to be a priority. They often put the needs of others before their own.
- Because women have been marginalized in society, women's health issues are often not viewed as a priority.

Women's Health May Be Poorly Understood:

- The challenge is trying to make sure that women's health issues are demystified and decoded for the public.
- There is a lack of consensus regarding the difference between sex and gender and the implications of these differences for women's health outcomes.

Race and Ethnicity Issues Pose Additional Challenges:

- Women's health may at times emphasize the health needs of White women while not adequately addressing the needs of other racial and ethnic groups.
- Efforts that conduct demographic analyses to better understand health needs of diverse women and that do a better job of targeting services at particular subgroups may have an advantage in winning support from partners, funders, and the public.

Recommendations for Sustainability

How should Federal agencies and other funders define sustainability?

Continue All or Some Aspect of the Programs and Initiatives in Some Form:

- Continue the multidisciplinary, integrated approach to women's health, which represents a cultural change at the host organizations.
- Continue to provide the services and support that the community needs.
- Integrate components into the care delivery system.
- Make the systems change aspects of the program or initiative the norm.
- Institutionalize activities, products, or policies.

Adhere to the Original Vision:

- Maintain a commitment to the original intent of the program/initiative.
- Maintain a commitment to making positive health changes.

Have an Ongoing Leadership Structure:

- Maintain some type of organizing body that continues to convene implementers and partners. This will help provide institutional memory about how the program operated during the period of initial funding.
- Adoption or ownership of the program or initiative by expanding constituencies.

- Maintain efforts that empower women so that they play a major role in leading the transformation of women's health.

What are the key characteristics that should go into this definition of sustainability?

Recognize the High Level of Diversity Across Programs and Initiatives:

- A Federal definition should be broad enough to be applicable to a broad range of programs and initiatives.
- The aspects of programs and initiatives that are most appropriate to continue differ based on the nature of the organization's needs and the nature of the activities implemented.

Acknowledge That Sustainability is a Complex Process:

- Acknowledge that there are many different pathways to accomplish sustainability.
- Sustainability pathways may differ across organizations as they react to changing needs or changing external forces, such as the economy or political climate.
- Rather than focusing on the continuation of specific components implemented at the outset of the program or initiative, funders should allow for the growth and adaptation of these components over time.
- While it is realistic to expect planning for sustainability, it may be unrealistic to hold grantees or contractors accountable to all aspects of that plan.

Limit Sustainability to Certain Activities:

- Sustainability should be more narrowly defined to emphasize continuation of only those activities that are proven to be successful and valued by the community.
- Organizations should constantly assess and adapt to changing community needs. Only those activities that continue to address current needs should be sustained.

What are realistic expectations in regard to sustainability?

Develop Timelines for Sustainability:

- It is important to take into consideration the substantial amount of time that it often takes for a program or an initiative to get up and running.

Note the Level of Sustainability Achieved:

- It is not necessary to sustain 100 percent of the initiative because:
 - It may not be feasible to achieve full sustainability;
 - Some aspects may have a finite timeline beyond which there is no reason to continue them; and
 - Some aspects may not be effective, and therefore, are not worthy of sustaining.

Note the Levels and Types of Resources:

- It may be unrealistic to expect that you will be able to find enough funds to replace the original funding level.
- There is no guarantee that you will have access to a comparable Federal grant or contract to that which you started with. Therefore, organizations should be open to exploring a diverse range of funding sources.

- It is important to tie expectations for sustainability to the funding amount and funding period. For example, expectations for sustainability for a short 1-year award should be lower than those for programs with a 5-year funding period.

What kind of support do organizations and agencies need to achieve sustainability?

