

Key Drivers of Success: What catalyzes lasting change in your organization or community?

What drivers might matter while conducting policy, systems, and environmental change efforts?

Policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change is a process that occurs over time and requires strategic and systems thinking, a focus on continuous improvement, and ongoing engagement of a diverse array of partners and stakeholders. Additionally, there are certain drivers that can help achieve success. Building on the first and second *Action Learning Briefs*, which defined PSE change and identified its six phases, this third brief provides practical guidance on what factors support and sustain momentum when moving through each PSE change phase.

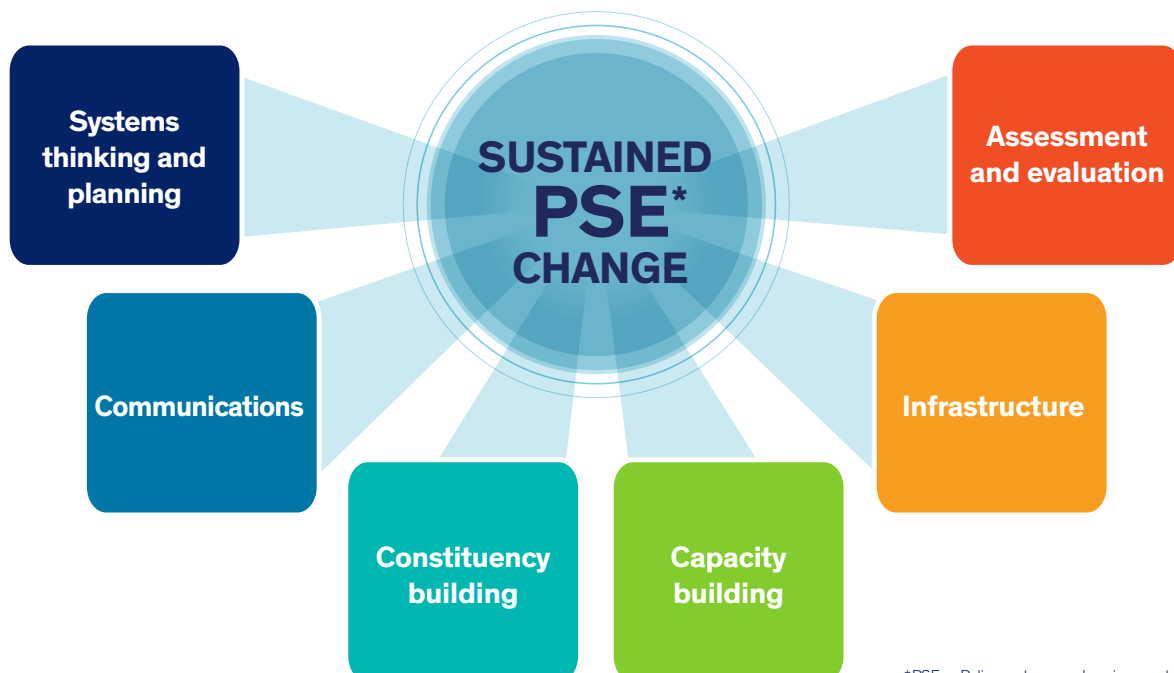
These factors include but are not limited to: 1) Having a clear vision and mission to help generate support and awareness for partnership and gain momentum toward a common cause; 2) Conducting action planning to identify goals, strategies for action, and defined roles (responsibilities and accountability); 3) Developing and supporting leadership to organize and manage partners' activities, including facilitation and decision-making; and 4) Documenting ongoing feedback on progress, celebrating accomplishments, and identifying barriers, and adapting plans accordingly.^{1,2} Many of these drivers are known to be important

before and during the PSE Adoption and Early Implementation Phase. Less is known about what drivers of PSE change may help to deepen and/or expand PSE implementation and sustainability.

How do you implement and sustain the effort after you have adopted a policy, systems, and environmental change?

A community's ability to sustain its work can be defined as: "A community's ongoing capacity and resolve to work together to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all."³ This definition suggests that when beginning, maintaining, or expanding upon PSE change work, different types of support may be needed at different times. Evaluation research at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health in collaboration with the Cook County Department of Public Health (<https://illinoisprc.org>) revealed evidence for six different drivers that may help organizations and communities plan for implementation and sustainability of PSE change. Figure 1 highlights these drivers, and Table 1 describes each driver in more detail with examples from the field.

