**"Sustainable support"** for a nonprofit refers to the strategies, resources, and systems that allow the organization to maintain its operations, achieve its mission, and create long-term impact over time, without relying on one-time or short-term funding or efforts.

It involves building a stable foundation that ensures the nonprofit can continue its work regardless of external challenges or changes in funding.

Key aspects of sustainable support for a nonprofit include:

**Capacity Building**: Investing in the development of the nonprofit's staff, leadership, and volunteers to ensure that the organization is well-equipped to adapt and thrive over time.

**Impact Measurement and Communication**: Regularly measuring and communicating the impact of the nonprofit’s work. This helps demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the organization, making it easier to attract continued support.

**Strong Community Relationships**: Cultivating deep, trusting relationships with the community, stakeholders, and volunteers to ensure consistent engagement and support.

**Diverse Funding Streams**: Rather than relying on a single donor, grant, or income source, nonprofits work to develop a mix of funding—such as individual donations, government grants, corporate sponsorships, and earned income from services or products.

**Strategic Alliances**: Partnering with other nonprofits, businesses, or government organizations can open up new avenues for support. Collaborative efforts allow nonprofits to share resources, knowledge, and networks, amplifying their impact.

**Volunteer Retention**: Sustainable support involves retaining skilled and passionate volunteers, keeping them engaged with regular recognition, opportunities for growth, and a sense of belonging within the organization.

**Productive Programs**: Nonprofits may also offer programs or services with fees, such as training, consulting, or educational services, that not only align with their mission but help cover operating costs.

**Long-Term Strategy**: Planning for the future by setting clear goals and creating strategies to achieve sustainability. This could include diversifying the donor base, establishing endowments, or building reserves.

**Ways to Build and Sustain Community Support:**

**1. Develop Strong Relationships with Local Stakeholders**

* **Community Leaders & Influencers**: Engage with local leaders, religious institutions, business owners, and influential community members. Their endorsement and support can lend credibility and help expand your nonprofit's reach.
* **Collaborations and Partnerships**: Work with other community organizations (nonprofits, schools, businesses, etc.) to leverage resources and increase visibility. Shared projects and joint initiatives can deepen community ties and build trust.

**2. Engage the Community Through Volunteering**

* **Volunteer Programs**: Encourage local residents to volunteer their time, whether it’s for events, administrative support, or hands-on program delivery. Volunteers are not only helping the organization but also become ambassadors of your cause within their own networks.
* **Skill-based Volunteering**: In addition to general volunteer opportunities, offer ways for people with specific skills (e.g., marketing, accounting, legal advice) to give back. This will build a deeper connection with those who may want to contribute in more specialized ways.

**3. Create Meaningful and Accessible Ways to Donate**

* **Small Donations Matter**: Make it easy for community members to contribute, whether through small recurring donations or one-time gifts. Consider establishing a "community giving" program that allows everyone to contribute according to their means.
* **Micro-Donations & Crowdfunding**: Leverage online crowdfunding platforms that make it easy for people to donate in small amounts. Consider specific campaigns that are tied to community goals and milestones.
* **In-Kind Donations**: Some people may prefer donating goods or services rather than money. Make sure to provide clear guidance on what donations are needed and how they can contribute items like clothing, food, or professional services.

**4. Host Community Events and Initiatives**

* **Local Fundraising Events**: Organize events such as charity walks, community dinners, or silent auctions that engage the public while raising funds. Events can be great ways to raise awareness and invite more people to get involved.
* **Educational Workshops & Community Engagement**: Host free workshops, town halls, or informational sessions that educate the public on issues your nonprofit addresses. This builds awareness of your work and fosters a sense of ownership and partnership among the community.
* **Festivals or Celebrations**: Participate in or sponsor local community festivals, fairs, and celebrations. This gives your nonprofit visibility and an opportunity to directly interact with the community.

**5. Utilize Social Media and Digital Engagement**

* **Social Media Campaigns**: Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to engage with the community. Share stories, updates, and calls to action to keep people informed about your work.
* **User-Generated Content**: Encourage community members to share their experiences with your nonprofit on social media. User-generated content, like photos and testimonials, can be a powerful way to amplify your message.
* **Online Volunteer & Donation Platforms**: Offer online opportunities for people to volunteer, donate, or participate in virtual events. This broadens the scope of community involvement and makes it easier for supporters to engage from anywhere.