Provide Guidance on Sustainability:

- Expectations for sustainability are often unclear to grantees and contractors. Federal agencies should come together to identify a common set of minimum standards on sustainability.
- Federal agencies should have a coordinated performance review process to assess sustainability across grantees and contractors.
- Require more substantial commitments from partner organizations, such as through memorandums of understanding (MOUs), when organizations apply for Federal funding. OWH requires these for its applications. Participants reported that MOUs encourage a greater level of organizational commitment from partners at the outset than do letters of support. Stronger partnerships will in turn support successful implementation and longevity.
- Conduct assessments or reviews of grantees and contractors to ensure that Federal agencies are taking adequate steps to help promote sustainability. Use this information to help develop guidance and resources.
- Establish a new type of Federal staff position, a sustainability officer, who would be responsible for reviewing and providing feedback on grantees' and contractors' sustainability plans.
- Have Federal agencies such as the Agency of Healthcare Quality and Research develop metrics for sustainability (i.e., evidence-based practices that lead to sustainability) that can be disseminated nationally.

Restructure Existing Funding Policies:

- Often funders are solely focused on supporting the new, innovative health strategy for a short period until the next new strategy comes along and the focus shifts. There should be an equal focus on continuing to support established programs.
- Federal agencies should restructure their funding system so that grantees and contractors can compete for additional years of funding after the end of seed funding. Programs that prove their potential for long-term viability within a given period would be eligible for continuing Federal support.
- OWH has tried to spread out its limited funds to provide relatively small awards across a large group of organizations. For example, mini-grants are available to ASIST2010 grantees that can be used only for a narrow set of short-term activities, such as 1-day events. It may be more impactful to pool these funds into larger award amounts for a smaller set of organizations. Programs and initiatives with access to an adequate amount of funding from the outset likely have a greater chance of success. Also, larger award amounts help grantees and contractors meet OWH's high expectations, such as conducting rigorous evaluations of their efforts.
- Allow for a brief initial planning phase (anywhere from 3 months to a year depending on the initiative) in new grants and contracts. During this time, grantees and contractors would not be required to demonstrate their progress on achieving outcomes. This approach will help provide enough time for programs and initiatives to become established and to form the strong partnerships needed to become sustainable.

- Federal agencies should have the same willingness to fund community-based health efforts, such as those led by community-based organizations, as they do for research-based efforts, such as those conducted by large academic institutions. Too often, research activities are offered a much greater share of Federal support.
- Build in requirements for a sustainability plan as a condition of funding awards. This requirement should also be extended to partners if they are expected to take over the program eventually.

Establish New Types of Funding Mechanisms:

- Develop a master agreement list to which organizations can apply in order to become prequalified to compete for women’s health funding. This mechanism allows greater awareness of targeted types of funding and a quicker turnaround period for releasing Requests for Proposals, reviewing applications, and granting awards.
- Establish regional consortia that are led by OWH regional coordinators who could help grantees and contractors be more strategic about finding and going after funding. In some cases, it may be most efficient for multiple sites in the same region to develop a close partnership and pursue funding together.
- Provide new short-term (1- to 2-year) awards to help build partnerships between academic institutions and community-based organizations. These awards will help support the strong partnerships needed to help implement and fund systems change efforts.
- Provide new awards that offer a small amount to focus on planning for the successful implementation and sustainability of an initiative.
- Provide additional funding to help grantees and contractors assess baseline data.
- Initiate more communication between Federal agencies and foundations and provide foundations with a list of Federal grantees and contractors that could benefit from such private funding. Another participant suggested that Federal agencies sponsor a conference that would allow foundations to meet with grantees and contractors.

Provide Training, Technical Assistance, and Resources:

- Provide training and coaching for staff to help them develop a model for institutionalizing programs.
- Help improve specific types of skills among staff members, including:
 - Grant writing;
 - Advocacy;
 - Branding and marketing;
 - Public relations; and
 - Publications development.
- Federal agencies should support train-the-trainer models so that initial investments in training will have a longer life and be passed on to new staff members who come aboard.
- Provide concrete examples of effective sustainability strategies and offer toolkits or other forms of assistance to help organizations develop and implement these strategies.
- Offer more opportunities for grantees and contractors to learn from each other, particularly from other organizations that have achieved sustainability. Participants added that it would be most effective to cover the cost of grantees/contractors coming together at multiple times throughout the year, instead of just once at annual forums.