FIGURE 1 Six drivers that help organizations and communities plan for implementation and sustainability of policy, systems, and environmental change



*PSE = Policy, systems, and environmental

TABLE 1 Drivers of policy, systems, and environmental implementation and sustainability

SUSTAINABILITY DRIVERS	CHARACTERISTICS SPECIFIC TO SUSTAINABILITY	EXAMPLES
Systems Thinking and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adopting a <i>strategic and systems viewpoint</i> and fostering relationships between partners at all levels in the system toward a shared vision and aligned resources ■ Developing <i>long-range plans</i> that include not only policy adoption but also systems and environmental change to implement those policies is beneficial. All three elements (policy, systems, and environmental change) are likely needed to promote sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The presence of a liaison between technical assistance (TA) providers and implementing agencies facilitates and expedites TA adoption and provision, such as in regionalized school systems in which intermediate service centers provided outreach to multiple local schools ■ Conversely, having to engage property managers at single housing units on an individual basis is a barrier to implementation. ■ The creation of a multi-year policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) plan allowed a multi-sector community-based collaborative to pool diverse funding sources, staff, and resources in a more coordinated, efficient manner
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing <i>tailored messaging</i> that speaks to how PSE goals align with those of the implementing agency or organization, such as potential economic gains associated with PSE improvements ■ Developing a <i>strategic communications</i> plan with multi-modal communications targeted at neighborhoods, communities, and regional system partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The development of a specific message to local government leaders about how increased walkability leads to increased foot traffic to local businesses was successful for many municipalities ■ The demonstration of the reduced need for cleaning services after a tenant vacates a smoke-free rental unit helped property managers see the benefits of a smoke-free housing policy ■ A local health department created a branded marketing plan; all places deemed “healthy” were branded and geo-located on organization’s website
Constituency Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Garnering <i>decision-maker support, community champions, and community groups</i> may all be required to implement and sustain PSE change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Despite a mayor not being re-elected, a local bicycle advocacy group and municipal planner sustained the momentum necessary to implement a transportation plan
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing capacity building is needed; it is not a one-time event ■ Developing a <i>capacity building plan</i> that includes multiple ways to promote skill-building and learning, including trainings for staff, investment of staff time, and materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Capacity for enhanced PE was built through curriculum development and training of PE teachers ■ Capacity to continue to promote fresh fruits and vegetables in corner stores was built through regular TA site visits to assess and troubleshoot signage use, item placement, etc.

SUSTAINABILITY DRIVERS	CHARACTERISTICS SPECIFIC TO SUSTAINABILITY	EXAMPLES
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations or coalitions that coordinate and collaborate expand their infrastructure by sharing an array of expertise and diverse funding sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities were able to use their transportation plans to seek funding for different plan components A clinical-community linkage program explored relationships with managed care organizations that show promise for expanding their statewide system
Assessment and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of an organization's <i>baseline readiness</i> for PSE change can help organizations plan for needed resources and next steps Setting up a system to <i>document process and outcome success</i> while setting up systems of quality improvement can help promote learning and strategic thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A corner store assessed its sales of specific items based on placement, signage, tasting events, etc. The assessment of teachers' perceptions of students' ability to participate in class after piloting a morning playground physical activity program informed the decision to sustain that program

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This 5-part Action Learning Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) change series provides evidence-informed practical guidance for organizations to apply and advance PSE change that promotes healthy living and health equity. Content for this series was developed based on results of an evaluation conducted by University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) School of Public Health in collaboration with the Cook County Department of Public Health and supported by Cooperative Agreement 6 NU58DP005869-03 funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The briefs are collaborative projects with the UIC Illinois Prevention Research Center and are a product of a Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research Center supported by cooperative agreement number U48DP005010 from the CDC. The findings and conclusions in this brief are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the CDC or the Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the evaluation go to <https://illinoisprc.org/publications/>.

References

- Kegler MC, Honeycutt S, Davis M, Dauria E, Berg C, Dove C, Gamble A, Hawkins J. Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change in the Mississippi Delta: Considerations for Evaluation Design. *Health Education and Behavior*. 2015; 42(1 suppl): 57S-66S.
- Roussos ST, Fawcett SB. A review of collaborative partnerships as a strategy for improving community health. *Annual Review of Public Health*. 2000; 21(1), 369-402.
- Batan M, Butterfoss FD, Jaffe A, and LaPier T. Healthy Communities Program: Sustainability Planning Guide. *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Welter C, Jarpe-Ratner E, Massuda Barnett G, Chebli P, Kite H, Geraci M, Becker A, and Hachett L. Key drivers of success: What catalyzes lasting change in your organization or community? Action Learning Brief No. 003. Illinois Prevention Research Center, University of Illinois at Chicago. Chicago, IL. April 2019. <https://illinoisprc.org/publications/>.