
COMPUTER SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT

UNIT 9:

Monitoring Your Plan

9



Now that you have started implementing your sustainability plan, you will need to make sure that it achieves your goals over time. To do this you will need to monitor progress to see if different aspects of the plan are working. This unit will help you track your progress, as well as to adjust your plan over time through explicit improvements and enhancements.

How do we know if our sustainability plan is working?

After you have developed and started implementing your sustainability plan, you will want to track its progress to see whether different aspects of the plan are working. This will allow you to adjust the plan over time to improve what is working and change features that are not functioning as you expected. To do this, you will want to develop a simple yet robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy for your sustainability plan.

A first step in developing your M&E strategy is to define indicators for each part of your plan. An indicator is simply a way for you to determine whether a specific part of your plan is working. An indicator will “indicate” or show you that the activity is or is not operating as planned. For example, if establishing and running an SSTC is part of your plan, then you may want to use some or all of the following indicators for this feature of your plan:

- The teacher sponsors were identified and recruited the first group of students.
- SSTC meets regularly and has created a schedule for maintaining the school’s computer system.
- SSTC keeps to its schedule and carries out routine maintenance activities on the school’s computers.
- The number of computers that are not working each month (or other period of time) is less than in the past. (The Computer System Status Report will provide the baseline information needed to make this assessment.)
- The computer lab is kept clean and orderly.
- Teachers in the school are using SSTC members to help them when they take their classes to the computer lab.
- Toward the end of the first year of operating, the first group of SSTC members recruited the second group of younger students to become “Junior Technicians” in the SSTC, thus ensuring its continuation.
- SSTC has diagnosed more serious computer problems requiring external computer technicians.
- The number of times the school has had to use external technicians has decreased since before the SSTC was established.
- The number of problems with viruses on the school’s computers has decreased since the SSTC was established.



Jing “How to!” Videos

The CD at the end of the Toolkit also includes a step-by-step instructional video for using the **M&E Tracking Template**.

Each part of your plan will need to have a set of indicators so the SPT will be able to track progress and identify difficulties before they become problems. The Toolkit includes an **M&E Tracking Template** you can use to identify and list milestones and indicators for each part of your plan. The M&E template also includes a column for you to list the type of data each indicator would collect. The sample template includes the different parts of the plan that were covered in the Toolkit and a few sample milestones and indicators. You will create your **M&E Tracking Form** by modifying the template and adding the milestones and indicators you want to track.

Once you have created your own **M&E Tracking Form**, you will need to create a

system for using the form to track indicators over time. One way to manage tracking different plan elements and indicators is to assign a two-person team comprising members of the SPT to one or more of these elements and their corresponding indicators. These teams then would report to the whole SPT during meetings. This lessens the difficulty of monitoring the plan and enables all SPT members to be part of the process of deciding how to adjust the plan over time.

One really important part of the SPT’s M&E plan is tracking costs to use, maintain, and grow your school’s computer system and any funds collected for your computer system or revenue earned from income-generating activities with or for your computer system over time. This financial tracking of costs and revenue is critical to the success of any sustainability plan. We suggest that, at the start of each SPT meeting, the finance officer distribute a simple monthly financial report showing monthly costs and revenue and any changes in the financial status of your school’s computer system during the year.



Sample:
M&E Tracking Template

Major Milestones	Person(s) Responsible	Deadlines	Completed on	Results	Challenges	Planned Next Steps
Teacher sponsors were identified	Mrs. Smith	Sept 3	Sept 3	2 sponsors found	None	Recruit Students
Students recruited	Mr. Reid	Sept 18	Sept 15	All 12 students recruited	None	Organize first meeting
SSTC has schedule for maintaining school's computer system	Mr. Reid	Sept 30	Sept 28	Schedule set	None	Make sure schedule is followed
Initial computer system status report completed	Mrs. Smith	Oct 10	Oct 7	Report complete on schedule	10 computers not working	Develop schedule for SSTC maintenance
SSTC recruited new class of Junior Technicians	Mrs. Smith	Apr 15	Apr 15	15 new students	Can only accept 12	Accept final members
Follow up computer system status report completed	Mrs. Smith	May 15	May 15	Only 1 computer not working	1 printer is now not working	Report progress to SPT

Ongoing indicators	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug
Number of times the school has used external technicians	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Number of problems with viruses	25	25	23	8	2	0	0	5	2	0	0	0
Computer lab is clean and orderly (enter date checked)				15/10	10/11	3/12	15/1	18/2	13/3	14/4	10/5	4/6
Number of times teachers are using SSTC members for help	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	4	5	5
Number of times SSTC has carried out routine maintenance	0	0	0	3	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Number of times SSTC has diagnosed more serious problems	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Number of computers that are fully operational	10	8	12	14	18	20	20	19	20	20	20	20
Percent of computers that are fully operational	50%	40%	60%	70%	90%	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In addition to tracking quantitative features of your school's sustainability plan, it is important to track qualitative features of the plan. For example, one of the main goals of any sustainability plan is to improve the use of your computers across the curriculum. Another important objective is to improve the relationship between the school and the surrounding community (that is, parents and local businesses). A final important objective is to improve student access to computers and the Internet. You can track this by noting the average number of hours per month students in different grades use the computers as well as the diversity of use between conventional computer literacy classes and uses for other subjects.

Combining the mix of quantitative results with qualitative benefits will give you a fairly complete understanding of how well your plan is doing over time. Some qualitative features of your plan may show a positive change sooner than do the financial aspects of your plan. Then, as the

plan progresses, improvements in student, teacher, and community satisfaction with the state of your computer system probably will lead to improvements in the system's financial situation. No single element of your sustainability plan will result in your computer system's becoming sustainable, so it is important to monitor all of the main elements of your plan to gain a complete understanding of progress.

At the end of each year, the SPT should integrate results from periodic monitoring of the different elements to create a comprehensive summary of the status of the school's sustainability plan. You should share this summary with all staff, students, parents, and other community members at some kind of school-wide event. Even slight improvements in the state of your school's computer system can translate into greater interest on the part of the larger school community in making more improvements and seeing your school as an important local institution.