V. Closing Remarks

Presenter: Barbara James, Director, Division of Program Coordination, OWH

Barbara James concluded the forum by stating that it has played a key role in gathering important information to inform OWH's ongoing assessment of Federal program sustainability. Findings from the assessment will help Federal agencies reach consensus on how to define sustainability and the type of guidance on achieving sustainability that organizations need to know when applying for funding. The goal is to include this guidance in future grant and contract announcements. Ms. James thanked participants for their hard work and encouraged them to continue sharing their experiences with sustainability when they are asked to participate in future phases of the assessment.

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**Appendix A:
Overview of the OWH Federal Program
Sustainability Assessment**

Multidisciplinary Health Models for Women (MHMW)

From 1996 to 2007, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office on Women's Health (OWH) funded five programs to improve the health of diverse women across the life span as part of its Multidisciplinary Health Models for Women (MHMW) effort. These five programs were designed to provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and integrated health services for women. The five programs are:

1. **The National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CoE) Program** operated through academic medical centers throughout the country. The program established new models of health care that combine health care services addressing women's health needs with gender-based research, public and professional education and training, the promotion of community linkages for improved access to health services and programs, and the provision of leadership positions for women in academic medicine.
2. **The National Community Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CCOE) Program** was conducted in community-based organizations throughout the country. The program provided resources to community-based organizations to help them develop models of health care delivery, particularly for preventive services, that address: training for health care professionals including allied health professionals and others; community-based research; public education and outreach; leadership development for women; and technical assistance to other communities to help them implement a CCOE-like model. The CCOEs were also required to replicate their program in at least one other site.
3. **The CoE and CCOE-Ambassadors for Change (AFC) Program** continued the "one-stop shopping" or "centers without walls" models of women's health care that were developed by the CoEs and CCOEs and helped developing sites and other organizations interested in developing or implementing women's health programs.
4. **The CoE Region VIII Demonstration Projects (R8Demo) Program** supported the efforts of three academic medical schools located in the Office of Public Health and Science (OPHS) Region VIII to implement the CoE program model.
5. **The Rural/Frontier Women's Health Coordinating Centers (RFCC) Program** operated through community-based organizations in rural and frontier communities. The aim of the program was to improve and enhance health care and human services for the 65 million people who live in rural and frontier states. This program extended the comprehensive services available to women served by the CoEs and CCOEs to women living in rural and frontier areas.

All 48 program sites were charged with integrating a multidisciplinary model of comprehensive care consisting of five core components:

1. **Clinical Care**, comprehensive health service delivery that include gender and age appropriate preventive services and allied health professionals as members of the comprehensive care team;
2. **Research**, the development or integration of research activities on women's health;
3. **Public Education and Outreach**, activities that emphasize gender-specific and age-appropriate prevention and/or reduction of illness or injuries;
4. **Training**, training on women's health issues and services for laypersons, allied health professionals, and professional health care providers;
5. **Leadership Development**, efforts to increase opportunities for developing and exercising leadership skills for women as health care consumers and providers.

CCOE sites were encouraged to address two additional components:

- **Sustained Technical Assistance**, sharing valuable lessons learned from the CCOE model with other organizations, such as effective strategies for uniting partners, securing resources, coordinating activities, and recruiting and managing volunteers.
- **Replication of the CCOE model**, reproducing all components of the CCOE model at another organization. Sites were encouraged to start the replication process with the most developed component or the component that addresses the organization's greatest needs and then phase in the other components.

National Assessment of Federal Program Sustainability

The Altarum Institute has been contracted by OWH to conduct a national assessment to identify and measure the key components of sustainability of Federally funded programs. The assessment will answer the following broad research questions:

1. How has Federal program sustainability been defined and conceptualized?
2. What are the characteristics of programs that have sustained themselves after Federal funding expired? What factors are associated with sustainability?
3. How is program sustainability determined?
4. What types of guidelines for sustaining a Federal program could be included in future Federal grant/contract announcements?

