A Systems Approach
to Substance Use Services in Canada

CCSA - CCLAT
Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
Centre canadien de lutte contre l'alcoolisme et les toxicomanies

Systems Approach Workbook
Change Management Module: **Sustainability**

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Who should use the change management modules?

- Leaders and decision makers in the substance abuse and mental health services field, such as regional directors and program managers

- Anyone interested in learning more about a system-change approach to improving substance use and mental health services and supports

Why use the change management modules?

- Many people have difficulty accessing and navigating the current system

- The system is constantly evolving and is influenced by many factors

- The Tiered Model presented in *A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada: Recommendations for a National Treatment Strategy* report provides an evidence-based framework to guide system change

- Taking a change management approach increases the efficiency and sustainability of system development

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Taking a Systems Approach: Sustainability

Scenario:

The following example is provided to illustrate the context in which the Systems Approach Workbook might be helpful. The example develops throughout the change modules to help readers situate themselves in the process.

Approximately a year after launching the implementation plan, the regional director is offered a new position in a different ministry. The director put a lot of emphasis in developing leadership for the Systems Approach throughout the organization, but doesn't want to see organizational improvements lost without an active champion.

Staff turnover is always a threat to maintaining new practices. Someone who wasn't involved in the process might not be as engaged in keeping it a priority when new issues come up. What strategies can be put into place to ensure that changes are not only completed but remain over the long term?

The following section outlines the key considerations that should be taken into account when maintaining practices that align with *A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada*. Regardless of whether initial changes were large in scale or more focused, investing in sustainability is essential to ensuring long-term benefits. Sustainability does not imply a constant state. Once implemented, changes need to respond to shifts in context, evaluation results, and emerging knowledge and best practices to remain relevant and have a meaningful impact. Change is an ongoing process. The substance use field does not move from a static state to a static state; it is in a constant state of development. *Continuous quality improvement*[1] and evaluation help to ensure change moves the field ahead to better meet Canadians' needs.

The change modules provide guidance according to five *change management* categories that leaders should consider throughout any change process: context, leadership, communication, benefits/outcomes and individual considerations.

Context

In the sustainability stage, *context analysis* shifts from identifying considerations for promoting change to identifying considerations for sustaining, adapting and improving current practice. Some of these considerations may have been in place when the original context analysis was completed in the background stage, and some may have been implemented as part of the process.

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[1] Please see the Glossary for an explanation of italicized terms.

For example, the analysis should look at some of the following considerations to evaluate whether or not they provide structural support for ongoing practice aligned with the Systems Approach and *guiding concepts*:

- Organizational mandates and values;

- Organizational policies;

- Partnerships across service providers, sectors and jurisdictions; and

- Resource allocation.

The context analysis at this stage will also feed into the evaluation process—providing information for comparing targeted areas prior to and following implementation. This analysis will be helpful in identifying areas where implementation may not yet be complete or where practice has diverged from the original plan. Such divergence may represent progress and is not necessarily problematic; however, it is important to recognize and record it for the purpose of evaluation.

Finally, context analysis can continue in a forward-looking fashion by looking at emerging issues such as demographic and cultural changes and how they fit with the Systems Approach and guiding concepts.

> **Workbook Toolbox**
> - Context Analysis Template
> - System Thinking and Complexity in Substance Use Systems

Leadership

The transition between implementation and sustainability is an excellent opportunity to bring closure to the implementation process and recognize achievements to date. But the story does not end here—continued leadership support for the changes implemented is important. The more widely disseminated that leadership is, the more resilient it will be to threats such as staff turnover and conflicting priorities. Leadership throughout the organization can support sustainability in many ways: leading by example, identifying goals and challenges that align with new practices, reporting successes, and working with colleagues to address challenges.

That being said, central leadership (e.g., members of implementation or other *support teams*, individual project leads) can also play an important role in continuing to foster the leadership developed during the preparation and implementation stages. Continuing to hold meetings with this leadership network provides opportunities to monitor progress, highlight successes and address difficulties. This network can also be drawn on to identify a lead individual or group to oversee sustainability moving ahead.

Central leadership is also situated to promote strategic policy and operational infrastructure development. Examples might include:

- The inclusion of partnership building and *knowledge exchange* in organizational and individual workplans;

- Policies and procedures for including client input in organizational and program-level decision-making processes; and

- Regular briefings to *senior decision makers* to highlight the benefits of the new processes and the importance of adequately resourcing them in the long term.

