

Sustainability Phase: Making the New into the Norm

Editor's note: This section was largely adapted from [Financing the Future of Local Initiatives](#) and the *Centering Equity in Financial Sustainability Planning Guidebook*, resources supported by the MacArthur Foundation. Learn more about [how to bring a racial equity lens to sustainability planning](#).

Since new initiatives often need help with maintaining funding after initial investments, it is crucial to focus on identifying and securing long-term funding to ensure that an initiative is sustained for the future. A commitment to advancing racial equity and evidence of progress toward that goal can be a critical asset to bringing in sustained funding. Further, planning for sustainability involves identifying and implementing strategies and mechanisms to ensure that the initiative continues over time despite changes in leadership, funding, policy, and staffing. Sustainability is achieved when an initiative's component strategies shift from stand-alone pilot programs and become part of how a system operates. Central to sustainability planning is bringing intentionality and identifying concrete steps to continue to center equity as the initiative's strategies become cemented in policy or practice.

Strategies to Consider

- **Develop a financial sustainability plan** early in an initiative's lifecycle to help identify the key costs over time, as well as how different funding streams may align with the different components of the initiative. Developing this plan can also help start the conversation about how much of the budget is being invested in communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system.
- **Incorporate a diverse mix of funding streams** to ensure that the components of your initiative that promote equity are adequately funded. Use the most restrictive funding sources first and then use more flexible funding sources to plug in gaps.
- **Set, Measure, Achieve (SMA).** This [call to action under Stepping Up](#), a national initiative reducing overincarceration of people with mental illness, provides a framework for sites to set baseline data; measure their progress over time; and

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Have you considered funding from a variety of sources (for example, federal grants; federal entitlements such as Supplemental Security Income [SSI] or Medicaid; Veterans Benefits; state, local, philanthropic, foundation funding, etc.)?
- Do your programs leverage resources (money, staff, or in-kind supports) from a larger or pre-existing effort? If not, consider if there are partners that might be interested in supplying resources to support this initiative or how you could work together to achieve a common goal.
- What percentage of the initiative's budget will be invested directly into neighborhoods or communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system or underserved by behavioral health systems?
- How does the initiative support capacity building for businesses or community-based organizations that are by, for, and about communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system?

achieve results. While the call to action under Stepping Up is specific to jail data, SMA provides a useful framework and process steps for setting targets on any number of baseline data, including data on equity, and using that data to guide program and policy decisions over time.

- **Use the power of storytelling** to educate funders and the community. Creating a platform where people with lived experience in the justice and behavioral health systems can share their stories can be a powerful tool to express the need for your initiative. However, initiative leaders must respect these individuals' time, effort, and stories, promoting empowerment rather than exploitation.¹
- **Broaden partnerships** to leverage additional funding sources to fill gaps and expand impact. Community-based and cross-systems partners have relationships and access to funding beyond the traditional avenues available to criminal justice agencies. Bring partners into sustainability planning to think creatively about scaling and sustaining the initiative.

Questions to Ask Yourself (continued)

- What data metrics are your funders interested in? Are you able to collect and report on that data consistently?
- What are the communications and community education plans for discussing the benefits and needs of your initiative with the community?

Community Spotlight — St. Louis County, Missouri

In September 2020, St. Louis County partnered with The Bail Project, the St. Louis County Library, and other county stakeholders to launch the Tap In Center, a new program to increase accessibility and lower barriers for community members attending court. The need for the Tap In Center arose amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which created new challenges and barriers that often led people to miss court dates and receive bench warrants. The Tap In Center creates safe and accessible community-based spaces for people with active bench warrants to 'tap in' to legal assistance and community support services to reengage with the court system without fear of arrest.² St. Louis County ensured that its community partners, especially people impacted by the justice system, had significant input on the creation of this program. They used a data-driven assessment of the community's needs to ensure that Tap In Center locations were placed in historically underserved and overpoliced communities. The St. Louis County Library was chosen to host the program because it is a neutral and welcoming location, is open to the public, and regularly provides essential social support services.

While initial funding came from a Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) grant, program planners have been able to sustain support from their community partners and the county to continue after SJC funding. Program planners made a case for additional funding by **using data to demonstrate the program's impact**. At its three-year mark in 2023, the Tap In Center supported the quashing of over 1,000 warrants and 86 percent of clients whose warrants were recalled through this program had yet to return to jail.³ The success of this program has also helped ease the burden on St. Louis County's criminal justice agencies. It has reduced the need for law enforcement to execute warrants and for jails to needlessly detain people for long periods. It has also enabled courts to resume processing these cases that would otherwise be paused.⁴

The Tap In Center has received ample **in-kind support from its justice system partners**. Key partner contributions include an assistant public defender dedicating two hours weekly to staffing the Tap In Center and support from the county jail director to create a new Justice Services agency position to manage the Tap In Center and other initiatives. St. Louis

1. Katy Maskolunas et al., *Empowering, Not Exploiting: Centering the Voices of Individuals with Lived Experience in Storytelling* (Arlington, VA: National Center for Victims of Crime, 2022).

2. Miranda Gibson, email message to author, May 10, 2022.

3. "St. Louis County Tap In Center Honored by Focus St. Louis," Saint Louis County, Missouri, accessed June 5, 2023, <https://stlouiscountymo.gov/st-louis-county-government/county-executive/county-executive-news/st-louis-county-tap-in-center-honored-by-focus-st-louis/>.

4. Ibid.

was also able to **utilize the [Guide for Centering Equity in Financial Sustainability Planning](#)** to identify funding gaps and potential funding opportunities to sustain their work. With the planning guide, they created a budget justification that has been used to propose implementing the Tap In Center as a primarily county-funded program.⁵

Key Resources from across the SJC Network

- [Getting Started: A Guide for Centering Equity in Financial Sustainability Planning](#), The CSG Justice Center
- [Applying the Stepping Up Framework to Advance Racial Equity](#), The CSG Justice Center

5. Miranda Gibson, email message to author, May 10, 2022.



Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS



SAFETY + JUSTICE
CHALLENGE

Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

This project was created with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce overincarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.