The assessment will examine these issues using OWH's MHMW effort as a case study of the sustainability process in a large Federal initiative. The assessment has, therefore, been designed to investigate the:

- Extent to which organizations previously funded under OWH's MHMW effort have sustained or enhanced the core components of the program approximately 20 months after OWH funding ended, and
- Factors that have facilitated or inhibited sustainability at MHMW program sites.

A mixed-method research design has been developed to build upon findings from a previous literature review and to collect data from all 48 MHMW program sites through four strategies:

1. **Data abstraction.** Data from key grant and contract documents will be abstracted and reviewed to establish a baseline understanding of each site's program activities and efforts to promote the sustainability of these activities.
2. **Web-based survey.** Key program staff at each site will be asked to answer questions on the extent to which the five core components were implemented, have been sustained, and the factors that may have inhibited sustainability. The primarily categorical responses will be used to group sites based on the level of implementation and sustainability each has attained. The web-based survey is primarily a close-ended survey designed to collect data on the key dependent and a number of key independent variables in a uniform manner across sites.
3. **Telephone interview.** Altarum will conduct telephone interviews with core program staff, and/or other types of staff as necessary, to collect more descriptive information on the factors that influenced implementation and sustainability, how well sites were able to integrate the five core components, the resulting outcomes of sites' efforts, and respondents' recommendations on how Federal agencies could better promote program sustainability. This information will be coded and used in the analysis of sustainability and to inform site visit selection.

4. **Site visits.** Altarum will also visit 12 sites to collect more in-depth information from a greater variety of key informants, including support staff, community partners, and clients. The site visit discussions are intended to fill gaps in information from earlier data collection methods and to help clarify existing information.



Appendix B: Meeting Agenda



Sustaining Momentum for Effective Change: Lessons Learned from Office on Women's Health Programs

HYATT REGENCY ONE BETHESDA METRO CENTER (7400 WISCONSIN AVENUE) BETHESDA, MARYLAND

DECEMBER 16, 2009 *Agenda*

OBJECTIVES

- *Participants come to a clearer understanding of how to define sustainability; the various ways the term is used; how to decide what should be sustained; and what research and experience suggests are promising practices in promoting sustainability.*
- *Participants share ideas and develop recommendations for sustaining program components and momentum for changing systems of care.*
- *Participants from all sectors (e.g., Federal, community, university, foundations) leave the forum with clear ideas about what they can do to promote sustainability and begin the development of a working definition of sustainability that is applicable across organizations and programs.*
- *The presentations and interactions among participants produce information that can be used to improve Federal guidance and support around the issue of sustainability.*
- *The Forum serves to maintain and strengthen networks of leaders in women's health.*

7:30-8:00 COFFEE, CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST, AND NETWORKING

8:00-8:05 **Welcome**

Presenter: **Frances Ashe-Goins**, *Acting Director*, HHS Office on Women's Health

8:05-8:10 **Overview**

Presenter: **Anna Kindermann**, *Public Health Advisor*, Office on Women's Health

8:10-8:35 **PLENARY SESSION:**

Opportunities for Creating Positive, Sustainable Change with Federal Support

Presenter: Lee Wilson, *Director*, Division of Public Health Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)

8:35-9:30 **PLENARY PANEL SESSION:**

What Do We Know About Supporting Sustainability?

Moderator: **Christopher Botsko**, *Deputy Director of Policy, Planning & Evaluation*, Community Health Systems, Altarum Institute

Presenters: **Stacie Geller**, *Professor*, University of Illinois, Chicago

Justina Trott, *Director of Policy, Research and Education*, Women's Health Services, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Quinn Gentry, *Behavioral Scientist and Program Evaluator*, Messages of Empowerment Productions, LLC, Atlanta, Georgia

Susan Hailman, *Director of Knowledge Transfer and Technical Assistance*, Campaign Consultation, Inc.