> **Workbook Toolbox**
> - Effective Leadership
> - Working with Teams to Support Change

Communication

Communication plays a vital role in this stage by maintaining awareness, interest and support within the organization.[2] External communication is also important in promoting knowledge exchange.

- *Internally:* The change process can be difficult; recognizing and communicating success helps to validate the work that has been done. Internal communications such as newsletters can be used to highlight achievements and positive outcomes. The mechanisms and open atmosphere that were developed to promote multidirectional communication throughout the organization are also valuable to maintain. These mechanisms should also be encouraged to evolve and support knowledge exchange (e.g., through *communities of practice*).

- *Externally:* External communication can be used to bring wider attention and recognition. For example, filling an identified service gap (e.g., establishing services to work with family members as well as clients) might be featured in a press release. External communication to the field through professional publications, newsletters or conferences can bring recognition among peers and contribute to knowledge exchange regarding best practices and system development.

- *Vertically:* Providing senior decision makers with updates on progress, outcomes and achievements validates the resources and commitment provided throughout the implementation process. Adding a component focusing on the new processes to quarterly reports, for example, is a way of ensuring that updates are provided regularly.

> **Workbook Toolbox**
> - Developing a Communications Plan
> - Communications Tools

Outcomes and Benefits

The sustainability stage in the process is where mid-term and long-term outcomes are realized. The beginning of the sustainability stage is usually marked by a particular point on the project timeline—either by a particular lapse of time after which new practices are to be in place, or based on the concrete achievement of predetermined goals (i.e., all defined deliverables or outputs have been completed). This point therefore provides an excellent opportunity to assess and report on outcomes, benefits and other achievements to date through an interim evaluation or similar report.

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[2] Implementation may be taking place at the system, regional or service level. In the interest of brevity, 'organization' is being used inclusively to refer to whichever level is most appropriate.

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Seeing the achievement of outcomes along the *logic model* provides validation and maintains momentum for continuing to support alignment with the Systems Approach and guiding concepts. Even once the long-term outcomes are evaluated, monitoring of outcomes on an ongoing basis continues to have benefits, including:

- Demonstration of impact on broader contextual factors (e.g., primary care admissions for substance-related harms);

- Indicating the integration of emerging practices or organizational directions;

- Contribution to the knowledge base regarding the impacts of using the Systems Approach and guiding concepts; and

- Contribution to the knowledge base regarding the sustainability of organizational change

Individual Considerations

With the implementation process complete, focus will shift from the change process to its ongoing effect on day-to-day activities. Leadership, communication and information flow throughout the organization remain important. Leadership can continue to be developed by working with staff representatives to identify and address challenges. Continuing to celebrate, recognize and share successes at the individual and team levels provides motivation and contributes to knowledge exchange.

Although the initial stage may be complete, ongoing or 'refresher' training is important in promoting continued engagement and skill development. There are also likely changes that emerged during or after the implementation stage that can be reflected in follow-up training sessions, for example. Incorporating changes or innovations led by individual staff in broader training components is important in recognizing and encouraging the strengths and creativity within the organization.

Considerations that may be raised at the sustainability stage include:

- I was more comfortable with the approach I was taking before introducing a Systems Approach;

- I'd like to apply my skills in a new area or continue to develop my skills to take on new challenges; or

- I'm not confident that the changes will last given competing pressures.

> **Workbook Toolbox**
> - Working with Teams to Support Change

Discussion Questions

The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. **Question**	**Considerations**
1. What new or emerging priorities will impact the change made? In what ways?	Sustainability means continuing to evolve in response to changing contexts and lessons learned.
2. What are the key "lessons learned" from the implementation stage? (Three key messages should be manageable.)	Nothing ever goes strictly according to plan, but good planning helps deal with the unexpected.
3. How will these "lessons learned" inform plans for continuity in the sustainability stage?	Incorporating lessons learned while moving ahead demonstrates flexibility and contributes to quality improvement.

The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. **Question**	**Considerations**
4. What are the key knowledge exchange functions that will support sustaining the change? (Identify at least three functions.)	Knowledge exchange provides a range of mechanisms that can help support sustainability, including communities of practice and networks.
5. Who is responsible for tracking progress/fidelity to the implementation plan? How will the tracking inform progress over the long term?	Flexibility is important, but changes to implementation should be made consciously and recorded, not by accident.