**6. Demonstrate Impact and Transparency**

* **Show Results**: Clearly communicate the impact of your nonprofit's work on the community. Share success stories, before-and-after data, or testimonials from people who have benefited from your programs.
* **Transparency in Financials**: Be open about where donations are going and how funds are being spent. Regularly share financial reports, impact assessments, and any other information that shows accountability.
* **Regular Updates**: Keep the community informed about ongoing projects, upcoming events, and how their involvement is making a difference. This ensures people feel connected to the cause and stay engaged.

**7. Provide Opportunities for Community Ownership**

* **Advisory Committees or Boards**: Involve community members in decision-making processes, such as advisory committees or boards of directors. This helps ensure that the organization is aligned with local needs and fosters a sense of ownership.
* **Peer-to-Peer Fundraising**: Encourage your supporters to become fundraisers themselves by sharing their personal stories and fundraising goals. This taps into their networks and increases the nonprofit’s reach while empowering individuals to make a difference.
* **Ambassador Programs**: Develop ambassador or advocate programs where passionate community members help spread awareness, recruit new volunteers, and engage local businesses in supporting the nonprofit.

**8. Focus on Long-Term Relationships, Not Just Transactions**

* **Regular Engagement**: Don’t just ask for support when you need it. Regularly update community members about your organization’s work, progress, and impact. Maintain relationships through newsletters, community events, and online engagement.
* **Recognition and Appreciation**: Recognize and appreciate your supporters, whether they’re donors, volunteers, or advocates. Publicly thank them, acknowledge their efforts, and make them feel valued.
* **Build Trust**: Trust is built over time through consistency and reliability. When the community sees that your nonprofit is making a genuine impact, they will continue to support you.

**9. Align Your Mission with Local Needs and Interests**

* **Community-Centered Approach**: Involve community members in identifying the problems your nonprofit seeks to address. When your initiatives resonate with their lived experiences, they are more likely to get involved and support the work.
* **Be Inclusive**: Ensure that your nonprofit’s programs and messaging are inclusive and reflect the diversity of the community you serve. Engaging people from all backgrounds and experiences helps strengthen your connection to the community.

**10. Leverage Corporate Sponsorships & Local Business Support**

* **Corporate Giving Programs**: Partner with local businesses for sponsorships, matching gifts, or cause-related marketing. Businesses often want to support causes that align with their values, and offering them a platform to give back can be mutually beneficial.
* **In-Kind Contributions from Businesses**: Local businesses can support your nonprofit by donating goods, services, or venue space for events. This reduces costs for the nonprofit and strengthens local partnerships.

**11. Foster a Sense of Community and Belonging**

* **Building Relationships**: Focus on building a strong community of supporters who feel personally invested in the nonprofit’s success. Social gatherings, community meet-ups, and recognition events create bonds between the nonprofit and its supporters.
* **Celebrate Milestones Together**: Celebrate major achievements, anniversaries, or milestones with the community. Involving them in the celebrations shows appreciation and reinforces their commitment.

**12. Provide Clear and Tangible Ways to Get Involved**

* **Structured Giving Programs**: Offer structured ways for people to get involved, such as membership programs, monthly giving clubs, or “adopt a program” initiatives. This can create ongoing relationships where supporters can directly see how their contributions are making a difference.
* **Service Learning Opportunities**: Collaborate with schools or universities to offer service learning opportunities where students can contribute their time and skills as part of their curriculum. This introduces younger generations to your cause and strengthens community ties.

**13. Leverage Data and Community Feedback**

* **Surveys and Community Listening Sessions**: Regularly gather feedback from the community on their needs, opinions, and how the nonprofit is performing. Surveys, focus groups, or community listening sessions allow you to better align your services with the community’s evolving needs and interests.
* **Data-Driven Storytelling**: Use data and success stories to illustrate the tangible impact of your work. Community members are more likely to support your cause if they can see measurable outcomes and understand how their support is directly contributing to positive change.

**14. Offer Training and Empowerment Opportunities**

* **Leadership Development Programs**: Engage community members by offering leadership development opportunities, such as training programs, mentorships, or skills-building workshops. Empowering local people to take on leadership roles within your organization helps build capacity and ensures the sustainability of your nonprofit.
* **Community Advocates**: Help train advocates and champions from within the community who can spread awareness, support your programs, and become active ambassadors for your cause. These advocates will make the nonprofit more integrated into the community and can mobilize support when needed.