Amy Brown, *Senior Policy Associate*, Altarum Institute

9:30-9:40 **Overview of the Breakout Sessions**

Presenter: **Christopher Botsko**, Altarum Institute

9:40-9:55 BREAK AND TRANSITION INTO BREAKOUT GROUPS

9:55-10:45 **BREAKOUT GROUP I: Sustainability Experiences**

Participants will be assigned to groups made up of a mix of participants from different programs and initiatives. The discussion will provide an opportunity for participants to share their experiences attempting to sustain the work of an OWH-funded program or their current plans or activities related to planning for long-term sustainability of the work done under a currently funded program. Participants will be asked to share successful experiences, things that did not work out well, and other examples of efforts to address sustainability. A reporter will summarize some key points for the report out session.

10:45-10:55 TRANSITION

10:55-11:40 **Report Out From Breakout Group I**

Each breakout group will provide highlights of their discussion.

11:40-12:35 LUNCH

12:35-1:25 **BREAKOUT GROUP II: Lessons from Sustainability Experiences**

This breakout group will bring together groups from similar programs and organizations to discuss their successes and challenges in trying to sustain work that had been previously supported by OWH or their thoughts on how they can and should plan for the sustainability of work being done under currently funded programs or initiatives. The group will address specific questions such as: How do you decide what should be sustained? What do you need to achieve sustainability and how do you get it? How do you maintain or create partnerships that support sustainability? What are the specific challenges related to sustaining efforts that recognize the importance of gender issues in health care as opposed to approaches that do not?

1:25-1:35 TRANSITION

1:35-2:20 **Report Out From Breakout Group II**

Each breakout group will provide highlights of their discussion.

2:20-2:30 TRANSITION

2:30-3:20 **BREAKOUT GROUP III: Recommendations for Sustainability**

There will be a return to mixed groups in which each group will discuss recommendations for sustainability. The questions to be addressed include: How should federal agencies and other funders define sustainability? What types of support do programs and organizations need in order to achieve sustainability? Are there types of training sessions or tools that would be particularly helpful?

3:20-3:30 TRANSITION

3:30-3:50 **Sharing Recommendations**

Forum participants will be asked to “shout-out” recommendations from their groups. The process will continue until most of the major recommendations are accounted for. All the recommendations will be collected and included in the Meeting Summary.

3:50-4:00 **Bringing It Back Home**

Presenter: **Barbara James**, Director, Division of Program Coordination, Office on Women’s Health

The day’s accomplishments will be celebrated and the implications for various groups’ (e.g., federal, community-based organizations, university, and foundations) work will be noted. Next steps will be described for using the information that has been shared and collected at the meeting.



Appendix C: Participants List



Hyatt Regency Bethesda • Bethesda, MD • December 16, 2009

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Appendix D: OWH Sustainability Forum Evaluation Summary

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office on Women's Health (OWH) convened a forum titled "Sustaining Momentum for Effective Change: Lessons Learned from the Office on Women's Health Programs" on December 16, 2009, in Bethesda, Maryland. The Forum was part of an initiative within OWH to examine the issue of sustainability with a goal of developing guidelines for future grantees and contractors on how to sustain successful programs beyond Federal funding.

The Forum had five objectives:

- To come to a clearer understanding of the definition of sustainability, the various ways in which the term is used, the way to decide what should be sustained, and practices that research and experience suggest are promising in promoting sustainability.
- To share ideas and develop recommendations for sustaining program components and momentum for changing systems of care.
- To obtain clear ideas about what can be done to promote sustainability and begin the development of a working definition of sustainability that is applicable across organizations and programs.
- To produce information that can be used to improve Federal guidance and support around the issue of sustainability.
- To maintain and strengthen networks of leaders in women's health.