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The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. **Question**	**Considerations**
6. Given that change does not occur in a linear fashion, what changes have been made to the evaluation framework? For example, what new outcomes or indicators have been identified?	Continuous quality improvement means that evaluation isn't finished once a change has been implemented or a pilot stage completed.
7. How are lessons learned being captured? How are they being used to inform ongoing improvements?	Continuing to monitor and learn from changes in the system or in practice demonstrates commitment at the leadership level.
8. What has been the greatest success or successes with regard to the change process?	Consider success according to different perspectives such as management, staff and clients.

The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. **Question**	**Considerations**
9. What was the greatest challenge with regard to the change process?	Consider how the challenge may have been seen differently according to different perspectives.
10. How are you addressing this challenge?	The Working with Teams to Support Change brief includes a troubleshooting section that might be helpful in addressing challenges.
11. What is the greatest benefit of working with the Systems Approach as a framework during the change process?	Help others identify where the use of the Systems Approach might be beneficial to them as well. Contact systems@ccsa.ca to tell your story.

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The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. **Question**	**Considerations**
12. What was the greatest challenge to working with the Systems Approach as a framework during the change process?	The Systems Approach is intended to be developed and revised. Contact systems@ccsa.ca to share lessons learned.
13. What mechanisms are being used to communicate evaluation results to staff, clients, partners and senior management?	Ongoing, multidirectional communication keeps all project partners engaged. Communicating evaluation results demonstrates transparency and validates participation in the process.
14. For each of these groups, what are the key messages you'd like to focus on when communicating the outcomes to date of the change process? (Identify between three and six key messages.)	Consistency, clarity and focus in messaging remain important throughout the process.

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The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. **Question**	**Considerations**
15. What ongoing training is in place to support sustainability of changes in practice, structure or procedure?	Sustainability doesn't just mean holding steady. It means continuing to upgrade and revise skills and practice as indicated by lessons learned, evaluation findings and ongoing contextual change.
16. What are the next steps in working with the Systems Approach? For example, what additional partners will you be connecting to or collaborating with?	Collaboration in Substance Use Systems provides assistance in developing external collaborations.

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Summary Checklist

This checklist is intended as an opportunity to "check in" and ensure that key considerations and activities appropriate to the sustainability stage have been accounted for. The list below is intended to be comprehensive but flexible; that is, not all items will apply in all situations. However, ensuring that as many of the boxes below are checked off as possible will help to ensure continuity.

☐ There is a continuity plan in place.

☐ External partnerships are being developed or strengthened using the Systems Approach and guiding concepts as a framework.

☐ Ongoing data collection and review is in place.

☐ Course corrections have been made as appropriate based on preliminary evaluation results.

☐ Evaluation results are communicated to staff and senior management.

☐ There is an ongoing process in place to identify and address problems or concerns.

☐ Organizational structure and workplans support the Systems Approach and guiding concepts.

☐ There is a process in place to monitor adherence to the Systems Approach and guiding concepts (i.e., to ensure fidelity).

☐ Staffing and training capacity meets the organizational demands created by the change process.

☐ There is a knowledge exchange strategy in place.

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Change Management

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[3] The purpose of this reference list is to provide a range of options for additional information and ideas. References have been identified by both CCSA and project partners. Some of the references listed are proprietary. Inclusion in this list does not indicate CCSA endorsement. Categories are for ease of reference and are not mutually exclusive; for example, most references under Leadership are also relevant to Change Management.

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Leadership

The Ivey Business Journal (www.iveybusinessjournal.com) provides a number of full-text articles on leadership, management, organizational and other relevant issues, primarily from a private business perspective but presenting concepts that apply in the non-profit sector as well. Examples include *Transformational performance-based leadership: Addressing non-routine adaptive challenges* (Granger & Hanover, 2012) and *Developing leadership character* (Crossan, Gandz & Seijts, 2012).

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The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) website (http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/about_apropos/evaluation/resources-eng.php) provides access to a program evaluation toolkit and a guide to project evaluation, as well as information about PHAC's own data collection and evaluation initiatives.

Suggestions?

We'd like to add to this list to provide a more diverse list of resource materials. If there are any information sources that you have found particularly useful, please let us know!
Send your suggestions to systems@ccsa.ca.

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