**15. Create Volunteer Leadership Roles**

* **Volunteer Leadership**: Encourage committed volunteers to take on leadership roles within your nonprofit, such as organizing events, managing teams of volunteers, or spearheading specific initiatives. This gives them a sense of ownership over your work, increases engagement, and helps you manage resources more effectively.
* **Volunteer Recognition and Development**: Provide opportunities for volunteers to develop new skills or take on more responsibilities. Recognize their contributions publicly, provide them with training, and offer growth opportunities that make their involvement more rewarding.

**16. Expand Reach with Cultural Sensitivity**

* **Culturally Relevant Programs**: Tailor your nonprofit’s programs to meet the specific cultural and demographic needs of the community. By understanding and respecting local traditions, values, and languages, you increase the likelihood of acceptance and support.
* **Engage Marginalized Communities**: Focus on involving underrepresented or marginalized groups in your nonprofit’s mission. Building relationships with diverse community members and ensuring inclusivity ensures broader, more sustainable support.

**17. Engage Youth and Families**

* **Youth Engagement Programs**: Creating programs or events that cater to young people, such as summer camps, youth leadership opportunities, or educational outreach, helps nurture the next generation of supporters.
* **Family-Friendly Activities**: Host family-friendly volunteer opportunities or events that involve people of all ages. Family involvement builds a sense of shared responsibility and commitment to the cause.

**18. Utilize Media and Public Relations**

* **Local Media Partnerships**: Collaborate with local newspapers, TV stations, or radio stations to raise awareness of your nonprofit’s work. Media partnerships can help you gain visibility and credibility in the community.
* **Storytelling Through Local Channels**: Tell powerful, personal stories through local channels, including blogs, social media, or community newsletters. Sharing how your work is directly impacting local individuals helps build a connection between your nonprofit and the community.

**19. Provide Community Benefits**

* **Economic Impact**: Demonstrate how your nonprofit’s work is benefiting the local economy, whether through job creation, skill-building, or addressing social issues. When the community sees that your nonprofit contributes to local prosperity, it becomes more likely to provide ongoing support.
* **Community Resource Hub**: Position your nonprofit as a hub of resources. If appropriate, offer services that the community can directly benefit from, such as job training, access to food or healthcare, or support groups. This positions your nonprofit as an indispensable community asset.

**20. Offer Opportunities for Advocacy**

* **Community Advocacy Campaigns**: Empower community members to get involved in advocating for change on local issues. When people feel they have a voice in shaping policies that affect them, they are more likely to remain invested in supporting the nonprofit.
* **Grassroots Movements**: Build grassroots advocacy efforts by training and organizing local supporters to engage with policymakers or organize petitions, marches, or letter-writing campaigns on behalf of your cause.

**21. Foster Collaboration with Local Businesses**

* **Cause-Related Marketing**: Partner with local businesses for cause-related marketing campaigns. For example, businesses could donate a percentage of sales to your nonprofit, or you could co-host events that align with both your nonprofit's mission and the business's marketing objectives.
* **Incorporate Local Businesses in Events**: Involve local businesses in fundraising events, either through sponsorships, in-kind donations, or participation in event organization. This encourages mutual support and promotes a community-wide effort.

**22. Leverage the Power of Technology and Innovation**

* **Digital Engagement and Communication**: Use apps, websites, and social media to create ongoing communication with supporters. Offering tools like mobile donation options, volunteer sign-up portals, or digital newsletters can improve engagement.
* **Innovation in Services**: Continuously explore innovative ways to deliver services more effectively. For example, using mobile apps to connect volunteers with service opportunities or using data analytics to better understand and predict community needs.

**23. Foster a Culture of Philanthropy**

* **Philanthropic Education**: Educate the community on the value of giving back. This could include offering workshops or resources about the importance of charitable donations, volunteerism, or other ways to support the nonprofit ecosystem.
* **Intergenerational Giving**: Encourage families and individuals to make giving a multi-generational tradition. Providing legacy programs or opportunities to engage young people in philanthropy helps ensure continued support over time.

**24. Establish a Local Advisory Board**

* **Advisory Board of Community Members**: Form a local advisory board consisting of respected community members who can offer guidance, insights, and connections. This board can help ensure that the nonprofit stays aligned with community priorities and also advocate on your behalf within the community.