This report summarizes the findings from the meeting evaluation. All forum participants were asked to complete an evaluation. A total of 29 evaluations were returned. Based on the comments, the overwhelming majority of these evaluations appeared to come from OWH community partners who represented organizations that were either previously or currently funded by OWH.

Response to Closed Ended Questions

Overall, the meeting evaluation respondents had very positive things to say about the forum as shown in the table below.

Questions	Responded Strongly Agree 1	Responded Agree 2	Responded Neutral 3	Responded Disagree 4	Responded Strongly Disagree 5	Average Response Score
The forum objectives were clear	31.0%	65.5%	3.5%			1.7
The forum was well organized	41.4%	51.7%	6.9%			1.6
The forum moved at a comfortable pace	34.5%	55.2%	3.5%	6.9%		1.8
The forum addressed issues relevant and useful to my organization	31.0%	62.1%	6.9%			1.7
I feel that I know more about the topic of sustainability than I did before the forum	17.2%	62.1%	17.2%	3.5%		2.0
I am more knowledgeable about what I can do to achieve sustainability of initiatives in my organization	13.8%	62.1%	20.7%	3.5%		2.1
The forum provided the opportunity for me to share my experience in trying to sustain programs or initiatives	27.6%	62.1%	10.3%			1.8
The breakout sessions were beneficial	24.1%	75.9%				1.7

Note: Row totals do not always add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

- More than 90 percent of respondents agreed somewhat or strongly that the forum was well organized, the objectives were clear, and it addressed issues relevant and useful to their organization.
- Participants were extremely positive about the breakout sessions, with everyone agreeing somewhat or strongly that these sessions were beneficial.
- The responses to the other questions were also very positive. Almost 90 percent of respondents agreed somewhat or strongly that the forum provided them with an opportunity to share their experiences in trying to sustain programs and moved at a comfortable pace.

There were two questions for which respondents expressed a degree of ambivalence regarding the outcomes of the forum:

- Twenty-four percent of respondents indicated that they were neutral or disagreed with the statement that they are more knowledgeable about what they can do to achieve sustainability of initiatives in their organization.
- Twenty-one percent reported being neutral or disagreeing with the statement that they know more about sustainability after the forum.

Most of these responses were neutral rather than negative, but they do suggest that there is a need for continued attention to the issue of sustainability. The comments indicate that a considerable number of participants need additional information on how to apply the sustainability experiences discussed at the forum to their own situation. OWH’s sustainability initiative will help accomplish this goal by providing guidance when funding is initially provided to future grantees and contractors to assist them in addressing sustainability early on. As sustainability is incorporated into all funding opportunities, grantees and contractors will have more opportunities to develop approaches which are most suitable for their particular circumstances.

Responses to Open-Ended Evaluation Questions

The evaluation forum included two questions covering what was most useful about the forum and what could have been more useful. All the responses are included in the table below.

OWH Sustainability Forum Open-Ended Meeting Evaluation Responses

Respondent	What about the forum was most useful to you?	What would have made the forum more useful?
1	Discussion in breakout sessions	A time set aside to talk directly to program people from different agencies about possibly funding to pitch ideas
2	Interaction with Federal agencies and other agencies	An additional panel discussion in place of one of the 3 breakouts. The room was really cold.
3	Discussing and dissecting the complexity of the issue	More structure to the morning session in order to set the stage, it was a bit too abstract.
4	Networking!!!	Sharing best practices
5	Reconnecting with the CoE/CCOE network, concrete examples were the most instructive, we talked about a lot of generalities, the lunch was great, well-organized conference	I think two sessions on sustainability were enough, the third session could have been more helpful if we talked about future partnership opportunities to advance women’s health
6	No answer	No answer
7	Hearing from and discussing with others. Putting focus to name/“network”	No answer
8	Being able to talk with other RFCCs about their experiences and needs	I would have liked to have been able to spend more time with organizations that received the same type of funding as my organization (RFCC)
9	Opportunities for brainstorming, especially around the breadth of approaches for sustainability, as opposed to only new funding	The breakouts and the reporting, especially, was rather repetitive. A more focused approach to the tasks of the breakout groups (clear, specific questions) and a reporting process that has groups summarize rather than repeat (a gallery walk of flipcharts can provide the details)
10	No answer	No answer
11	No answer	OWH staff was in attendance but didn’t really “say” much. In what direction is the OWH going?
12	Groups with commonalities coming together, listening to the discussion were interesting	No answer

