

# x factors of sustainability

## Introduction

Sustainability is not one size fits all. Every organization is unique and at a different place in their journey; each Meals on Wheels program has its own culture, characteristics, and strengths. The strengths lie in the organization's assets including the skills, talents, and abilities of the staff and board, the brand of the organization – its reputation and clout, as well as its base of support and level of connectedness in the community.



We're living in uncertain times:

- ▶ 48 of the 50 states experienced fiscal crisis in 2009 and 2010. (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities)
- ▶ 40 states forecast budget shortfalls through 2012. (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities)
- ▶ 80% of nonprofit organizations report experiencing fiscal stress; 40% report it as "severe" or "very severe." (Johns Hopkins University)
- ▶ President Obama called for a 5-year freeze on domestic spending in the 2011 State of the Union Address

"Leadership is needed more in times of uncertainty than in times of stability." Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in *The Leadership Challenge*

## Defining Sustainability

- ▶ The continuation of community health or quality of benefits over time. (Center for Civic Partnerships)
- ▶ Maintaining and continuing program services after a funding period is over and ensuring that the organization has become a permanent part of community resources (SAMHSA).
- ▶ The ability of an organization to develop strategies for continued growth and development that provide long-term impact of individuals and communities.
- ▶ Foundational elements that allow the organization to survive the tests of time and be resilient when confronted with various challenges.

In a very practical way, sustainability is about your organization remaining healthy and vibrant, fully funded and functional until you accomplish your mission.



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## X Factors of Sustainability

### What is an X factor?

- ▶ In mathematics an **x factor** is an unknown quantity which only becomes known after following a prescribed process.
- ▶ In the business world an **x factor** is a significant amount of personal charisma or that special quality that sets one candidate or company apart from the crowd.
- ▶ In the entertainment world it's that undefinable quantity which may promote one candidate over another in the judges' eyes. You can't define it, but you know it when you see it.
- ▶ In sports, **x factor** describes the adjustments a team uses to seize the next big opportunity or to stop the next big threat.
- ▶ In regards to organization sustainability, X Factors are the characteristics, qualities, and activities that, when combined, have a multiplicative effect for the organization causing the organization to rise above the crowd and stand out like a star and attract attention (and funding) from institutional and individual donors. X factors position your organization to seize the next big opportunity and/or survive the next big threat.

### People

- ▶ First who, then what is what Jim Collins taught us through *Good to Great*. The first task then is to get the right people on the bus.
- ▶ People are **not** your most important asset, the **right** people are.
- ▶ **Where, in your organization, is it critical to have the right people? Everywhere**
- ▶ Includes leadership (board and staff), and staff (paid and volunteer)
- ▶ Identify the qualities and characteristics that define *the right people* for your organization
- ▶ Identify all talents gaps and develop a recruitment plan
- ▶ Invest in the continued growth and development of your people

### Purpose

- ▶ The big WHY of what you do
  - ▶ Collins' BHAG - big hairy audacious goals - END SENIOR HUNGER BY 2020
  - ▶ Your purpose (mission and vision) should be clear, concise, compelling. **Easy to share, hard to forget**
- ▶ Both staff and board must be actively connecting others to and with your purpose

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- ▶ Remember the **too big to fail, think about it** - What are the real consequences to your community if you fail to fulfill your purpose?

## Plan

- ▶ Have strategic clarity about what you seek to accomplish
- ▶ Develop a plan that is compelling, credible, and convincing
- ▶ Obtain board and staff support for the plan
- ▶ Develop and implement accountability measures to monitor plan performance

## Passion

- ▶ Hegel said, “nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion.”
- ▶ Defined as “intense emotion compelling action”
- ▶ Contagious excitement about your mission
- ▶ Motivation that keeps you going when times are tough
- ▶ Passion must pervade all levels of the organization
  - ▶ Passion for the mission
  - ▶ Passion for seniors
  - ▶ Passion for the community
  - ▶ Passion for a better, brighter future

## Program(s)

- ▶ Anchored to organization’s mission
- ▶ Birthed out of planning and understanding of need
- ▶ Meet documented community needs
- ▶ Proven effectiveness (evidence-based)
- ▶ Culturally appropriate
- ▶ Critically relevant

## Performance

- ▶ Produce results that are measurable and meaningful - outcomes
- ▶ Positive community impact
- ▶ Proven track record of financial integrity
- ▶ Demonstrated history of cost-effectiveness and sound financial management - solid ROI

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## Partnerships

- ▶ Integrating into the community through a variety of cross-sector partnerships
  - ▶ Business, education, arts & culture, faith, healthcare, etc.
- ▶ Connecting with other service providers
- ▶ Working for the greater good of the community
- ▶ Being a good collaborator

## Prophetic Resilience

- ▶ Actively engaged with community leaders and influencers
- ▶ Studying trends and patterns
- ▶ Anticipating the future needs of your clients and community
- ▶ Being resilient with programs resources to meet the evolving needs
- ▶ “Skate to where the puck is going to be” - Wayne Gretzky



## What are the next steps in your journey?

- What are your areas of strength?
- How can you leverage those strengths for greater impact to your organization?
- What are the critical gaps that need to be filled?
- What actions can you take this quarter/year to enhance the sustainability of your organization?

## Need More Help

We'd love to hear from you. You can reach us at 800-883-7196 or [impact@xfactorllc.com](mailto:impact@xfactorllc.com). You can also connect with us online at:

- ✓ LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/kevinmonroe](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kevinmonroe)
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