**25. Provide Long-Term Value to the Community**

* **Focus on Sustainability**: Ensure that the impact of your nonprofit’s programs will have long-lasting effects on the community. Whether it’s improving education, health, or the local economy, sustainable and visible outcomes are a powerful motivator for continued community support.
* **Exit Strategies**: If appropriate, work toward creating an exit strategy for your programs. The goal would be to empower the community to eventually take ownership of specific initiatives, reducing dependence on external support and creating long-term sustainability.

Sustainable community support relies on building trust, showing measurable results, and creating ongoing opportunities for involvement.

When people feel that they have a stake in the mission, believe in the impact, and feel valued, they are more likely to remain engaged over the long term.

**Ultimately, sustainable community support isn’t just about financial resources—it’s about making your nonprofit an integral part of the community fabric.**

**"People support what they help create"** means that individuals are more likely to be invested in and support a project, idea, or cause if they have had a hand in its development or creation.

When people feel a sense of ownership, contribution, or involvement in something, they tend to feel more connected to it and are more likely to advocate for its success.

When people contribute their time, effort, or ideas to something, they develop a sense of ownership or responsibility for it.

There are a few reasons why this principle works:

**Sense of Ownership**: When people play a role in creating something, they feel like it's "theirs." They are more likely to want to see it succeed because it represents their ideas, work, or passions.

**Personal Investment**: If someone has put in effort—whether intellectual, physical, or emotional—they are naturally more invested in the outcome. This makes them more likely to stand by it, especially when faced with challenges or opposition.

**Pride in Contribution**: People often take pride in what they’ve helped to build, whether it's a small project or a large-scale endeavor. This pride becomes a motivator for continued support and involvement.

**Belief in the Vision**: If individuals have had a say in creating the vision or direction of something, they are more likely to believe in it and be aligned with its goals. This shared vision strengthens their commitment and belief in the project.

**Empowerment**: Being involved in the creation process can make individuals feel empowered and valued. This sense of empowerment fosters loyalty and ongoing support.

For nonprofits, the phrase **"people support what they help create"** is especially significant because it speaks to the power of community involvement and collective ownership.

When people have a voice in creating or shaping a nonprofit's efforts, they are more likely to be committed, stay involved, and advocate for the cause.

In essence, sustainable support means building a nonprofit that can continue to meet its mission and serve its community effectively, without being vulnerable to short-term financial fluctuations or external pressures.

Sustainable support for a nonprofit goes beyond just ensuring that there is enough funding—it involves creating a framework of financial stability, community involvement, operational efficiency, and long-term planning.

Securing sustainable community support for a nonprofit is critical for long-term success, and it involves building strong, authentic relationships with local stakeholders, engaging the community in meaningful ways, and ensuring that the nonprofit's mission aligns with community needs.

**Mail Out Template**

Dear «Prefix» «First\_Name» «Last\_Name»,

Imagine, a strong community, where families raise healthy children, free from the effects of substance misuse.

Healthy families are the building blocks for a strong society yet substance misuse fractures family foundations.

The effects of substance misuse are felt throughout our community, such as increased crime, drunk driving, students on drugs and families in trouble, all at the cost of the taxpayer.

**In Our Community, there is hope, there is help, and there is** (*enter your agency’s name*).

Since (date of inception), We have provided free, premier Research-Based Recovery, Education, and Prevention Services designed to prevent the onset of, interrupt the progression of, and support the recovery of substance use disorder for adolescents and their families.

In Our Community, during the past \_\_ years, We have served \_\_\_\_ adolescents, \_\_\_\_ parents and \_\_\_\_ adults absolutely free of charge.

Today we are asking you to be a partner with us, so that we can provide our life changing services. «First\_Name», XX% of our annual budget will come from individuals like you.

Any new contribution made to (the agency) will be matched dollar for dollar through the generous $30,000 challenge match from the Community Foundation.

Your contribution today of $25 will be turned into $50; this will provide one month of services for 2 adolescents.

A gift of $50 doubled, will provide two months of support for a parent in need.

A gift of $100 doubled, will provide six month’s continuous prevention services for an individual.

**Please partner with us today and you will help build a strong community, where families raise healthy children, free from the effects of substance misuse.**