Respondent	What about the forum was most useful to you?	What would have made the forum more useful?
13	No answer	No answer
14	The discussion about defining sustainability	Fewer break out sessions
15	No answer	2 breakouts useful
16	Meeting other contractors and grantees	Having a facilitator that could summarize and highlight common themes among groups, bring her experience in comments, let's empower women to conduct these sessions, after all, it is OWH
17	Good discussion	Too cool, the 3rd breakout was not needed
18	The ability to share and hear feedback from other ASIST2010 grantees (what's working for them)	Listing more resources for additional funding, two breakout groups would have been sufficient, if needed 3, 2 before lunch, 1 breakout after lunch. Session overview should follow 2 breakouts and then adjourn for the day.
19	Learning more about what other hope to do and are presently doing to stay sustainable	Two breakout sessions
20	Breakout groups, listening to others, good job. Thanks for the invite.	Ms. Ashe-Goins showing up on time. Huge disrespect to all.
21	The break out groups generated some wonderful discussions. Also, Lee Wilson's presentation was very informative.	Perhaps to do the breakouts differently, two only and back to back, then do the group reports in one big session. All the back and forth seemed to fragment the flow of the meeting and contribute to a fair amount of redundancy.
22	Networking with others, learning about other success, ideas about sustainability, future sources of funding	Provide the results of a literature search on sustainability articles, resources, tools, and other enduring materials on the topic
23	Hearing other grantees successes and tactics to ensure sustainability	There could have been only 2 breakout sessions
24	Connecting with others	No answer
25	Networking	More background information on successful sustainability projects
26	Learning from programs that have had to sustain their programs	No answer
27	No answer	No answer
28	At least one full concrete presentation of what works for sustainability instead of a full day of sharing ideas	Having presentation slide notes from morning speakers, list of contacts already available
29	Breakout sessions were a great opportunity to share ideas	No answer

More than half of the comments (17) about what worked well regarding the forum mentioned the discussion or breakout sessions. Another eight comments indicated that the networking that took place was the most successful aspect of the forum. This suggests that the decision of the Meeting Planning Group and OWH to put a strong emphasis on small group discussions during the meeting was a good one. The most common comment about what could be improved was made by 10 respondents; their suggestion was that one less breakout would have been better. They felt that three breakouts created too much redundancy in the topics covered. A few comments suggested that it would have been helpful to have provided a little more structured information and detail on sustainability and what research and experience indicate should be done to promote sustainability. Only one comment suggested a need for more time for participants to network with other participants from the same type of program; this suggests that the forum was successful in providing an opportunity to maintain and strengthen networks of leaders in women's health.

Discussion of Evaluation Findings

Overall, the forum appeared to be successful in achieving or partially achieving its objectives. Participants were provided with an opportunity to discuss sustainability and provide suggestions, which will be valuable as OWH moves forward with its sustainability initiative. The forum helped to renew networks of women's health leaders, who are vital to the overall mission of OWH and to its vision of a society where all women and girls are healthier and have a better sense of well-being. The responses indicate that there remains a need for more information about sustainability and practical advice on how to achieve it. This conclusion supports OWH's efforts to refine its advice, guidance, and approach to sustainability. Respondent comments about the forum's format indicate that OWH clearly understands the importance of networking and peer discussion among its constituents and that this should be a continued focus of future meetings. It is always challenging to balance the presentation of information and discussion, and figuring out how best to do this and how to effectively use input from discussion groups during meetings is an important topic for future meeting planning groups to consider.