



"Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition."

- Steve Jobs

Sustainability

Organizational sustainability occurs when an organization is profitable enough to plan for and develop financial reserves and other resources which allow the organization to weather changes in the economic environment and the field without risk to the organization. If the Oklahoma Victim Service System is to expand to meet the current need and remain sustainable, each current and future organization within the system must render itself sustainable, i.e. secure and invest sufficient resources to maintain itself over the years.

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In the May 2013 U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime report, Vision 21 Transforming Victim Services, the following recommendation was made for victim service systems:

“Foster adaptation of sustainability models that are used successfully in the nonprofit sector for victim assistance and advocacy organizations, including the use of **strategic planning, investments in human capital, and funding diversification.**”

Tribal, state, and national level victim organizations should formally link and leverage their largely separate advocacy efforts to develop unified and comprehensive policy and programming initiatives, address the intersection of prevention and victim services, raise national consciousness about victimization, and promote the critical system linkages that are needed in the 21st century to serve all victims of crime.”

The April 2009 OVC-TTAC publication: Victim Services in Rural Law Enforcement summarized sustainability methods which had proven successful based on the experiences of 17 sites that received OVC funding to establish or enhance victim assistance efforts in their law enforcement agencies. In reviewing these methods and the data gleaned from the Threshold of Transformation Needs Assessment the following sustainability strategies are recommended. The advisors note that throughout the victim service field, sustainability efforts are varied and most successful agencies use multiple strategies to increase the likelihood of program continuation.

INTEGRATE VICTIM SERVICE PROGRAMMING INTO EXISTING EFFORTS

Review existing agency structure and research how elements of victim service programming can be integrated into other agency initiatives. For example, if faced with budget cuts, could your local Victim Service Unit be integrated into other agency units to sustain its efforts. Investigate ways in which professionally trained,

experienced personnel can be retained and utilized to increase victim safety.

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE PROGRAM

To institutionalize victim service initiatives, agencies must gather data to demonstrate its usefulness to victims and the federal-tribal-statewide victim services system. Once the data is gathered, agencies should have a communication plan in place to effectively disseminate the data to all stakeholders, i.e. victims, agency staff, organizational leadership, victim services leadership, and policy makers.

ABSORBING COSTS

Organizations which employ victim service providers are encouraged to absorb victim service program costs into their existing budgets. For example, focus on building agency infrastructures so victim services costs are absorbed into agency budgets. Encourage leadership to make policy changes related to assisting victims and to create mechanisms to ensure compliance with those policies. Additionally, victim service providers are encouraged to develop an array of materials to standardize agency responses to victims.

REQUESTING FUNDING FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

As part of the public policy initiative, the Oklahoma Coordinated Community Response Team, OCADVSA, and NAAV are encouraged to utilize data which demonstrates the cost savings available to the community by implementation of prevention programs. Armed with this data, victim service providers are encouraged to request increased funding from their local governing bodies. For example, funding may be requested from municipal, county, state, tribal, and federal sources to make Victim Assistance and Prevention Services permanent within local agencies.

SEEKING GRANT FUNDING

Members of the Oklahoma Victim Service System are encouraged to create, strengthen, and formalize collaborative agreements and seek coordinated federal

and state government grants and nongovernmental grants. For example, tribal, state, county, and municipal governments are encouraged to collaborate on federal grant applications. County and non-profit agencies are encouraged to explore ways to partner with the State Department of Corrections to fund notification and support services for victims whose perpetrators are incarcerated. A collaborative effort to seek private foundation funding and in-kind support for state-wide, regional, and local activities should be explored.

SEEKING IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Continued fostering of relationships between governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and business entities is encouraged. Through these relationships, in-kind contributions may be sought for needed services, equipment, office space, and publicity. For example, partnerships have been established through which local motel owners arrange short-term accommodations for domestic violence victims. Collaborations between law schools, legal aid providers, and non-profit agencies have allowed civil legal services to be available for victims of interpersonal violence. A key to this approach is to be creative in identifying potential resources.

Success in sustaining victim services programs is affected by factors such as personnel turnover, staff tenacity and experience in seeking funding and resources, and the degree of support received from leadership, governing bodies, community agencies, and the public. Other factors include local politics and administration changes in agencies and local government. Sustaining victim service efforts require vigilance from all members of the victim service system to counter factors which can negatively affect program continuance and to maintain the support of the community and funders.

KEYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Institutional sustainability of Oklahoma's victim services has been proven via the ongoing services currently provided and described throughout this

plan. Through discussion of ways in which the goals and objectives set forth within this document may be attained, the advisors have identified hallmarks of a solid sustainability plan such as: respect and cultural competence among stakeholders, stakeholder buy-in, solid policy development, accountability and transparency, and regular meetings of the Oklahoma Coordinated Community Response Team to set, monitor, and revise benchmarks as necessary. The OCCRT should be led by a neutral convener with a firm understanding of the plan and the desired outcomes of Safety, Security, and Stability.

To reach these desired outcomes and sustain victim services throughout the geographic boundaries of the State of Oklahoma, the OCCRT is encouraged to systemically follow the OVC's Vision 21 Transforming Victim Services Recommendations:

- Conduct continuous rather than episodic strategic planning in the victim assistance field to effect real change in research, policy, programming, and capacity building.
- Support the development of research to build a body of evidence-based knowledge and generate, collect, and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on victimization, emerging victimization trends, services and behaviors, and enforcement efforts.
- Ensure the statutory, policy, and programmatic flexibility to address enduring and emerging crime victim issues.
- Build and institutionalize capacity through an infusion of technology, training, and innovation to ensure that the field is equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century.

CDC FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

Sustainability is also contingent upon on-going systemic evaluation. By engaging in the Center for Disease Control's framework for program evaluation in public health, the OCCRT will engage in a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using data to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of programs; thereby, contributing to



continuous program improvement and sustainability. [See <https://www.cdc.gov/eval/>] The OCCRT is encouraged to commit to the use of data for decision making, as well as assuming the responsibility of describing the outcomes achieved with funds devoted to victim services. Strong systemic and program evaluation can assist in identifying Oklahoma’s best investments as well as determine how to establish and sustain them as optimal practice. The goal of creating the OCCRT is to increase the use of evaluation data for continuous program improvements statewide.

OCCRT PATH FORWARD

The Threshold of Transformation process has utilized CDC-focused methodology to complete the needs assessment and investigate the capacity of victim service providers within the geographic borders of Oklahoma. As the OCCRT begins planning the implementation of the Threshold of Transformation: Vision for Victim Safety recommendations for sustainability, the team is encouraged to begin by engaging stakeholders, i.e. everyone involved in, those affected by, and the primary intended users of the Oklahoma Victim Service System. Secondly, the OCCRT is encouraged to describe the Threshold of Transformation process including the need for the process, the expected effects, proposed activities, available resources, and the current stage of the process. The stakeholders are encouraged to understand the context in which the process

has been developed and the logic models which will be utilized to further implement the proposed recommendations.

The OCCRT is further encouraged to educate all stakeholders on the focus of the evaluation designs which is recommended to be implemented for victim service providers, i.e. the purpose, users, uses, questions, methods, and agreements which will be necessary to engage in a Blueprint for Safety process. The Threshold for Transformation Project Director and the Cultural Sensitivity, Diversity, and Quality Evaluation Team (CSDQE), under the oversight of the OCCRT, will continue to gather credible evidence on the current victim services system. The evidence will expand on data gathered in the initial needs assessment and include further indicators, sources, quality, quantity, and logistics which accurately describe the capacity of the current victim services system. As the OCCRT engages in the Blueprint for Safety process, the team will be able to justify conclusions for recommended standards, describe the analysis/synthesis of data, interpret the conclusions for all stakeholders, exercise sound judgment, and make recommendations designed to sustain a solid victim services system.

The OCCRT is encouraged to ensure the utilization and sharing of lessons learned with all stakeholders. By doing so, the OCCRT will be modeling evidence-based, best-practice in designing evaluation, preparing for the process, providing feedback about the process, engaging in appropriate follow-up, and disseminating results. The recommendations within the Threshold of Transformation Sustainability Section are designed to strengthen the foundation for national, tribal, and state level victim organizations to formally collaborate and leverage their separate advocacy efforts to develop unified and comprehensive policy and programming initiatives, address the intersection of prevention and victim services, raise Oklahoman’s consciousness about victimization, and promote the critical system linkages which ensure safety, security, and stability for all residents of Oklahoma.